

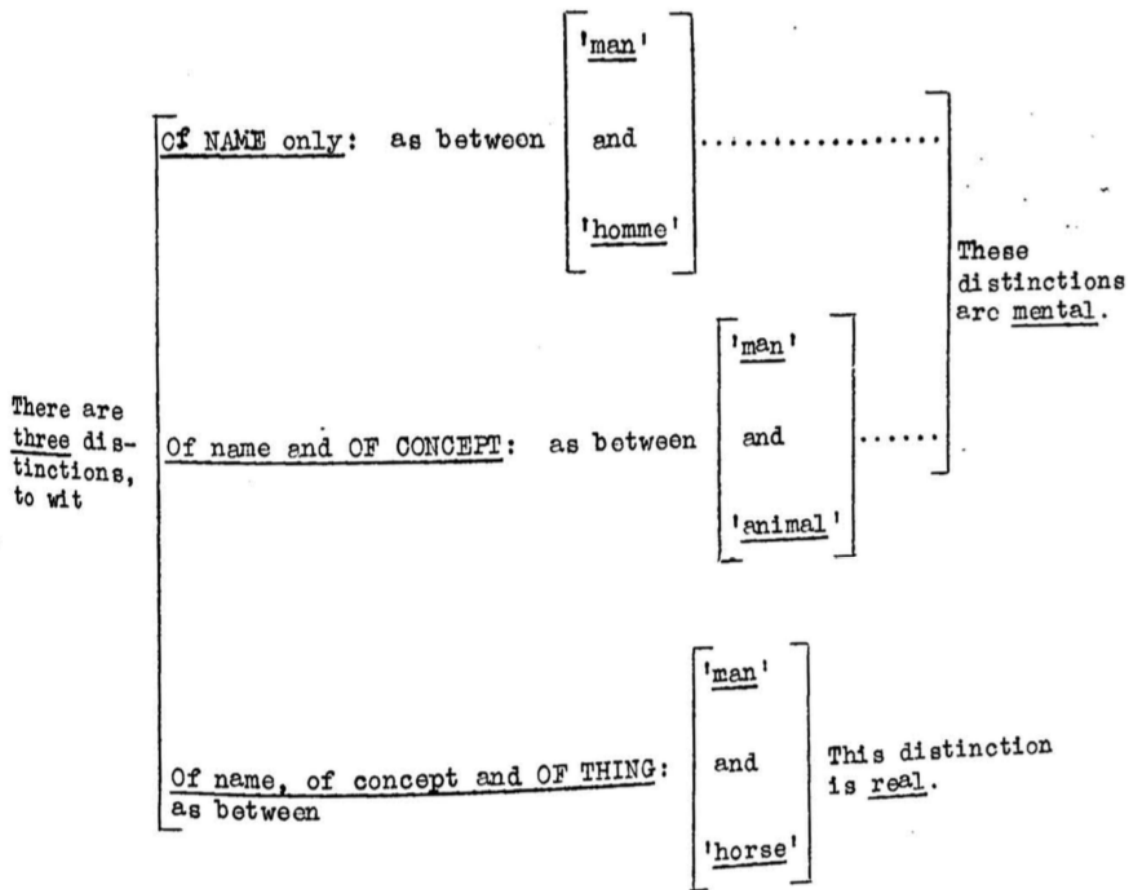
882. The notion of distinction. Though, as was said above (no. 880Ba1), distinction is taken in a *narrower* sense for lack of identity between two *individuals*, nonetheless, *DISTINCTION* taken in a *general* sense is the *LACK OF IDENTITY* between many [“things”]. (Cf. *De pot.*, q. 9, a.7; no. 863Bb2; no. 870Ab.) Accordingly, *THOSE* [“THINGS”] *WHEREOF ONE IS NOT THE OTHER* are *DISTINCT* in this general sense.

883. Three distinctions. Since *NAMES* (or, “vocables”) signify the intellect’s *CONCEPTIONS* immediately and, by means of them, *THINGS* (cf. *In I Periherm.*, lect. 2), there are therefore *THREE* distinctions, namely:

- a. Distinctions of *NAME* only, as between “man” and “homme”
- b. Distinctions of *name and OF CONCEPT*, as between “man” and “animal”
- c. Distinction of *name and of concept and OF THING*, as between “man” and “horse”

Now, of these, both the *first* and the *second* are *MENTAL* distinctions, for the *first* indeed is only *FROM, and IN the MIND NAMING*, namely, from and in the mind ordering its objective concept to diverse terms (e.g., to diverse names), whereas the *second* is *FROM, and IN, the MIND CONCEIVING*.

However, the *third* is a *REAL* distinction, for distinction or lack of identity is already actual in the thing, before the mind’s consideration and independently thereof. Therefore, it is merely *discovered* and not *made* by the mind.



884. **Real distinction is twofold.** Real distinction is twofold, namely either:

A. *REAL-REAL*, when it is between two realities, neither of which is related to the other as a mere *manner* (mode) of it or in other words, which are not related to each other as *manner mannerizing* and something *mannerized*. Thus, there is a real-real distinction between *man* and *horsed*.

B. *REAL-MODAL*, when it is between two realities, one of which is related to the other as a mere *manner* whereby that other is mannerized, so as to be had thus or thus—or, in other words, which are related to each other as *manner mannerizing* and *something mannerized*. Thus, a curved *line* and its *curvedness* are *really-modally* distinguished.

885. **Conceptual distinction.** *Conceptual* distinction (cf. no. 883Ab) arises inasmuch as the *same thing* is conceived by *diverse objective oncepts* which are referred to each other by the intellect as of the same thing. Accordingly, a conceptual distinction is lack of identity between two (or many) objective concepts of the same thing, inasmuch as these concepts are *intrinsically* diverse.

Now, because this is a distinction between objective concepts, it depends upon the *thing*, which is represented by the comprehension of the concept. However, the distinction is indeed not found *in the thing*, for then it would be a *real* distinction. However, the *THING* offers a *FOUNDATION* for a diversity of concepts, *INASMUCH AS IT IS TOO PERFECT TO BE EXHAUSTED BY ONE OF OUR INTELLECT'S CONCEPTS*, for our intellect is the most imperfect of all intellects. Thus, because our intellect cannot by one single concept perfectly understand *that thing which is man*, it must from that *same thing abstract* diverse concepts, namely, concepts of *substance, body, living, animal, rational*, and so forth.

Accordingly, in order to prevent a conceptual distinction from being confused with a *NOMINAL* distinction (cf. no. 883Aa)—or, in other words, with an (intrinsically) *UNBASED mental distinction*—a conceptual distinction is called a *BASED mental distinction* or a *mental distinction WITH (INTRINSIC) A FOUNDATION IN THE THING*. However, in order to prevent it from being confused with a *REAL* distinction—which, given that it is *IN THE THING*, has an *ACTUAL* foundation in reality—a conceptual distinction is also called a *mental distinction with a VIRTUAL* foundation in the thing. The term “virtual” here means, *without distinction in the thing* but supposing *in the thing* a perfection which has the *virtue* or power of engendering many distinct concepts of this thing.

Now, this (virtual) foundation *in the thing* indeed is not an *actual* distinction, for if there is a real distinction in the real, then we have a real distinction, not a conceptual one. Rather, it is in the perfection of the thing *AS THIS PERFECTION IS THE FOUNDATION OR REASON WHY THERE IS AN ACTUAL DISTINCTION OF CONCEPTS in the intellect*. Accordingly, this virtual foundation *in the thing* is called a *VIRTUAL DISTINCTION*, for a *virtual distinction* is in the *intrinsic eminence of the thing whereby, being the same in itself, it offers, through a simple containment of perfections, the intellect a foundation for distinguishing one of these perfections from another*.

Thus, it is manifest that a virtual distinction is not an *actual* distinction but, rather, is a *cause* of a distinction. In other words, it is a *distinguishability and foundation* of an actual distinction which is actual only in the intellect. For a thing in which there is said to be a virtual distinction is a thing which, although one and indistinct in itself (i.e., it is *one thing*), nonetheless contains perfection which can be intentionally by the intellect into many perfections, that is, it can be *many objects* of understanding. Thus, as is shown in *Natural Philosophy*, the human soul, though simple, is *virtually* multiplex, for the one and same entity which is the human soul contains in itself a *triple* perfection inasmuch as it is together the root of vegetative activity, sense activity, and intellectual activity. Whence, our intellect, seeing this containment of diverse perfections, *actually* distinguishes through its concepts (thus constituting an *actual plurality of objects*) what is *virtually* distinct *in the thing* (given that even though it is only one thing, it is a *virtual* plurality of objects).

However, this intrinsic diversity (cf. A) of objective concepts of the same thing is *twofold*, namely, either:

a. inasmuch as one [logically] *inferior* concept (e.g., “man”) adds something objective (e.g., “rational”) to another *superior* concept (e.g., “animal”), *WITHOUT THIS ADDED OBJECTIVE CONTENT BEING ACTUALLY CONTAINED IN THE [LOGICALLY] SUPERIOR CONCEPT*. Thus, as regards what is added, the two concepts *differ AS ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL* (as “man” is actually rational, whereas “animal” is potentially rational). Therefore, this kind of conceptual distinction is based on *OBJECTIVE PRECISION*, whereby a thing is conceived *inadequately*, that is, not totally as regards all its predicates but, rather, with the omission of some of them. Such a conceptual distinction is called a *MAJOR conceptual distinction* or a *MAJOR based mental distinction*. And, indeed, it has a *major* virtual foundation in the thing and corresponds to a *MAJOR VIRTUAL (intrinsic) distinction* as an *actual* corresponds to a *virtual*.

b. Or, inasmuch as one concept *EXPLICATES* or *distinctly* represents something which only *IMPLICITLY* or *confusedly*, though *ACTUALLY* is contained in the other concept, so that the two concepts differ *AS EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT* or *as distinct and confused*. This kind of distinction exists between *that which is defined* and its *definition* (e.g., between *man* and *rational animal*) and between a *metaphysical essence* and its *metaphysical properties* (see no. 853Ab) (e.g., as between “man” and “able to talk,” between “being” and the transcendental properties of being (cf. nos. 853-856), and between God’s metaphysical essence (*subsistent existence*) and the divine attributes, which will be made clear below, and between *metaphysical properties* themselves). Therefore, this distinction is based not upon *objective* precision but only upon *FORMAL PRECISION*, inasmuch as each of these two concepts (e.g., “man” and “rational animal”) attains the thing according to all its predicates, though one of them (“man”) attains them only *CONFUSEDLY* and represents them *IMPLICITLY*, whereas the other (“rational animal”) attains them *DISTINCTLY* and represents them *EXPLICITLY*. This kind of conceptual distinction is called a *MINOR conceptual distinction* or a *MINOR based mental distinction*. And indeed, it has a *minor* virtual foundation in the thing and corresponds to a *MINOR VIRTUAL (intrinsic) distinction* as an *actual* corresponds to a *virtual*.

In order to understand this better, *note that PRECISION* is the same as separation or distinction *effectively* taken. For distinction may be taken either: (a) *effectively* for the very act whose effect is a distinction, or (b) *formally* for the very lack of identity (or, plurality itself) which is the distinction (distinctness), or (c) *relatively* for the relation which follows plurality inasmuch as those which are distinct are referred to each other as distinct.

However, *PRECISION* (i.e., distinction understood in its *effective* sense) is *twofold*, namely either: (a) *PHYSICAL* precision, as when one thing is really separated from another (e.g., when a branch is lopped from a tree) or (b) *INTENTIONAL* or cognoscitive precision, which is had inasmuch as one [objective concept] is separated from another *in and by understanding*. Now, *INTENTIONAL* distinction is itself twofold.

On the one hand, there is *FORMAL PRECISION*, whereby knowledge attains a whole object regarding all its predicates, though in such a way that one predicate is clearly and

distinctly apprehended while the others are *confusedly* apprehended. Thus, take the case of one and the same thing that is Peter. One concept of Him distinctly attains the predicate “man” while confusedly attaining the other predicates such as “animal,” “rational,” “able to talk,” “able to laugh,” “social,” etc. Another concept distinctly attains the predicate “rational animal,” while only confusedly attaining the other predicates, “able to talk,” “able to laugh,” “social,” etc. And yet another concept distinctly attains the predicate “able to talk,” while only confusedly attaining the other predicates, “animal,” “able to laugh,” “social,” etc. Once again, yet another concept distinctly attains the predicate “able to laugh” while only confusedly attaining the other predicates, “able to talk,” “animal,” “rational,” “social,” etc. As was said above (Db), this *FORMAL* precision gives rise to a so-called *MINOR CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTION*.

On the other hand, there can be *OBJECTIVE PRECISION*, whereby one predicate is attained with other being *simply omitted*. Thus, for example, take the case of one and the same thing that is Peter. The concept “animal” attains only the one predicate “animal”, simply omitting (i.e., not even confusedly or implicitly attaining) the other predicates “man,” “rational,” “able to talk,” “able to laugh,” “social,” etc. As we said above, (Da), this kind of *OBJECTIVE* precision gives rise to the so-called *MAJOR CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTION*.

886. NOMINAL DISTINCTION: A *nominal* distinction (cf. no. 883, Aa) arises inasmuch as the *same thing*, conceived by the *same objective concept* is nevertheless named by *diverse names*. This occurs inasmuch as the mind orders its objective concept to diverse names by affixing to its objective concept this and that *mental* relation (e.g., to this and that name). Thus, we can understand how this distinction is a kind of *MENTAL* distinction (i.e., *IN and FROM the MIND*) but nevertheless occurs inasmuch as the objective concept is not indeed *intrinsically* diverse but is *extrinsically* diverse (i.e., through an extrinsic connotation). Therefore, this distinction is not a *based* mental distinction, as if it would suppose an intrinsic (virtual) foundation in the thing itself (about which the distinction is made) but, instead, is an *UNBASED DISTINCTION*. However, a nominal definition can take three forms.

It could be *PURELY CONVENTIONAL*, when the diversity of names is *utterly without foundation in the real*, so there is no foundation *neither* in the thing *itself* i.e., there is no *intrinsic* foundation, nor in some *other* thing (i.e., there is no *extrinsic* foundation). Such a purely conventional distinction exists, for example, between “mouth” and “bouche,” “horse” and “cheval,” and between “man” and “homme.”

However, a nominal distinction can also be *SYNONYMOUS*, namely, when the diversity of names does *have an extrinsic virtual foundation*, while both names nonetheless express an objective concept that is intrinsically the same (for otherwise, the distinction would be *conceptual*), without even diversity according to implicit and explicit. Thus, names are synonyms when they signify “*one thing according to one formal notion*” or objective concept (ST I, q. 13, a. 4, ad 1). However, there are *two* kinds of synonymous distinctions.

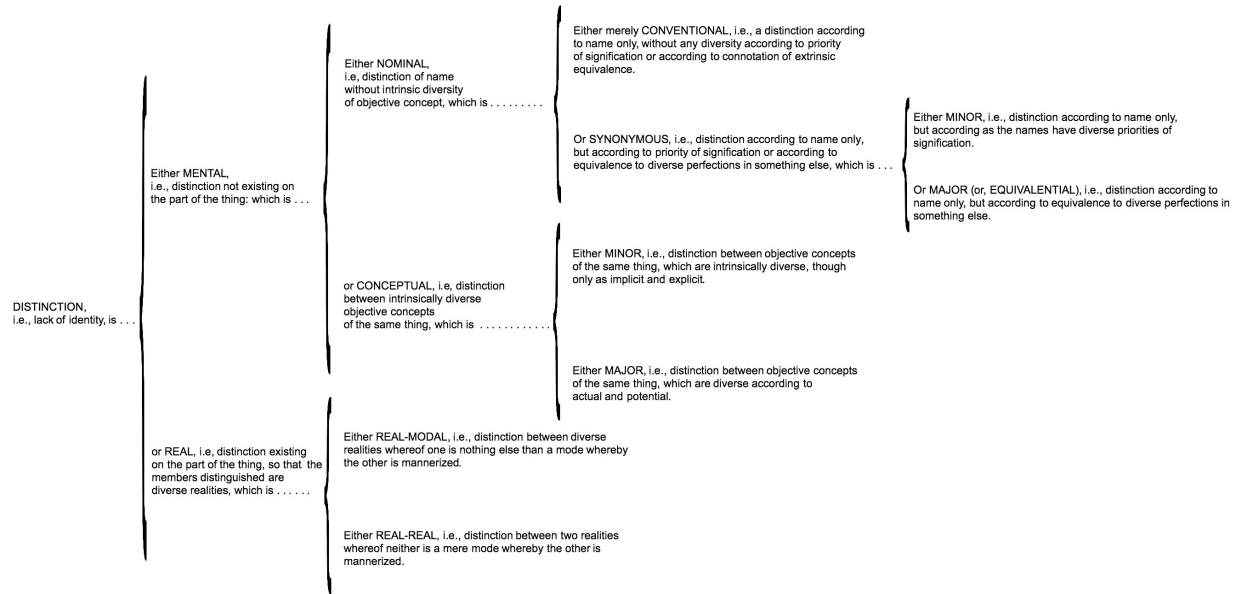
On the one hand, there can be a *MINOR* synonymous distinction, when one name is taken *from one* reason or character of the thing, while the other is taken from *another reason* or character thereof. Then, indeed, even though there is no *intrinsic* foundation for the distinction, nonetheless, there is a kind of *MINOR extrinsic* foundation (or, *minor extrinsic distinguishibility*) on account of the fact that the thing has diverse aptitude to be named inasmuch

as its concept contains diverse notes from each of which a name can be taken. Thus, this distinction corresponds to a *MINOR EXTRINSIC VIRTUAL DISTINCTION*, as an *actual* corresponds to a *virtual*. In this way, “base” is distinguished from “foundation,” for it is named “base” from its aptitude to be stepped on but named “foundation” from its aptitude to support; similarly “lamp-globe” is distinguished from “lamp-bulb,” being named “lamp-globe” from its global shape but “lamp-bulb” from its shape as similar to that of a plant-bulb; likewise, “being” and “thing” (cf. no. 849Ab1a), which is named “being” from *existence* and “thing” from *essence*. Therefore, this distinction is had inasmuch as one name signifies one reason or character or aspect of the thing *by priority*, while the other name signifies another reason or character or aspect of the same thing *by priority* (each name nevertheless signifying both reasons or characters or aspects, so that there is no intrinsic diversity of concepts), as “being” emphasizes (or, signifies by priority) *existence*, so that it signifies “*what IS,*” whereas “thing” on the other hand emphasizes (or, signifies by priority) *essence*, so that it signifies “*WHAT is.*”

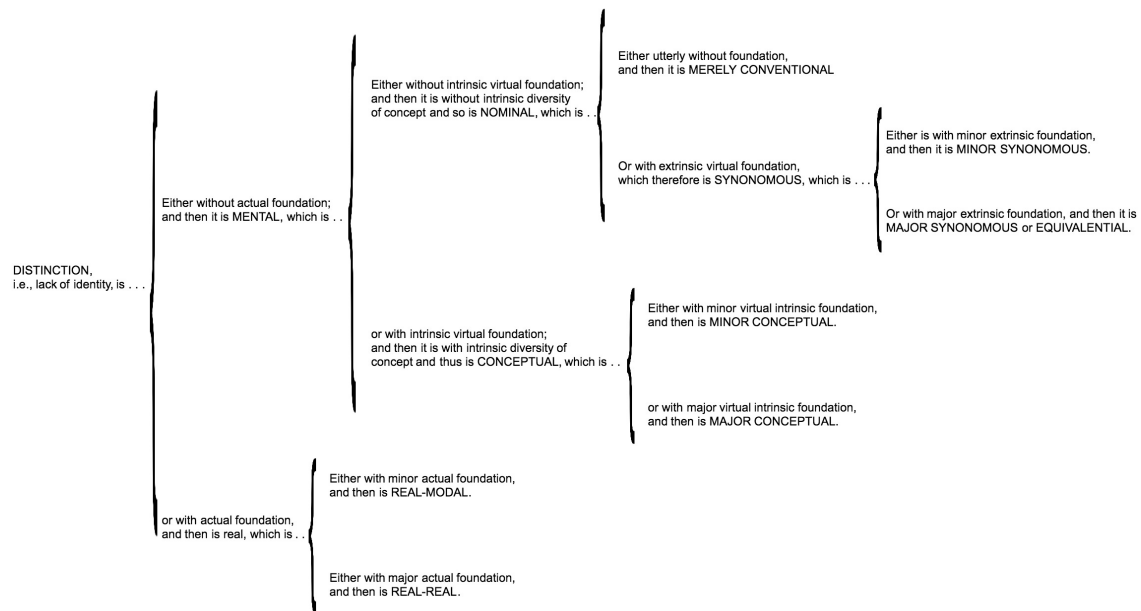
On the other hand, there can be a *MINOR synonymous distinction* (or, an *EQUIVALENTIAL distinction*) when *one and the same simple thing* is conceived by *one concept that is intrinsically the same* but is named by *diverse names INASMUCH AS THIS ONE SIMPLE THING IS EQUIVALENT TO DIVERSE PERFECTIONS IN OTHER THINGS*. Then, indeed, though there is no *intrinsic* foundation for the distinction, nonetheless, there is a kind of *MAJOR extrinsic* foundation (or, *major extrinsic distinguishability*) inasmuch as some perfection which is one, simple, and indivisible in a higher being is equivalent to many diverse perfections in lower beings (e.g., inasmuch as “those (things) which are multiply and diversely in others exist in God simply and unitively”, *ST I*, q. 13, a. 4, ad 3). Thus, “divine essence” and “divine existence” are distinguished in this manner, for they are *one and the same thing*, conceived by *one, intrinsically the same concept*, namely, “*subsistent existence,*” but are *named diversely*, namely, it is named “essence” as it is equivalent to that which is *essence* in creatures, and it is named “*existence*” inasmuch as it is equivalent to that which is *existence* in creatures, essence and existences being related to each other as *really distinct* in creatures (as we showed above in nos. 779-811). Accordingly, this distinction corresponds to a *MAJOR EXTRINSIC VIRTUAL DISTINCTION*, as an *actual* corresponds to a *virtual*.

Thus, everything that we have said in nos. 883-886 can be summarized as follows.
Distinction is divided thus:

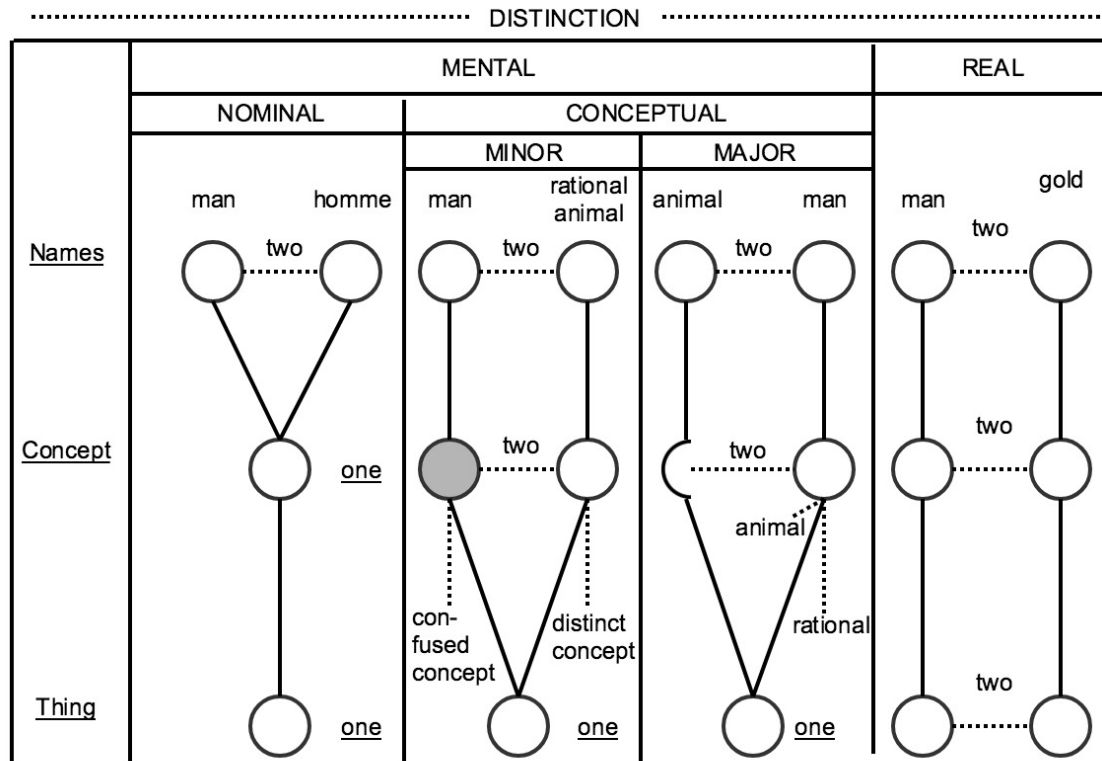
Austin Woodbury, Distinction and Divine Attributes introduction
 Edited version by Dr. Matthew Miner, 2019



And this division can be exhibited inasmuch as its foundation is considered, thus giving us:



However, the following schematic illustration exhibits WHAT IS OF VERY GREAT MOMENT TO KNOW as regards the nature of diverse distinctions:



888. **The Scotistic Division of Distinction.** Scotus and the Scotists propose another division of distinction, one that is not in agreement with the division that we have discussed heretofore. According to Scotus, distinction is divided as follows:

- A distinction not on the part of the thing itself: *MENTAL DISTINCTION*
- A distinction on the part of the thing
 - o Between absolutely inseparable [“things”], i.e., between two [“things”] whereof one of its nature and essence, BEFORE ALL BENEFIT OF THE INTELLECT, is not of the intrinsic and formal concept of the other, so that they are not identified in a formal sense and consequently are formally divided, though they agree in the same reality and entity. Indeed, they agree so much that they cannot be separated even by an absolute power. This is *AN ACTUAL-FORMAL DISTINCTION ON THE PART OF THE THING* (or, a “secundum quid” real distinction).
 - o Or, between absolutely separable [“things”]: a *simpliciter REAL DISTINCTION*

Regarding this Scotistic division let us note the following. Scotus’s notion of a *MENTAL* distinction is without intrinsic diversity of objective concepts, as well as without an (intrinsic) foundation in the thing. Therefore, it corresponds to what the Thomists call a *NOMINAL* or *unbased conceptual distinction*. In accord with the principles operative in his *exaggerated realism*, Scotus thinks that that *every* intrinsic diversity of concepts has a corresponding *actual* distinction *in the thing*. This does not mean that this is always a distinction between *diverse* things (for when this does occur, we do have what he calls a *real* distinction). However,

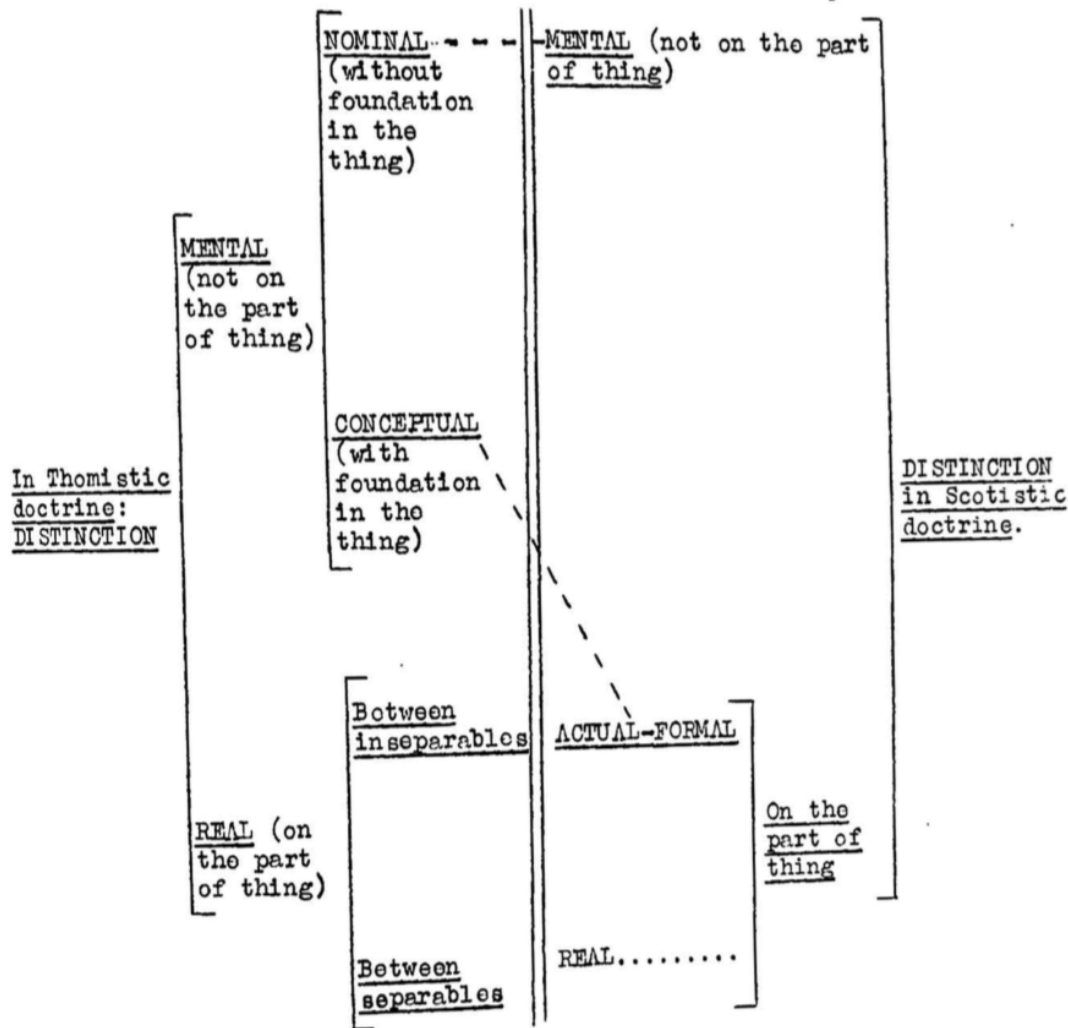
sometimes, at least, on his account, he speaks of an *actual-formal* distinction on the part of the part of the thing when there are *diverse formalities* of the same thing.

Accordingly, Scotus's (simply) *REAL* distinction is narrower in extension than is what the Thomists call a *real* distinction, for the *Scotistic REAL* distinction requires not only an *actual distinction* (i.e., actual lack of identity) in the real (or, in other words, an actual foundation in the thing) but also *separability* (according to what cannot be separated by an absolute power). In contrast, the *Thomistic REAL* distinction requires only an *actual distinction* (i.e., an actual lack of identity) in the real (or, in other words, an actual foundation in the thing). Therefore, it is found not only between *separables* but also between *inseparables*.

Thus, in accordance with the principles of his *exaggerated realism*, which posits that every intrinsic diversity of concepts corresponds to an *actual distinction in things*, Scotus teaches that there cannot be an intrinsic *diversity of concepts* without an *actual lack of identity in the corresponding reality*. As was already noted above, this does not mean that diverse *separable things* must correspond to diverse concepts (i.e., the case that he calls a *REAL* distinction) but only that there must correspond *diverse formalities actually lacking identity in the real, though being inseparable from each other*. However, Scotus calls this actual lack of identity in reality between diverse formalities which are absolutely inseparable an *ACTUAL-FORMAL distinction on the part of the thing*.

Thus, Scotus does not admit the distinction that the Thomists call a *CONCEPTUAL* distinction (i.e., a *BASED MENTAL* distinction), which we discussed above (cf. no. 885). Instead, he substitutes for it a distinction that he calls an *ACTUAL-FORMAL distinction on the part of the thing*, a distinction which the Thomists, however, would call a *REAL distinction (between inseparables)*. Therefore, it is clear that the difference between *Scotism* and *Thomism* regarding distinctions is not a terminological difference but, instead, is a difference regarding *reality* itself. In other words, it is a genuine doctrinal difference. Likewise, it is also manifest that since Scotus does not think it possible for there to be *objects of diverse concepts* which are *identical on the part of the thing*, he posits this *ACTUAL-FORMAL* distinction on the part of the thing, not only in the case where *Thomists* would have to posit a *REAL distinction between separables* but also in the case where *Thomists* would be able to posit a *CONCEPTUAL distinction*. Thus, in this sense, Scotus's *ACTUAL-FORMAL distinction* corresponds not only to the *Thomistic REAL distinction between separables* but also to the *Thomistic CONCEPTUAL distinction*.

Accordingly, the *Thomistic and Scotistic* teachings regarding distinction can be comparatively diagrammed as follows:



HOWEVER, THE REASON why Scotus rejects what is called a *CONCEPTUAL* distinction by the *Thomists* and, accordingly, divides distinction in the manner explained above, is because according to *Scotus* the proper object of the human intellect is *being* and not, as *St. Thomas* [and, even more clearly, the later Thomist school] states, *the quiddity of sensible things*. For *Scotus*, fearing that metaphysics would be rendered impossible by “the first object of our intellect... [being] some particular being... [thus meaning that] being in itself would in no way be understood by us” (see *Scotus*, *Opus. Oxon.*, I, dist. 3, q. 3, no. 1),¹ identifies the *first* (or proper) object of our intellect with its *adequate* object, teaching that *being* is not only the *adequate* object of our intellect but, also, the *first* object thereof, thus rejecting the Thomistic doctrine which holds that the proper object of our intellect is the quiddity of sensible things (cf. no. 603; N.Ph. No. 916).²

¹ Note, however, that these Scotistic texts are dated.

² On this point, see Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Sense of Mystery*, trans. Matthew K. Miner (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic Press, 2017), 145-148, especially note 6.

HOWEVER, THE FUNDAMENTAL REASON for this Scotist teaching is to be found in the fact that he holds that *one* power can have *one* object that is *only univocally one* and not merely *analogically one*. By contrast, the Thomistic doctrine holding that the *proper* object of the human intellect is the quiddity of sensible things implies also that the object of metaphysics extends itself beyond the proper object of our intellect and is knowable by us *only analogically* (cf. N. Ph. No. 937). Thus, the object of our intellect is, according to the Thomist teaching, *only analogically one* (cf. N. Ph., no. 908). Therefore, Scotus rejects said Thomist teaching regarding our intellect's *proper* object and thus must assert *the univocity of being* (cf. nos. 604-605, no. 620A). Therefore, he is obliged to say that being is a "*merely determinable concept*" (cf. no. 604).

However, this concept of being as a "*merely determinable concept,*" *perfectly prescinding from its inferiors* (cf. no. 612) and *univocal* (cf. no. 620A) would *seem* to force Scotus into *conceptualism*, for this concept which is *strictly one* cannot be identified with being in its multiplicity [lit. "multiple being"]; and, indeed, Scotus does distinguish *two* orders, namely: (1) the order of *abstract being*, which is strictly one or *univocal* and the order of *concrete beings*, which are diverse and *analogous*. Therefore, Scotus would *seem* to admit that the objective concept is not *identified* with the external thing, which represents a form of *CONCEPTUALISM* (cf. no. 605Ab). However, in order to avoid *conceptualism*, Scotus has recourse to *EXAGGERATED REALISM*, adopting therefrom the principle that *to every conceptual distinction there corresponds a distinction on the part of the thing* (cf. no. 605B, no. 612, no. 614, no. 620).

This distinction (or lack of sameness) *on the part of the thing* may be either *simply REAL* or "*secundum-quid*" *REAL* (or, *ACTUAL-FORMAL*). If it is the former, it exists when the objects of the diverse concepts are, at least by an absolute power, separable (i.e., when these objects are diverse *things* such as a *man* and *brute* or *divers realities*, for example, body and soul). On the other hand, in the case of an actual-formal distinction, the objects of the diverse concepts are not separable, even by an absolute power. That is, it exists only when these objects are *DIVERSE FORMALITIES* (or, *DISTINCT ACTUALITIES*) *OF THE SAME THING* (cf. no. 789A). According to Scotus, this kind of distinction exists between the formalities of the same thing whenever these formalities are *diverse* (i.e., whenever the same thing, i.e., the same subject, *actually* receives several predicates which are *formally* diverse, namely, so diverse that the concepts of these predicates do not mutually include each other). Thus, this distinction exist between "animal" and "rational," for the same thing (e.g. Peter) is *actually* an *animal* and is *actually* *rational*, and these two concepts do not mutually include each other. Accordingly, Scotus posits this distinction between whatsoever two ["things"] have a *material* but not *formal* identity.

However, observe that: "We call *FORMAL* that identity which is expressed by a proper and formal concept, ... wherefore those things that differ in definition or proper reason (i.e., through their objective concept)³ are said to differ *FORMALLY*. However, *MATERIAL* identity

³ The comments are Fr. Woodbury's.

(or, identity in *an identical sense*) holds when several [‘things’] are the same in the entity and in reality itself and not in formal notion for that thing (i.e., its objective concept) which is essentially and primarily signified” (John of St. Thomas, *Curs. Phil.*, I, p. 296a, ed. Reiser; cf. *ST I*, q. 13, a. 4; *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 9, *SCG*, 1.35; Cajetan, *In de ente et essentia*, ch. 3, no. 45, ed. Laurent.

However, it is to be observed that *Scotus* admits a *diversity of relations* between these formalities, which he pronounces to be *actually-formally distinct on the part of the thing* (cf. no. 612Ba). *Sometimes*, they are related so that one is an *intrinsic mode* of the reality of the other. Thus, the *differences contracting being* are intrinsic modes of the contracted itself [i.e., being], thus leading *Scotus* to deny that being, though *univocal*, is a *genus*, a point we discussed above in no. 612Ba1. However, *at other times*, they are not so related that one would be an intrinsic mode of the reality of the other. Thus, differences that contract a genus are not intrinsic modes of the genus (cf. no. 612Ba2). This is sufficiently clear from our earlier discussion in no. 612Ba regarding *Scotus’s* thought on these matters.

However, this Scotistic actual-formal distinction on the part of the thing must be rejected as impossible. FIRST of all, *Scotus’s* distinction falsely supposes the thesis of *exaggerated realism* holding that intrinsic diversity of objective concepts cannot be had without an actual distinction in the thing. This is so because “*Scotus* and his school do not deny that distinction truly exists on the part of the thing inasmuch as this is real; however, they affirm that it only consists in the fact that one [‘thing’] really indeed is the other but nonetheless *really* one is not of the concept of the other. For the rest, from this itself is taken the foundation for denying that this distinction is true and actual on the part of the thing before the intellect’s activity. *Because that formal non-identification is nothing else than the negation of intrinsic relation and connection of one [‘thing’] with the other...* For that one [‘thing’] be of the formal concept of the other is nothing else than that it have an essential and intrinsic connection or relation with the other. Therefore, negation of this identity is only negation of this relation and connection” (John of St. Thomas, *Cursus. Phil*, I, 296b-297a, Reiser ed.). “*But this negation does not suffice to make the extremes actually distinct and thus render the distinction itself real...* For given that there only is that negation of essential relation, the extremes do not remain so distinct as to be able to found between themselves a relation of this distinction, as is clear in the divine attributes, which *Scotus* asserts are distinguished in this manner and, yet, between one and the other there are not real relations... And in the same man, as he is man, there is not a real relation to himself as an animal and, therefore, neither is there a (real) distinction, for distinction is a kind of relation. Therefore, if a relation does not exist in a thing, neither does a distinction exist in it” (ibid., 297a.)

Therefore, that formal non-identification does not suffice to make the extremes actually distinct and to render the distinction itself real. And indeed, when the intellect so diversely conceives some one thing that there are diverse objective concepts, the extremes are diverse *NOT AS THINGS BUT AS CONCEPTS*. For in the object apprehended, intellectual apprehension does not cause something that would affect it *as it is a thing* but causes something that affects it *as it is known* (namely *as it is object*). And indeed, this is true *whether* the objective concepts

are *intrinsically* diverse (i.e., in the case of *unbased* mental distinction) or whether the objective concepts are *intrinsically* diverse (i.e., in the case of *based* mental distinction). And indeed, when the objective concepts are *intrinsically* diverse (i.e., in the case of *based* mental distinction): the extremes are so diverse that not everything which is manifested in one concept is manifested also in the other, but in one concept is displayed some reason or formality which is not displayed in the other, because the thing is not manifestable according to every part or formality of itself *with respect to such light and knowledge*.

However, where there we find a diversity of manifestation and manifestable ['thing'], there results a diverse *ratio* or formal character of the thing *inasmuch as it is an object* that is, a diverse knowability or manifestability but not a diverse *ratio* or formal character of the thing *as it is a thing*. Thus, in such a case, diverse *objects* correspond to those diverse concepts but not diversity *on the part of the thing*. However, when the objective concepts are not intrinsically diverse (i.e., in the case of an *unbased* mental distinction), the distinction does not exist inasmuch as one extreme is manifested in one concept and the other extreme in another one but, rather, the same extreme or object is manifested as regards its intrinsic *ratio* or formal character in each concept.

SECONDLY, the Scotistic ACTUAL-FORMAL distinction from the nature of the thing is self-contradictory, as we can show thus. Scotus and his disciples teach that this distinction BOTH is actual ON THE PART OF THE THING, BEFORE THE CONSIDERATION OF THE INTELLECT AND a the same time teach it is NOT A REAL distinction, for it does not remove identity in the very entity or reality itself (for in that case, they would call it a *real* distinction, which, however, they would deny it to be). However, this is contradictory. For since distinction is nothing other than *lack of identity* (cf. no. 870Ab; no. 882A), so that two ['things'] are distinct when *one is not the other* (cf. no. 882B), a distinction that is ACTUAL on the part of the thing before the intellect's own consideration ACTUALLY removes identity *in the very entity of or reality itself* so that the extremes are REALITIES WHEREOF ONE IS NOT THE OTHER. For whatever exists *before* the intellect's consideration is *reality* or real being, for beyond *real* being and *mental* being, there is no *third being*, for every being *either can* exist outside the intellect (in which case it is a *real* being) of *it cannot* exist outside the intellect and therefore does not exist *before* the intellect's consideration (in which case it is *mental* being). Therefore, Scotus's distinction which he calls *actual-formal on the part of the thing* is self-contradictory.

This argument is proposed by *John of St. Thomas* in a different manner: "That distinction must actually and in the thing remove some identity if the distinction is actual before the intellect's consideration, for distinction essentially must remove identity in that wherein the distinction exists. However, that formal distinction does not remove identity in the very entity and reality itself, for otherwise it would truly and properly be a *real* distinction, not a formal one, for it would have the formal effect of *real* distinction, which is to remove *real* identity and thus would have no deficiency whereby it would default from being a *real* distinction. Therefore, in Scotus's opinion, it only removes *conceptual* identity (or identity of formal *ratio*); that is, it only makes one be not *in the thing* of the concept and formal reason of the other or of the constitution thereof. However, this does not require an *actual* distinction but, instead, a

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virtual and fundamental distinction suffices, namely, because it offers a foundation for one to be conceived in distinction from the other and be represented without it and thus that *where* identity has been removed *there* may actually be a [based conceptual] distinction” (ibid., 338b).

THIRDLY, it is not clear how this *Scotistic* distinction can be sustained without admitting that there is a plurality of substantial forms in the same individual, if the fact that one substantial predicate is not of the concept of another substantial predicate of the same thing means that they are *actually distinct in the thing*, then *the same thing must have within itself a plurality of substantial forms corresponding to these diverse predicates*, for these predicates will be distinct formal reasons actually and consequently will bespeak distinct *principia a quo*, which is nothing else than an assertion that there are *actually distinct forms* in the thing.

However, such a plurality of substantial forms in the thing cannot be admitted....

This part is skipped for the particular course handout that this transcription was being made for, even though it is important.

[Selection from the section of Fr. Woodbury’s *Ostensive Metaphysics: Natural Theology*]

Distinction of Divine Attributes

1682. The Question. The question to be dealt with here is this: What kind of distinction exists between the divine attributes themselves as well as between them and God’s metaphysical essence?

1683. Various answers. Three principal answers are given to the foregoing question, proceeding from the diverse solutions of the problem regarding universals and regarding the analogy of being: (a) the opinion of the medieval *NOMINALISTS*, whose forerunner was Eunomius, an Arian of the fourth century and among whom we note in particular *Ockham* (d. 1347), *Noctas of Autrecourt* (b. 1300), *Pierre d’Ailly* (d. 1420), and *Gabriel Biel* (d. 1495); (2) the opinion of *SCOTUS* (1265-1308), which opinion is often called *Scotistic Formalism*; (3) the doctrine of *St. THOMAS* and nearly all Christian philosophers.

1684. Nominalist doctrine. According to this teaching, the distinction between the divine attributes is merely a *NOMINAL* distinction so that at most this distinction is distinction between synonyms, like the distinction between vesture and garment or between base and foundation or between lamp-globe and lamp-bulb. There are *two* foundations to this opinion. On the one hand, there is their *NOMINALISM*, which holds that nothing in the real corresponds to universals so that between individual things there is no commonness of nature, be it specific, generic, or analogical. From this, a second foundation arises, namely, *EQUIVOCITY* of being, asserting that there is nothing even analogically common to God and creatures, at least according to any *proper* meaning (but only metaphorically or symbolically). It follows from this

that God is not more properly said to be just than He is said to be angry. Likewise, it follows that when God is said to be good, he cannot be said to be good *substantially* but only *causally* inasmuch as he is the cause of goods.

Assessment of this opinion. This opinion must be rejected, for its foundations are both false, namely nominalism (cf. nos. 311-313 and logic, nos. 89-91) and the equivocity of being (nos. 621-625). Likewise, according to this opinion, one could say that God punishes through His mercy and spares through His justice, which evacuates divine names of their meaning. Likewise, one could say that “God is a body” or “god is an animal,” for he is the cause of these (cf. *ST I*, q. 13, a. 2). However, since God is simple, He cannot be said to be a body. And to pray that God show us His mercy would equally be to pray that God show us His justice—which again evacuates the divine names of their meaning. Moreover, “it would follow that all the names said about God would be said about Him *by posteriority*, as ‘healthy’ is said about medicine because it signifies only the fact that it is the cause of health in an animal” (*ST I*, q. 13, a. 2.). However, “God is not said to be good because He makes good things... but, rather, because He is good he makes good things” (*In I Sent.*, d. 1, a. 3; *ST I*, q. 13, a. 2). Accordingly, this opinion leads to (dogmatic) agnosticism (cf. no. 1636). “We know God from the perfections proceeding into creatures from Him: which perfections indeed are in God according to a more eminent mode than in creatures. But, our intellect apprehends them in that manner according as they are in creatures; and according as it apprehends it, so does it thus signify them by names. Accordingly, in the names which we attribute to God, there are *two* (elements) to be considered, namely: the *very perfections signified*, such as goodness, life, etc., and *the manner of signifying*. Accordingly, as regards *what such names signify*, they properly befit God and are said of him by priority. However, as regards *the manner of signifying*, they are not properly befitting of God, for they have a manner of signifying that befits creatures” (*ST I*, q. 13, a. 3; cf. no. 1639).

Thus, “The even though the names attributed to God signify one thing, nonetheless, because they signify it under many and diverse significates, they are not synonymous” (*ST I*, q. 13, a. 4).

1685. Scotist Formalism. Scotus teaches that between the divine attributes and the divine metaphysical essence, as well as between the attributes themselves, there is an *ACTUAL-FORMAL DISTINCTION FROM THE NATURE OF THE THING* (no. 888). He posits this distinction between diverse, though inseparable, formalities of the same thing—meaning by “diverse formalities” whatsoever [‘things’] which have diverse definitions. For example, he posits this distinction between being and the differences of being (e.g., *perseity*, cf. nos. 605 and 620A), between animal and rational in the same, individual man, and between wisdom and goodness in God.

Thus, in speaking of the divine attributes, Scotus says, “Therefore, we there find the *third* distinction (namely, which differs from real and mental distinction)⁴ preceding the intellect in every manner. And this is so because wisdom exists in the thing from the nature of

⁴ Again, Fr. Woodbury’s parenthetical comment.

the thing and nature in the thing from the nature of the thing. However, wisdom in the thing formally is not goodness in the thing. This is proven as follows: for, if infinite wisdom were formally infinite goodness, also wisdom in common would be goodness in common; for infinity does not formally destroy the essential character [*ratio*] of that to which it is added.” (Scotus, *In I Sent.*⁵ d. 8, q. 4, no. 17, t. 9, 664). The foundation of this teaching is the *exaggerated realism* held by Scotus, according to which every conceptual diversity also has a corresponding *actual-formal distinction in the thing* (cf. no. 605Bb and no. 888).

ASSESSMENT OF THIS THEORY. This Scotist teaching must be rejected. First of all, as we showed above in no. 888, his formal-actual distinction must be rejected, and this for five reasons:

1. As impossible (888Ea)
2. As self-contradictory (888Eb)
3. As involving plurality of substantial forms in the same individual (888Ec)
4. As involving denial of identity *on the part of the thing* between the universal and the individual whereof the individual is predicated (888Ed)
5. As representing a confusion between a certain extrinsic denomination with an intrinsic denomination (888G – [not in notes above])

Secondly, even if the Scotistic actual-formal distinction were admissible in itself, or in the abstract, yet it could not be posited between the divine attributes, for it would be incompatible with God’s utter simplicity, for if the perfection, which is *understanding* in God Himself independent of (and antecedently to) our intellect’s precision (cf. no. 888E) is diverse or distinct from the perfection which is will (“*velle*”), then the former perfection is really other than the latter or there is at least something in God which is really [distinct] whereby He is said to understand and something else really [distinct] whereby He is said to will. Wherefore, what Scotists call “distinct formalities” either are diverse *realities* or at least suppose diverse *realities*.

For this reason, the Scotist theory is logically reduced to the assertion—made by the Palamite sect among the Greeks in the fourteenth century—of *real* distinction between the divine attributes, something that contradicts the divine simplicity.

Thirdly, the *ARGUMENT*, whereby Scotus endeavours to prove his doctrine, namely that *IN GOD* (i.e., *ANTECEDENTLY TO OUR INTELLECT’S CONSIDERATION*) *THAT WHICH IS FORMALLY WISDOM IS NOT THAT WHICH IS FORMALLY GOODNESS* is not itself without manifest vices. For Scotus argues thus: “If Wisdom in common is not formally goodness in common, then infinite wisdom is not formally infinite goodness; for infinity does not formally destroy the essential character of that to which it is added. But wisdom in common is not goodness in common. Therefore, infinite wisdom is not formally infinite goodness.”

However, as regards the *MAJOR PREMISE*, the consequence therein (namely, of conditioned upon condition) is bad. For when it is a question of *finite* wisdom and goodness, the one *is not* formally the other: whether as regards themselves (“*quoad se*”) or to us (“*quoad*

⁵ Need to check; likely the Wadding edition?

nos'). But when it is a question of *infinite* wisdom and goodness, the one is formally the other as regards themselves ('quoad se'), for each is infinite through the fact that it is *SUBSISTENT BE [esse]*—so that the very same form which is subsistent be is together the very same form which is wisdom and the very same form which is goodness, so that *utter simplicity* is had (cf. nos. 1648-1650). However, the one *is not* formally the other to us ('quoad nos'), for by formally diverse concepts do we conceive subsistent be as wisdom and goodness, for which reason wisdom and goodness are *diverse attributes* of God (so that the formal notions of *diverse attributes* of God—i.e., what is meant by them—are *realized* in God though the very thing that *realizes* them is subsistent be, which, being infinite, realizes each of them unto infinity.

AS REGARDS THE REASON SUBJOINED TO THE MAJOR PREMISE... It is true that "infinity does not destroy the essential character" as it is such perfection "of that to which it is added"—so that infinite wisdom remains pure wisdom and infinite goodness remains pure goodness. But it is false to think that infinity, which bespeaks identification of each of these with subsistent be, leaves wisdom and goodness *formally distinct* as regards themselves ('quoad se') *from each other*. This indeed would be to leave them remain *finite*.

AS REGARDS THE CONSEQUENT... This is true from our perspective ("*quoad nos*"), namely, it is through formally diverse concepts that we conceive infinite wisdom and infinite goodness. However, it is false as regards them in themselves ("*quoad se*"), for God is not infinitely wise and infinitely good through this and that form existing in Himself. Rather, one and the same form, namely subsistent be, is together the infinite form which is wisdom and the infinite form which is goodness.

Therefore, Scotus and his followers do not sufficiently retain the divine simplicity, which is aptly expressed by St. Augustine: "*One and the same THING* is bespoken, whether God be said to be eternal, or immortal, or incorruptible, or unchangeable.... Or do goodness and justice differ from each other in the nature of God as they differ in His works, as though they would be two diverse qualities of God, the one goodness and the other justice? Certainly not! However, that which is justice itself is goodness and that which is goodness, itself is beatitude" (St. Augustine, *De trinitate*, bk. 15, ch. 5, no. 7).

Accordingly, though all simply simple perfection exist *formally* in God, nonetheless, they are not *formally distinct* in God Himself.

1686. Thomistic Solution. Thomists (and, along with them, most Christian philosophers) teach—and *rightly so*—that between the divine attributes and the divine essence, as well as between the divine attributes themselves, *THERE IS A MINOR CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTION* (or, as this doctrine is formulated from the perspective of the foundation of this distinction, *A MINOR VIRTUAL DISTINCTION*). On this point, see nos. 885; no. 887.

This distinction is found between two concepts are intrinsically diverse inasmuch as one explicitly contains what the other contains implicitly, so that the two concepts differ as *EXPLICIT* and *IMPLICIT*—as do "rational animal," "an animal able to talk," "an animal able to laugh," "an

animal that can feel shame.” This distinction is obtained through *FORMAL* or *IMPERFECT PRECISION* (cf. no. 885E). Thus, according to this doctrine, the Divine Essence *ACTUALLY-IMPLICITLY* contains each of the divine attributes (and all of them together), so that reasoning is required in order for our intellect to pass from the divine essence to the attributes. Similarly, each of the attributes *ACTUALLY-IMPLICITLY* contains the divine essence and each of the other attributes.

However, the necessity of this distinction arises from *two* causes, namely an *OBJECTIVE* cause and a *SUBJECTIVE* one. The objective cause of this distinction is the utter simplicity and infinity of God’s perfection, inasmuch as the divine essence, while being utterly simple, contains all simply simple perfections carried unto infinity *formally-eminently* and therefore surpasses our power of understanding. The subjective cause of this distinction lies in the very limitation of our intellect, inasmuch as all our knowledge comes from sensible things, which are finite and composite, wherefrom we abstract formally diverse objective concepts (cf. *In I Sent.*, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3). Accordingly, St. Thomas says, “Since our intellect knows God from creatures, in order to understand God, it forms conceptions proportioned to the perfections proceeding from God into creatures. Now, these perfections indeed pre-exist in God in a united and simple manner, but they are received into creatures dividedly and in a manifold way. Thus, just as to the diverse perfection of creatures there corresponds one simple principle, represented variously and multiply by the diverse perfections of creatures, so to the various and multiple concepts of our intellect there corresponds one utterly simple (principle), imperfectly understood according to such conceptions” (*ST I*, q. 13, a. 4).

Now, the *foundation* of this doctrine is found in *MODERATE REALISM* and *THE ANALOGY OF BEING*, standing like a golden mean or peak of excellence between and above *nominalism* on the one hand (cf. no. 1684) and *immoderate realism*, from the influence of which Scotus’s teaching is not immune (cf. no. 1685). We can easily prove that *BETWEEN EACH OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES AND THE METAPHYSICAL ESSENCE OF GOD, AS WELL AS BETWEEN THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES AMONG THEMSELVES, THERE IS A MINOR CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTION*, for on the one hand, the distinction in question cannot be *MERELY NOMINAL*, as was already shown against the Nominalists (no. 1684). However, on the other hand, owing to God’s utter simplicity, the distinction in question cannot be either *REAL* or *MAJOR CONCEPTUAL*. It cannot be real because this would bespeak a physical composition in God, that is, a composition from parts really distinct among themselves. Nor can it be a major conceptual distinction (i.e., according to objective or perfect precision, as discussed in no. 885E), a point that is manifested from the following three considerations:

1. Then something in God would be conceived by us as *being in potency* to an extrinsic difference, as *animal* is conceived as being in potency to *rational* and as perfectible by it. However, whatever is conceived in God must be conceived as *pure act*, utterly devoid of potency.
2. The metaphysical essence of God, since it is subsistent *esse* [esse] (no. 1668-1670) must be conceived of as *actually* (implicitly) containing in itself all perfections unto infinity (nos. 1648-1650). Similarly, each of the divine attributes is really identical with the divine essence, as we said above (Db1) and therefore actually-implicitly contains the

divine essence and all the other attributes. Therefore, nothing in God can be rightly conceived as potential to a difference or determination beyond what is already conceived—as in Peter *animal* is conceived as potential to *rational*. However, one would need to conceive things thus if one were to have a *major* conceptual distinction.

3. If the distinction in question were *major* conceptual, then there would be metaphysical composition in God, that is, composition from parts not really distinct from each other. However, there is no such composition in God, for if God were thus composed, He would have a *genus, difference, definition, and demonstration* through a cause. However, “all which are in one genus communicate in quiddity or in the essence of the genus... But they differ according to be [esse]... And therefore whatsoever things are in a genus differ in be and in what it is, that is, essence. However, in God they do not differ... Wherefore, it is manifest that God is not in a genus as a species. And from this, it is also quite clear that He does not have a *genus, nor differences*. Nor is there *definition* of Him, nor *demonstration* save through effect, for definition is from genus and difference; but the medium of demonstration is the definition” (ST I, q. 3, a. 5). Therefore, there is no metaphysical composition in God. And moreover, between each divine attribute and the divine essence, as well as between the diverse attributes among themselves, the distinction is not *major conceptual*.

Therefore, between each divine attribute and the divine metaphysical essence, and between these attributes among themselves, there is a minor conceptual distinction (namely, according to formal or imperfect precision), that is, a distinction according to *implicit* and *explicit*. For each divine perfection (i.e., whether essence or attribute) *explicitly* bespeaks according to its own proper essential character or objective concept what is implicitly bespoken by the others and thus, “Though they signify one thing, yet... they signify it under many diverse objective concepts” (ST I, q. 13, a. 4). But, “Those (names) which... signify diverse objective concepts of one thing do not *per se* primarily signify the one, for a name does not signify save by the mediacy of the conception of the intellect” (ibid., ad 3). Therefore, “the several objective concepts signified by these names are not futile and vain, for to all of them there corresponds one simple reality, multiply and imperfectly represented by them all” (ibid., ad 2).

1687. THIS DISTINCTION IS WITHOUT IMPLICATION OR POTENCY IN GOD: *It is to be noted* that this *MINOR CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTION* holds only between divine perfections which are diversely specified and therefore pertain to *diverse lines*. Thus, this distinction avails, for example, between understanding (*intelligere*) and will (*velle*) in God and between justice and mercy in God. However, it does not avail between attributes which in creatures are distinguished only as potency and act. Thus, this distinction does not avail, for example, between essence and be [esse] in God, nor between intellect as a power and understanding as an act, nor between *will* as a power (*voluntas*) and will as act (*velle*). For these are distinguished only by an *EQUIVALENTIAL* or *MAJOR SYNONYMOUS DISTINCTION*, corresponding to a major extrinsic virtual distinction, inasmuch as a perfection which is one, simple and indivisible in a higher being is equivalent to many diverse perfections in lower beings (no. 886Cb2b). Otherwise, we would indeed have to say that something *potential* is conceived of as

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being found in God, with a foundation in the divine reality itself, which cannot be said, as we explained above (1686Db2a2).

Thus, a schematic outline of this discussion of the distinction among the attributes of God can be schematically summarized as follows:

The attributes of God

ARE: SIMPLY SIMPLE PERFECTIONS, NECESSARILY AND FORMALLY EXISTING IN GOD, AND ACCORDING TO OUR MANNER OF UNDERSTANDING CONSEQUENT UPON HIS METAPHYSICAL ESSENCE.

ARE DIVIDED

By Suarez, too much from our point of view, into

POSITIVE.

NEGATIVE.

By St. Thomas, more through respect to God, into

ENTITATIVE.

OPERATIVE.

By REAL DISTINCTION, as said the PALAMITES: For then God would be physically composite.

This distinction must be rejected in itself.

This opinion is logically reduced to Palamite doctrine.

By ACTUAL-FORMAL DISTINCTION ON THE PART OF THING, as says, SCOTUS: because

Scotus' argument is bad: For infinity

though it leaves each attribute intact in its formal reason,

yet eliminates formal distinction between them 'quoad se'.

ARE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE DIVINE ESSENCE AND FROM EACH OTHER:

NOT

By MAJOR CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTION: For then

Something would be conceived as potential and perfectible in God.

Each perfection in God would not implicitly bespeak all the others.

God would be metaphysically composite; and therefore would have

Genus. Differences. Definition. Demonstration. through cause.

By NOMINAL DISTINCTION, as say mediaeval NOMINALISTS: For then

The divine names would at most be synonyms. The divine perfections would be said by posteriority of God. The proper formal reason of each attribute would be destroyed. Agnosticism is implied.

BUT THEREFORE IS MINOR CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTION, as teaches ST. THOMAS: Because each divine perfection bespeaks explicitly what is implicitly bespoken by each of the others.