Distinction of the Beginnings of Philosophy

Duane H. Berquist

It is necessary to distinguish the beginnings of philosophy from each other so that each beginning can be given the attention and consideration that it deserves. We can divide the beginnings of philosophy into two or three kinds. We can distinguish two or three kinds. Both divisions give the same because when we divide into two, one of the members can be subdivided into two. Both divisions should be used because they confirm each other and what are the kinds of beginnings. We must not overlook or omit any beginning. For the bad is from any defect, but the good *ex integra causa*. However, we cannot here distinguish every single beginning, but we can divide and subdivide, and thus approach them. We shall do our best, but we shall not be so presumptuous as to claim that we have exhausted all the beginnings even in general.

We shall first divide into two. The distinction of the beginnings of philosophy is between those in our desire (or ability to desire) and those in our knowledge (or ability to know). The beginnings in our desire are chiefly in our will and to some extent in our emotions. The beginnings in our knowledge are in our reason and senses, both outward and inward. Although philosophy is in reason as in a subject, it is also in the senses and even in desire as in a cause.

That philosophy, as all human knowledge, should have a beginning in the ability to know is obvious. And since the use

or application of a knowing ability depends upon the ability to desire, it must also have a beginning in the latter.

That the beginning of philosophy is both in our heart or ability to desire and in our ability to know can also be seen from the word *philosophy* itself which is taken from the *love of wisdom*. Love is the first act of the heart. And if the goal is wisdom, which is the perfection of knowledge and reason, philosophy must, of course, have a beginning in our ability to know.

Since philosophy is the wisdom which man can get by the use of his reason and senses, and such wisdom is some kind of knowledge, the beginnings of philosophy must be, in part at least, in our reason and senses. But since the use of reason and the senses depends upon the will and, even to some extent upon our emotions, we should also look for beginnings in the will and emotions. Thus, both Plato and Aristotle speak of wonder as the beginning of philosophy and wonder is a desire to know which is in the will. And the philosopher is named from a disposition of will, the love of wisdom.

The philosopher is named from the love of wisdom. Since wisdom is a perfection of reason (indeed the word *wisdom* seems to name the highest or greatest perfection of reason) and reason depends upon the senses (both the outward and the inward senses), it is not strange that there are beginnings of philosophy in reason and the senses. But the philosopher is named from the *love* of wisdom and love is in the will or feelings or both. When Socrates or Plato in the *Theaetetus* and Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* said that *wonder is the beginning of philosophy,* they were also speaking of a beginning in the will and feelings. Although philosophy is in reason as in a subject, it is has causes in the senses and in the will and emotions or feelings. For reason derives its knowledge from the senses in some way and the use or application of reason depends upon the will and even to some extent upon the emotions.

That the beginning of philosophy is both in our ability to

desire and in our ability to know can also be seen from the observation of Plato and Aristotle that men begin to philosophize out of wonder. Wonder is a desire to know, and the man who wonders must know something, as the man who wonders about the unknown cause of a known effect. Hence, philosophy has a beginning both in desire and in knowledge.

The beginnings in our ability to know are either about the way and order in which we know things or about the things we know.

Beginning well in philosophy and human knowledge involves beginning well both in the ability to desire and in the ability to know. And as will be seen later, one cannot begin well in one of these without the other. Thus, in a consideration of beginning well in human knowledge and philosophy, we should consider the beginning in our ability to desire and the beginning in our ability to know and their mutual dependence.

Φιλοσοφία (philosophy) is usually called by Aristotle a μέθοδος (knowledge over a road or knowledge following a road) or an ἐπιστήμη (reasoned out knowledge). The etymology of these three Greek words suggest that philosophy has three kinds of beginnings. Φιλοσοφία, whose etymology is the love of wisdom, suggests that philosophy has a beginning (or beginnings) in the will. μέθοδος, whose etymology is over a road or after a road, suggests that a road (or roads) and reason's knowledge of that road, is a beginning of philosophy. And ἐπιστήμη, whose etymology is coming to a halt, suggests that there are beginnings in reason about things by which reason can come to rest its judgments or out of which it can think out conclusions.

The *first* beginnings in anything are by nature. And because there are three natural beginnings of philosophy, we are led by a consideration of the natural beginnings of philosophy to begin to see that there are three kinds of beginnings of philosophy.

Plato and Aristotle tell us, and we can also see in the first

philosophers, that wonder is the beginning of philosophy. But wonder is the natural desire to know for its own sake the cause.

There is also a natural road in our knowledge which is from the senses into reason. Since man is by nature an animal with reason, the natural road in our knowledge is, of course, the road from the senses into reason. Animal is defined by having senses. But man is not just an animal. He also has reason. And what is general (in this case, animal) is before what is particular (in this case, having reason) in time and generation. The first philosophers followed this road and sometimes spoke of it.

And then there are statements and their parts which we naturally come to know. These are the statements called *axioms* which are known through themselves by all men and which are common beginnings of all reasoned out knowledge. The axioms about being and non-being are the natural beginnings of these statements: *It is impossible to be and not be* and *it is necessary to be or not be*. Parmenides saw that it would be unnatural to deny this, that one would have to be a two-headed monster to think that something is and is not. "To be, or not to be: that is the question" It is a question because you cannot both be and not be and because you must either be or not be. But there are many other axioms, such as that *the whole is more than a part* and *nothing is before or after itself*.

There are three genera or kinds of beginning of philosophy and in each genus there is more than one beginning. Every beginning in each genus is necessary and requires a consideration by itself and in its connection with the others. But before considering any beginning in detail, we should first see its place in the division or distinction of those beginnings. In this way, when considering any beginning at length, we will not lose sight of the others, but will remain open to seeing how one cannot be fruitful without others.

Since the bad is from any defect, we cannot afford to neglect any beginning. Further, since one beginning cannot stand without the others, we need to be aware of all of them. Hence,

it is necessary to distinguish the beginnings so that we shall neither neglect any beginning, nor in considering one forget about the others as if one were sufficient without the others. But in attempting to outline the beginnings here we are fearful of leaving even one out.

[The light of active reason whereby what is in our images becomes actually understandable is also a beginning. And in a more remote way, one could say that the things which act upon our senses are a beginning of philosophy. And someone might want to go back at last to God who is said to enlighten every man who comes into this world and is a beginning of things. But the proximate and more known beginnings of philosophy seem to fall into the above three kinds.]

The Beginnings in Desire

The chief beginnings of philosophy in our ability to desire and the chief dispositions of will necessary in a philopher are *wonder,* the *love of wisdom, teachableness* (in the will — there is also a teachableness in reason) and *humility*.

No one can *become* a philosopher without wonder since wonder is the beginning of philosophy. Socrates (or Plato) states in the *Theaetetus* that there is no other beginning of philosophy than wonder. And Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* tells us that both now, and in the beginning, men began to philosophize out of wonder. We can see this wonder in the first philosophers. And Democritus expresses its strength when he said that he would rather discover one cause than be master of the kingdom of the Persians.

And no one can *be* a philosopher without the love of wisdom, as the etymology of the word *philosopher* indicates. The philosopher is named from the love of wisdom.

But since the things which a man can discover by himself are few in comparison to those he can learn from others, a man

could not go very far in philosophy if he was not willing to learn from others. One man by himself is not sufficient to get very far in coming to know truth. We need to learn from others and to investigate with others. Hence, we must be willing to learn from and with others. Hence, in addition to wonder and the love of wisdom, a man must be teachable in the sense of being willing to learn from the wise.

"Direct not him whose way himself will choose".

The fourth disposition of will required in a philosopher is humility. This is necessary to acquire or preserve wonder, the love of wisdom, and teachableness.

The man who wonders thinks himself ignorant which the proud or haughty are not apt to do. The slave-boy of Meno is humble enough to be shown by Socrates that he is ignorant of how to double a square and then to be taught how to double a square.

And how could the love of wisdom be found without humility? There is humility as well as the love of wisdom in the origin of the word *philosopher*. For Pythagoras refused to be called wise, saying that God alone is wise. But he accepted the humbler title of a *lover of wisdom,* a *philosopher*. There is a proverb: *Ubi humilitas, ibi sapientia* — "Where there is humility, there is wisdom".

No one is teachable without some humility. Without humility, one would not be willing to submit one's mind to another so as to be taught.

There are other beginnings in our will, or dispositions of our will, which need to be considered along with either wonder or the love of wisdom or teachableness or humility.

The wonder of the philosopher, the wonder which is the beginning of philosophy, is the natural desire to know for its own sake the cause (or the what and why of things since both the question what is it and question why ask for the cause) or this desire is the fundamental part of wonder. The wonder of the philosopher would not be, or would not be a sufficient

beginning of philosophy, if it did not include or was without three other movements or dispositions of the desiring ability.

Thomas points out in the *De Unitate Intellectus Contra Averroistas* that, just as there is a natural desire in men to know, so also there is a natural aversion or turning away of man's will from error. Just as one could not desire virtue without turning away from vice, so likewise one could not have a natural desire to know the truth about things without having a natural aversion for error or mistake about them.

But man's natural desire to know would not be a sufficient beginning of philosophy without a reasonable hope of overcoming the difficulties which stand in the way of finding and coming to know what is true. Without the *hope* of coming to know the truth which he desires, the philosopher would take no delight in the pursuit of it and hence give it up. Further, without hope, he would despair of coming to know the truth about great things. This would be the destruction of philosophy. Hope involves a perseverance or endurance in the pursuit of a difficult good, the willingness to make the effort necessary to overcome the difficulties in the way of knowing truth. Since philosophy is a reasoned out knowledge, and no one can think out anything without persistence and perseverance, this hope or will to persist or persevere is most necessary for the philosopher. Plato in the *Dialogues* often represents the man with whom Socrates converses as lacking this beginning.

But it is also difficult to avoid mistakes or errors. Hence, it is not only necessary to wish to avoid mistakes, but the philosopher must have a reasonable fear of them. Without a *fear* of mistake, the philosopher would rush to judgment and be easily deceived. Hence, the reasonable fear of mistake would seem to be the culmination of the wonder of the philosopher. Indeed, Thomas sometimes speaks of wonder as this form of fear.

As Socrates shows so well in the *Phaedo,* it is necessary to balance the reasonable hope of coming to know the truth with the reasonable fear of mistake. When his friends despair of

finding the truth about whether the soul is immortal, Socrates leads them out of this discouragement and reawakens their hope. When they become over-confident, he instills a reasonable fear of mistake.

With wonder then, or perhaps as parts of it, we can consider the hope of coming to know the truth and the aversion of the will from error and most of all the reasonable fear of mistake or error.

The love of wisdom is something more perfect than wonder. Wonder is a desire to know which arises from the awareness of one's ignorance. But love is perfected in the presence of its object. The love of wisdom presupposes that one has already acquired some of the wisdom that a man can acquire by the use of his natural reason.

Within the love of wisdom, there must be a love of reason and a love of order. For wisdom is the highest or greatest perfection and good of reason. Now it is impossible to love health and not love the body, or to love the body and not love health, since health is the good of the body. Likewise, then, it is impossible to love wisdom and not love reason or to love reason fully and not love wisdom. And since reason looks before and after and, consequently, it must belong to the wise man most of all to know order, it is clear that the love of wisdom and the love of reason are inseparable from the love of order. It is laughable then to claim to be a philosopher and not love reason and order. With the philosopher, then, goes the greatest love of reason and of order. This is also why Shakespeare's *Exhortation to Use Reason* is so important for philosophy. And since wisdom is by antonomasia the knowledge of truth (for the reason given by the Philosopher in the second book of the *Metaphysics*), the love of wisdom also involves the love of truth. Further, how could one love reason without loving truth since truth is the good of reason?

By the love of wisdom, the philosopher loves not only what Aristotle calls *first philosophy* which is wisdom *simpliciter* in the

genus of human knowledge, but also the philosophy of nature and political philosophy and logic insofar as they partake of the nature of wisdom in some respect. Indeed, the love of wisdom involves a love of the whole good of reason.

With the love of wisdom, there comes the hate of folly or foolishness and the hate of error and falsehood and the hate of disorder.

The *tranquility of the emotions* is also a disposition of desire necessary for becoming wise. As Aristotle pointed out in the seventh book of the *Physics,* the soul becomes wise and prudent when it settles down.

One is not teachable if one is not *willing to believe* one's teacher. And since we learn from others in discussion, *mildness* is necessary for anger generates more heat than light. Mildness should be considered with docility for both are towards another man from whom one learns or with whom one disputes.

Since the truth pursued out of wonder and wisdom itself is a *common good,* there should also be *friendship* between those who pursue and know truth. Such friendship is necessary to pursue the truth together and to communicate the truth. And perhaps the friendship of the teacher and student is different from the friendship of equals in discussion. But as Socrates and Aristotle teach us, we must love the truth more than what our friend says.

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The beginnings in the will and feelings are either about knowledge and mistakes or about those with whom or from whom we learn.

The beginnings in our desire can be divided into three parts. The first part contains those acts or dispositions by which we are well disposed towards truth and wisdom and the pursuit of them, even by oneself. This part includes wonder and the love of wisdom, the hope of coming to know truth and the fear of being mistaken. The second part contains those acts or

dispositions by which we are well disposed to learning from or with others. This part includes respect or reverence for those wiser than us, friendship in the pursuit and knowing of truth, and mildness in discussion. A third part contains acts or dispositions by which we are well disposed both for pursuing truth by oneself and for learning from or with others. This part includes humility.

The Beginnings in Knowledge

In all knowledge, we can distinguish between what we know and how we know it. Hence, the beginnings of philosophy in reason and the senses are either about what we know, the thing or things we know, or about how we know, the way and order in which we know.

The beginning in reason is either about things or about our knowledge of things (the roads to knowledge).

Beginnings of philosophy in reason (and the senses)

Beginnings in reason about things Common beginnings Private beginnings

Beginnings in reason about our knowledge of things

The natural road in our knowledge

The roads made by reason in our knowledge Common road of reasoned-out knowledge Private roads of reasoned-out knowledge

The texts from Plato and Aristotle (and Albert and Thomas commenting on them) on the importance of beginning well seem to be speaking chiefly of the importance of knowing the *beginnings about things*. But there are many other texts in these same writers, which emphasize the necessity of knowing *the way and order of knowing things.*

Although we could distinguish between what we love or desire and how we love or desire it, this would not give rise to two kinds of beginning in our desire.

The philosopher thinks about the things we sense, remember and have experienced. Hence, sensing, memory and experience are all (in a certain order) beginnings of philosophy about things.

But philosophy is in reason and not in the senses. And there are beginnings about things for philosophy in reason. These are the statements known through themselves and the parts of these statements. Such statements are either known through themselves by all men (because their parts are known to some extent by all men) or they are known through themselves only by those men who know their parts. For example, since all men know what a whole is and what a part is, all men see that a whole is greater than its part. But since all men do not know what is a right angle, all men do not see that all right angles must be equal.

There are also beginnings of philosophy about how we know things. Since man is by nature an animal with reason, there is a natural road in man's knowledge. This is the road from the senses into reason. This road and our knowledge of it are beginnings of philosophy.

But philosophy is a reasoned out knowledge and there is a common road of reasoned out knowledge. In all reasoned out knowledge, we must *think out* definitions, divisions, distinctions, statements, and, at last, conclusions. Logic is a knowledge of this common road. Hence, this common road and logic are also beginnings of philosophy.

But each reasoned out knowledge has its own matter or subject and how we go forward in that knowledge should fit its matter and how our reason is towards that matter. Hence, each reasoned out knowledge has it own road to some extent and this private road and our knowledge of it are beginnings of that particular reasoned out knowledge.

A second kind of beginnings in philosophy is the road or roads to follow and a knowledge of the road to follow or knowledge of the way of going forward in philosophy.

Thomas Aquinas had distinguished between the common way of going forward in philosophy which is learned in logic and the proper or private way of going forward in this or that part of philosophy which should be learned in the beginning of each part (as Aristotle shows, for example, in the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* how we should proceed in that matter.) And the common way is before the private way. For example: we learn in logic that definition is the beginning of syllogism and reasoned out knowledge. But we learn in the beginning of natural philosophy that we define therein with matter and motion (while in geometry we define without matter and motion).

But before these ways of going forward in our reasoned out knowledge (both the common and the many private ways), there is the natural way of going forward in our knowledge. Since man is by nature an animal with reason, it is natural for man to go forward from what he can sense. And this is before what is studied in logic and the reason why for it. For example, we learn in logic that men give examples of a thing before they define it and that induction comes before syllogism. And the reason for both of these is that we sense singulars before we understand the universal.

Thus there are three ways of going forward in philosophy or three roads to be considered: the natural road from the senses into reason, the common road of reasoned out knowledge and the private roads of geometry, of natural philosophy, of wisdom, of ethics and so on. Perhaps the second of these could be called the road from reasonable guesses to reasoned out knowledge since men guess the truth before they know it. And hence in logic we study not only the common road of reasoned out knowledge (as in the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*), but also the road of reasonable guesses (as in the *Books About Places* or *Topics*).

It was the great Msgr. Dionne who made explicit the threefold distinction and order of the roads or ways of going for-

ward in philosophy. And in so doing, he directed all of us. *Sapientis est ordinare*.

The Greek philosophers called an order in our knowledge a *road*. We can distinguish three such roads in a certain order.

The first road is the natural road in our knowledge. Since man is by nature an animal with reason, the natural and first road in our knowledge is the road from the senses into reason.

The second road is the road from reasonable guesses to reasoned out knowledge. This road is studied in logic. This includes the common road of reasoned out knowledge which is studied in the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* as well the road of reasonable guesses studied in the *Places* (*Topics*) which is devoted to dialectic. Dialectic has a road to the beginnings of all reasoned out knowledge.

The third road, or rather roads, are the private roads which fit the matters of the different forms of reasoned out knowledge. These are studied at the beginning of each of the forms of reasoned out knowledge after we have learned what is their matter or subject.

There are ways of knowing corresponding to each of these roads.

Minds that do not know these roads (or the ways of knowing corresponding to them) are apt to wander into various errors.

The roads underlying our knowledge are made by nature or by reason. The road made by nature is the road from the senses into reason which underlies all our knowledge of things. The roads made by reason can be divided into the common road of reasoned-out knowledge which underlies all reasoned-out knowledge and is studied in logic and the private road of each reasoned-out knowledge which fits the matter of that knowledge and is determined at the beginning of that knowledge.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ROADS TO FOLLOW

Road made by nature in our knowledge

Roads made by reason in our reasoned-out knowledge

Common road of reasoned-out knowledge (studied in logic)
Private road of each reasoned-out knowledge (studied in beginning of each)

The Beginnings about Things in our Knowledge

The chief beginnings about things are

(1) our experience of things,

(2) the probable opinions of men about things

(3) knowledge of some definitions, divisions and distinctions of things (we say *some* for definitions can be either a beginning or an end of reasoning) and

(4) knowledge of statements known through themselves about things.

An experience of things, a distinction or a division of things, a definition of a thing, and a statement about things can all be a beginning of philosophy on the side of things.

The beginnings about things can be divided into two parts. The first contains beginnings in reason that are about all things and that are common to all forms of reasoned-out knowledge, such as the statement about contradiction and the other statements known through themselves by all men, as well as the parts of these statements. The second part contains the beginnings in reason which fit one particular matter or subject and are private to one reasoned-out knowledge, such as the statements known through themselves by the wise or learned in that reasoned-out knowledge as well as the definitions, divisions and other distinctions of things upon which they are based. The definition of right angle and the statement that all right angles are equal are examples of such beginnings in geometry.

The young man, for example, is not a good judge of political things because he lacks the first kind of beginning: an experience of them. Dialectic proceeds from probable opinions and reasons to opposite conclusions. Dialectic helps us to discover and prepares the way for judgment. Knowing that the good is what all desire and that the goods of man can be divided into the goods of the soul and the goods of the body and outside goods are beginnings of ethics. The geometer must know both the axioms and the postulates which are statements known through themselves. The axioms (in the sense in which Aristotle and Euclid use this word) are the statements known through themselves by all and which are common to all forms of reasoned out knowledge, such as the statement that *a whole is greater than one of its parts*. The postulates (as Euclid uses this word) are the statements known through themselves by those who have learned something in a particular reasoned out knowledge (such as geometry) and which are private to that reasoned out knowledge, such as the statement that *all right angles are equal*. Before one could see this beginning, one would also have to know the definition of right angle.

The beginnings about things can perhaps be divided in two ways. There is experience of things and statements about things and definitions or divisions or distinctions of things. Experience is in the inward senses, but is a result of bringing together memories of what has been sensed by the outward senses. Statements about things and the definitions or divisions or distinctions of them are in reason. Thus the beginnings about things are either in the senses (and here the main beginning is experience) or in reason (and here the beginnings are statements about things and definitions or divisions or distinctions of things).

Another way of dividing the beginnings about things can be seen in particular in the well known distinction of Boethius between statements known through themselves by all and statements known through themselves by the wise. The former

are common to all forms of reasoned out knowledge while the latter are private to one form of reasoned out knowledge. The statement about contradiction, for example, is a statement known through itself by all men and is common to all forms of reasoned out knowledge. But the statement that all right angles are equal is private to geometry and is known only by the wise who understand the definition of right angle.

One could also divide definitions and divisions and distinctions in somewhat the same way. The definition of square, for example, is private to geometry, but the definition of element is common to all forms of reasoned out knowledge. However, the distinctions that correspond to the statements known through themselves by all, although common to all forms of reasoned out knowledge, do not seem to known by all. For example: Although all men know that a whole is greater than one of its parts, all men do not distinguish between the integral or composed whole and the universal whole.

One can also distinguish between the experience common to all men and the private or special experience that only some men have. But common experience does not correspond only to those statements which are common to all forms of reasoned out knowledge, but also to some statements private to one form of reasoned out knowledge. Dialectic has a road from common experience to the beginnings private to some forms of reasoned out knowledge. We see this, for example, in the first book of the *Physics* and in the first book of the *De Anima*.

It should not be thought that any one of the three kinds of beginnings is sufficient by itself. As Dionysius said, the bad is from any defect. Hence, we can begin to see how difficult it is to begin well which is the most necessary thing in philosophy.

The beginnings about things would seem to be the closest to the goal of the philosopher for they are the seeds of the knowledge he seeks. But those seeds will not be found or grow into philosophy without the help of the two other kinds of beginning.

> 16. Praeterea, ad operationem propriam speciei pertingunt vel omnia vel plurima eorum quae sunt in specie. Sed paucissimi homines perveniunt ad hoc quod sunt intelligentes. Ergo intelligere non est propria operatio animae humanae; et ita non oportet animam humanam esse incorruptibilem eo quod sit intellectualis.
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> Ad decimumsextum dicendum quod, licet pauci perveniant ad perfecte intelligendum, tamen ad aliqualiter intelligendum omnes perveniunt.
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> Manifestum est enim quod prima demonstrationis principia sunt communes animi conceptiones, quae intellectu percipiuntur.[1]

The above is one text where Thomas explicitly identifies the *prima demonstrationis principia* with the *communes animi conceptiones*. The *prima demonstrationis principia* are the *principia communia* of reasoned out knowledge. Hence, these beginnings are *common* both in the sense of being shared by all men and in being common to all forms of reasoned out knowledge. They are also common to all things.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE BEGINNINGS ABOUT THINGS

Common beginnings about all things: for example, the statement about contradiction .

Private beginnings about things only in one reasoned-out knowledge

[We naturally know, or come to know, the common beginnings about things. But the private beginnings about things must be thought out by reason.]

> Omnia enim propria principia cuiuscumque scientiae dependent ex principiis primis indemonstrabilibus per se notis, quorum cognitionem a

[1] *Quaestio Disputata de Anima,* Art. 14, Obj. 16 & ad 16.

> sensibilibus accipimus, ut patet in fine *Posteriorum*.[2]

One could also say that every road made by reason depends upon the natural road.

DIVISION & ORDER OF THE CONSIDERATION OF THE BEGINNING IN PHILOSOPHY AND HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

1. On the role of the will and feelings in human knowledge
2. First division of the roads in human knowledge
3. Natural or first road in human knowledge
4. Logical papers
5. Papers on the private or special roads
6. On the common and private beginnings about things
7. Mutual dependence of the parts of the beginning.

[2] *Summa Contra Gentiles,* L. III, c. XLI.