KENNY AND LONERGAN ON SUBSTANTIAL FORM

This question that has baffled us, as it baffled Aristotle long ago, 'What is being?' just is, so it seems, the question, 'What is substance?' These remarks seem pertinent to the study of St. Thomas given by Sir Anthony Kenny. In *Aquinas and Being*, Kenny endeavours to make sense of the Thomist metaphysics, and substantially reinforces the assessment he came to in 1980, in which the theory of being is described as sophistry and illusion.[i] Kenny greatly admires the logician, and his Fregean eye is quick to see affinities in the modern analytic tradition, and of course, Kenny is very sympathetic to writers such as Peter Geach and Herbert McCabe, who have sought to build bridges between the thirteenth and the twentieth centuries. So, to the extent that metaphysics is described as the study of being, especially through an analysis of the ten categories given by Aristotle, with special attention to the nature of predication, Kenny is an admirer. However, if metaphysics attempts to go deeper, and so explain being in terms of the intrinsic constitutive causes, Kenny is a severe critic. Aquinas, of course, in speaking concretely of this matter, this form, and this essence, practices metaphysics in this deeper sense. In the early work, *On Being and Essence*, Aquinas carefully explains, for example, how to relate the various ways we speak of essence. To jump to one of his conclusions, he is able to affirm that, 'Because of this. The term 'essence' is sometimes predicated of a thing, as when we say, Socrates is a certain essence, but sometimes this is denied, as when we say the essence of Socrates is not Socrates.'[ii] That is, he dovetails two distinct inquiries, the logical, or as I shall call it, 'pre-metaphysical' inquiry (essence is regarded abstractly, so that the essence of Socrates is not Socrates) and metaphysics in the deeper sense, so that Socrates is regarded as this essence. A repeated complaint, nevertheless, is that it is *Aquinas* who confuses abstract and concrete.[iii]

Already, the question of method has arisen: what are we doing when we do metaphysics? Granted that we analyse true propositions in sentences such as 'S is P,' how do we relate this to the set of technical terms such as matter, form and act? But very quickly divergences in doctrine emerge too, most especially, I think, regarding substantial form. Kenny, in fact, will argue against the notion on the grounds that rules of predication have been misapplied. Because I feel that Kenny has helped us to think afresh about those questions that baffled Aristotle long ago, my first task will be to convey a sense of what the burden of Kenny's objection is.

It may help to orientate the reader if I explain my philosophical allegiances. I believe that the writings of Bernard Lonergan provide a fruitful resource for these questions. Lonergan, especially at the time he taught theology at the Gregorian (to Anthony Kenny among others) made use of the Thomist metaphysics to tackle some of the speculative issues that arose, regarding the person and natures of Christ, for example. Although he makes very distinctive contributions to method, very substantially Lonergan's metaphysical conclusions are traditional and agree with Aquinas. Moreover, as the teaching notes he handed to his students make plain, he was very familiar with what he regarded as the common errors lurking in confusion of methods, and the mistakes arising in mixing up abstract and concrete.[iv] I feel that a careful comparison between the methods of Kenny and Lonergan can be rewarding, then. Naturally, I can only scratch the surface of Lonergan's thought in a brief space. My aim is to make some suggestions of the kind of response Lonergan's corpus provides to the sort of questions Kenny raises. They are good questions, and deserve lengthy answers, that I cannot provide here. All I can do is make one or two gestures towards Lonergan's *Insight.* But I will at least give a more thorough exposition to Lonergan's reading of a particular text that can be fairly regarded as foundational. This is found in *Metaphysics Zeta,* to which I alluded in my first sentence. Lonergan, however, was particularly enthusiastic, not about the first, but the last chapter, in which Aristotle announced the need for a fresh start.

KENNY AND SUBSTANTIAL FORM

Aquinas approached separate substances – angels composed of essence (that is, form) and act after treating of composite beings for which essence is matter and form. In Kenny's commentary he finds agreement with Descartes, not because he shares the Cartesian notion of substance, but because Descartes thought that the notion of pure substance could not be accommodated in Aristotle's hylomorphism. For when one understands how predicates are used, and how they refer, the idea of form (or essence) as substance becomes unintelligible:

> The notion of form was introduced earlier in the book by reference to the Aristotelian system of categories, substantial forms being what corresponded in reality to true predicates in the first category, and accidental forms being what corresponded in reality to true predicates in the remaining nine categories. But it is hard to see how the notion of pure form can be explained by reference to predication. Forms are forms of the entity which is the subject of predication: Socrates' wisdom is what corresponds to the predicate in the sentence 'Socrates is wise,' and Plato's humanity is what

> corresponds to the predicate in the sentence 'Plato is a human.' In the same way a pure form would be something that corresponded to a predicate in a sentence that had no subject; but this seems close to an absurdity.[v]

Kenny then wonders whether Thomas has lapsed into Platonism. Clearly, the problem is not simply the possibility of angels. Several others seem interconnected. Closely related is a difficulty regarding the subsistence of the human soul after death, or the legitimacy of any speech about 'material forms.' Aren't all forms material in that they inform matter? Connected with these is a bafflement that arises when once speaks of the essence of Socrates meaning a concrete essence: this essence of this man, and not simply the abstract essence by which we can say both Socrates and Plato share the common essence of humanity. Just how does an essence relate to its possessor?[vi] But I think the difficulty concerning substantial form is primary. What is it that legitimates our identification of this thing (this horse, this man) as a form? Very often in Kenny's account the word 'essence' presents an equivalent difficulty: in what sense could an abstract essence such as 'humanity' be substantial?

Kenny's metaphysical disagreements, then, also pertain to this world. He did, in fact, raise his objection on the grounds of invalid predication with regard to substantial form too – why are men and horses forms? For example, consider: 'Peter has the substantial form of humanity.'[vii] We understand this because the sentence is equivalent to 'Peter is a man.' The meaning of the first sentence is derived from the second, and not the other way round. That is, the more abstract idea is taken from the concrete predicate. But in the second sentence, 'man' is a universal, and universals do not subsist. Peter exists, but Peter is not a universal. How then, unless we embrace Platonism, can it make sense to speak of substantial forms? Wouldn't this mean that we somehow have universal particulars in the subject place of a sentence?

It is possible that some with Thomist sympathies will still find no difficulty with substantial forms. It might be worth making some elementary remarks on logic with which Kenny was very familiar to try to feel the weight of his objection.

Typically Kenny is prompt to introduce his readers to the ten predicaments (or categories). Aristotle distinguishes substance from nine accidents (quantity, quality, relation, place, time, action, passion, posture and habit) and analysis centres on how we make predications such as 'Socrates is a man.' We are introduced to substance in the pre-metaphysical perspective.

Substance, which tells us what something is, is divided into first and second. ‘Man,’ then, can be uses to denote a particular man, this man, as when we say: ‘a man is in the tulip bed.’ Here, ‘man’ is understood as ‘first substance.’ Or again, we can speak of ‘this centaur,’ in which the first substance is hypothetical. First substance can be the subject of predication.

But we can also say: ‘man is an animal.’ Here, the subject of the sentence is understood as ‘second substance.’ It is a universal, as in: ‘Socrates is a man.’ Here, ‘man’ (second substance) is used as a predicate. We may not, in fact, use words taken as first substance as predicates and so names (which refer to particulars) may only be used as first substance, and are never predicates. We may not say: ‘Peter is a Socrates,’ unless ‘Socrates’ is taken metaphorically. The priority of first substance is seen in that we can predicate second of first, but not vice versa. First substance is the ultimate subject of predication.

Essence refers to what it is that makes a thing what it is; it is signified by the definition of a thing. Man is a rational animal, and so we can speak of his essence, ‘humanity.’ For man to be man, man must have a rational soul. Nevertheless, he is not his soul. In the definition of man we must include flesh and bones, for all men have a body. Whilst there are various complications that should be teased out, we can say that body (or perhaps the ‘stuff’ that makes the body) and soul relate as matter and form. Essence refers (concretely) to this matter and this form.

Nevertheless, ‘essence,’ in the pre-metaphysical context, is referred to abstractly: humanity. Although the notion of a human being must include the idea of flesh and bones, it need not refer to the flesh and bones of any individual. Thus we include the ‘common matter’ (flesh and bones) in the definition, but we abstract from these flesh and these bones (the ‘individual matter’). Man, then, taken as second substance is also universal, but concrete – though not of course concrete as referring to this particular man. But ‘humanity’ is an abstract universal. Although we can say ‘Socrates is a man’ we cannot say, ‘Socrates is his humanity,’ for ‘man’ refers to all that is in him (including his whiteness) whereas ‘humanity’ refers to what Socrates shares with all men.

Now, because Kenny is engaged in interpreting Aquinas, he will translate, so to speak, from the logical (the grammatical, or predicamental) language of true sentences to the metaphysical language of intrinsic causes (matter, form and act). This is something that Lonergan, and we can infer Aquinas, thought was fraught with difficulty. The conclusion, it appears, is that we should not identify substance with essence.[viii] Substance, apparently, must

only refer to the ultimate subject of predication.[ix] Perhaps the following considerations will make Kenny's case seem plausible.[x]

First of all, it may help (so as to raise questions without begging them) to rename Aristotle's first substance the 'supposit.' That is, corresponding to the subject of a sentence such as 'Socrates is a man' or 'Socrates is wise' is the supposit, Socrates. The supposit is this thing we are speaking of, or pointing at. We have begged no questions as to whether Socrates is a form (or more precisely, essence). For, even if we grant that dogs and masters are substantial forms; and granting further that dogs know bones, their masters and other dogs, we may baulk at saying that dogs know substantial forms. Certainly, what they know is *this*, which absolutely speaking may turn out to be a substantial form, but they do not know it as a form, because to know a form suggests we grasp something intelligible. We may grant that dogs, very successfully know things in the sense that they perceive some sensibly integrated whole, but this is no more grasping a substantial form than grasping this finger or this sand dune or this corpse amounts to grasping a substantial form. We can, however, speak of this thing as a supposit.

Secondly, we can certainly note that data are presented to us. Doubtless, it is an abstraction to speak of data apart from the pattern of experience with which we perceive the data, but we can speak of the blackness of this dog which we see, and generally of the properties spoken of as accidents. However, as well as grasping the datum in its aspect of universality (this colour is the same kind as coal is) we can also grasp it in its particularity (this instance of blackness). Then we ask: what is it? For, we can understand that the accident does not have being in itself – for it to be is to be in another. We find the idea that blackness simply subsists-in-itself unintelligible. We may suppose that the blackness exists in the fur, or in the tail of the dog, but again, we are bound to find certain ideas unintelligible. The tail must be understood by comprehending the animal too, just as we cannot understand the part without the whole. It seems as though we must postulate the ultimate subject in which the accidents inhere, and this subject is certainly what those who speak of 'substantial forms' mean. Can we not identify Aristotle's first substance, the supposit, and the subject of the accidents with a form?

A form suggests that we understand some datum. Now, as present, a datum is given to us, and so, we can say that a form will pertain to the accidents of a thing, for surely, we know things by way of its accidents. For example, an eclipse is an accident. We see a darkening of the

moon, and we want to understand, and so we ask what it is. Note that the darkening is an accident, a property of the moon, and this must inhere in its subject. We can get the point: when the earth blocks the rays of the sun it casts a shadow on the moon. So, it seems, we can understand certain aspects of our experience. But such understanding will pertain to accidents. Let us grant that by understanding we know accidental forms. Furthermore let us grant that such forms a conjoined[xi] to the supposit. We are still no nearer to the idea that the supposit, which may indeed be the subject in which the accidents inhere, is a form.

Let us ask about the way the supposit, as subject in which the accidents inhere, relates to its accidents. Is it not that the accidents qualify or determine its supposit? Isn't the supposit precisely what is determined by its accidents? But form stands to matter as that which determines stands to that which is determined. Why should we not say that the supposit underlying the accidents is best understood as matter rather than form? Isn't there some truth in the idea that 'forms are [and can only be] forms of the entity which is the subject of predication'? The 'entity' is not a form.

Think of a form as the F that makes a thing what it is. For example, the key to my house must have a characteristic shape, and this shape, which may perhaps be perfectly understood by a mathematical formula, is the form. This formula, as such, is abstract. In order to actually unlock any doors (and so be a key) metal must be formed into the right shape. Together, metal and shape, matter and form, make the key. Both matter and form are 'causes' on equal footing and neither cause must be confused with the key-cutter, the efficient cause. It will be this metal that makes this key the concrete, individual key that it is: a key![xii] But if the characteristic shape (which may exist abstractly in a mind before ever a key is cut) comes to be instantiated then a new door key will exist. Then we will be able to make an affirmation of this metal that it is F shaped. The form will be 'of' the matter, and so will not be a pure form.

We must, of course, employ the idea of form, for we understand that only if the key is this shape will it unlock my door. We also understand that we can cast many keys of this shape so that this shape is a kind of shape, a universal. But if there is no matter, there is nothing to form. Matter, as the principal of individuation, makes this key this one – form does not make anything one. 'It is the matter that makes the form to be the form of this individual; and the form makes the matter to be matter of this particular kind.'[xiii] In order to bring about a key we unite the abstract form with this concrete matter. So, with a so-called 'pure form' nothing concrete gets individualised, realised – shaped. Certainly, we could construct sentences in

which the form takes place of the subject: 'the shape of my key is extremely complicated' and so on, but here we predicate abstraction of abstraction, and in no sense do we obtain a substantial form. Accordingly, the idea of a substantial form is suspect. That the accidents are radicated in what could be termed a 'substantial gestalt' we concede; that the 'first substance,' the supposit, the entity, the subject is form, we deny.

If it is objected that since matter is unknowable, to make matter the ultimate subject that is the thing-in-itself, is to make things unknowable, the reply might be that perhaps reality ultimately is unintelligible. If the authority of science is invoked we may point out that empirical science relies on measurement, and that science only ever measures accidents. The mind (*mens,* from which we get 'mensuration') never measures a substantial form.

If this account is close to the truth it would seem as though Kenny has a point. Consider the idea that the soul can subsist after death. Surely this makes as much sense as the snubness of a nose surviving surgery. Whilst I shall not discuss the roots of Kenny's perspective, it seems as though his thought regarding the subject (of a sentence) and predicate is governed by the parallels in Frege's thought between object and concept. It is difficult to see how the Thomist notion of substantial form fits.

LONERGAN'S *INSIGHT* AND CENTRAL FORM

Among the many things Lonergan attempted in *Insight* was to argue for the reality of substantial form. He concludes his introduction by referring to Hume, and adopts his phrase of 'assaulting the citadel.'[xiv] This can be taken as a signal that Lonergan will reach an anti-Humean position on substantial form. He does so at some length; accordingly, my intention is to point out a few salient points rather than attempt a thorough exposition.

Lonergan's method is to start with cognitional theory, and indeed, by describing the act he referred to as insight. He begins by considering the way we can grasp the 'formal cause,' so to speak of a circle.[xv] Given an image, of a cart-wheel, say, we can ask what it is that makes it round. By imagining equal radii, like spokes in a hub, we can grasp the necessary and sufficient conditions for circularity, and because we understand we are able to select what is relevant, and prescind from all that is irrelevant, in forming a scientific definition of a circle. Lonergan certainly wishes to prepare the ground for understanding what he will refer to as 'central form,' though perhaps it is worth insisting that a circle is an accident.[xvi] For a circle to be real it must take inhere in a surface – we cannot easily move to the insight that will

grasp central form. But at least Lonergan has made a start. His aim is to help acquaint the reader with what it is like to be perplexed and then understand – because we see why. In the circle example a single insight grounds a plurality of concepts such as 'centre,' 'radii,' 'sets of points' and 'equidistant,' that hang together as one. To get an insight is simply to get a point because we have answers to our questions. It is certainly true that the first chapter concerns itself with definition, for we define *because* we understand, but it is also worth stressing that the chapter continues with an account of 'redefinition,' namely in what Lonergan refers to 'higher viewpoints,' as, say, we perform analogous operations on the integers as we do with the natural numbers. Lonergan is seeking, in part, to introduce his rethinking of genera (and species) whereby a sequence of increasingly 'higher' things – understood in sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology and psychology – are conceived.

Lonergan then develops the notion of insight in empirical science in which he embarks on some very complicated arguments against mechanistic determinism. He does so by explaining the complementarity of classical and statistical method. It is easy to miss the fact that Lonergan is quite consciously probing the question of the relationship between substance and accidents.[xvii] Some might think that he is slightly disingenuous when he claims that in the course of his argument, the 'problem of the thing … became increasingly apparent,'[xviii]but he has, in fact, been concerned with arguing for a view of world process that can accommodate the evolution of substantial forms.

Classical method grasps laws in systematic processes, but Lonergan proceeds to explain the non-systematic, and introduces the notion of the 'coincidental aggregate.'[xix]In fact, this is the first place in *Insight* in which Lonergan raises the question of unity. As he explains in his lectures on the ontological and psychological constitution of Christ, 'one' can be said in three ways. In fact, these ways correspond to experience, understanding and judgement. Corresponding to experience is 'predicamental one.' We can distinguish, say, different fingers, sand dunes, pyramids, corpses, or animals – and count them. Corresponding to understanding is 'natural' or 'formal' one – *unum per se*. In the list of items just given, the first four are, on the contrary, *unum per accidens.* With an animal – it will be claimed – we can conceive an intelligible, systematic unity. Judgement ultimately relies on principles such as identity and contradiction. A thing is not distinct from itself and is distinct from other things.[xx] If we reasonably make such judgement we affirm the thing. Lonergan is certainly envisioning such an affirmation, though it will come much later in the argument, and then the judgement (concerning things in what he calls explanatory genera and species) will be

deemed 'uniquely probable.'[xxi]It could be said that the 'coincidental aggregate' puts us in mind of the 'supposit' I introduced earlier: 'this thing,' in a non-committal sense.

Lonergan, in describing the methods whereby we anticipate the systematic and non-systematic ('classical and statistical heuristic structures'), is careful to obey the 'canon of parsimony'[xxii] and so bracket the notion of the 'thing' (substantial forms). Reading the chapters carefully, we can discern that he regards the notion of the thing as pressing from the scientific, methodological point of view.[xxiii]

Nevertheless, the sixth and seventh chapters concern common sense – a much easier entry point for the non-scientific reader, as it happens. Lonergan is aware that in man two kinds of knowing reside. In fact, it is because dogs truly know bones, masters and other dogs that they cope wonderfully with their environment. This is true for us too. Lonergan always shows interest and esteem for the practical, non-scientific lay knowledge he thematises as 'common sense' and to which he returns on many occasions. Nevertheless, when he makes a first stab at the problems of substantial form – he speaks of 'things' as opposed to 'bodies' – he is, so to speak, fighting on two fronts. He seeks to 'bring science and common sense together.'[xxiv] On the one hand we must contend with the inner materialist in us (Lonergan does not put it quite like this. In my previous section I attempted to illustrate what I think amounts to a sophisticated materialism). It is natural for us to think in terms of 'substantial gestalts,' or 'bodies' and only if we undergo an intellectual conversion will we advance to critical realism. On the other hand, Lonergan seeks to meet the serious, scientifically grounded, criticism that he finds in Cassirer, say, that rejects the idea of substance.[xxv] In part, Lonergan tackles the existential (personal, psychological) difficulties in accepting things.

Eventually Lonergan makes a first direct 'assault on the citadel.' The result is another highly complex chapter, in which Lonergan situates the idea of 'things' in the light of modern scientific methodology as well as evolutionary accounts of world process.[xxvi] He will, in fact, give more familiar arguments from change, and he will also argue that the notion of progress in science requires the notion of the thing. It is worth pointing out that he has introduced the notion only for understanding rather than judgement. Lonergan is not yet concerned with one in the 'transcendental sense.'

Lonergan speaks of the insight whereby we grasp the unity-identity-whole that is, in effect, substantial form.[xxvii] He also claims (and when first he does, Lonergan simply asserts) that this is a *concrete* unity of concrete data. In affirming that the unity *is* concrete, and not simply

of the concrete, Lonergan parts company with the empiricist.[xxviii] It is fair to say that an artefact such as a pyramid is a unity grasped in concrete data. The intelligibility of the tetrahedral edifice, present first in the architect's mind, and then in those who survey his work, is certainly concrete in the sense that it was actually existing in some person's mind. Pyramids did not come about by chance, and so the concrete unity – someone actually had to have the idea – in fact was a condition for the (efficient) causality that produced the pyramid. But such intelligibility is not, strictly in the pyramid. To affirm that a concrete unity-identity-whole is in the so called thing is to affirm that it is a substantial, or as Lonergan terms it, central form. We can take it that a hydrogen atom or a dog is really a thing (an *unum per se*). Here, the unity itself is concrete.

Lonergan thinks that we can grasp this by an insight – but that this insight is of a distinct kind. Lonergan will distinguish central from conjugate forms. These correspond to substance and accidents – the dog and its respiratory system, say. Conjugate form corresponds to a certain regularity correlating data, so the blackness of the dog, in which data are related to my senses, is not properly speaking a form. Here Lonergan departs from Aristotle, but I shall continue (improperly) with the example of a black dog to get my point across. How are we to understand that the 'concrete unity' is really in the thing? And how are we to grasp the idea?

We can begin by considering an accident as a datum– this blackness. If it is given, then it is given to *us* – of course – but otherwise we can still regard the same datum in two ways. Firstly, the datum can be regarded under some aspect of universality – an accidental form qua form. The blackness is the same kind of colour as coal, and so on. But we can also regard the datum in its particularity. And here we find ourselves asking, what is it? Not, what kind of colour is it? but, realising that blackness cannot simply subsist – for it to be is to be in another [xxix]– we want to know in what subject the accident is radicated. Again if we understand the blackness to be in the tail, then by grasping the idea that the tail is a part, again we understand that such a notion is inexplicable save as part of a whole. So, to understand the datum in its individuality is to understand that something is in need of explanation.

It is the central form that is the explanation for the unity of the whole. For example, neither my left, nor my right, nor your left arm can exist apart from some whole. Each must be explained by some central form. But both my right and left arms are explained by the same central form – which is undivided in itself, yet quite distinct from the central form that explains your arm. The central form, so to speak, is 'in' me, though not as accidents are in

me. The central form is not another accident. The central form is the ultimate explanation for any inherence of accidents. What it does is make the thing one – unifies it. That is, it exercises formal causality. The unity of the thing, if that unity is neither simply accidental (as with a sand dune) nor artificial, (like a pyramid), is the effect of something that is not extrinsic to the thing. Of course, there is also the act of understanding that understands that the anticipated unity is not, or no longer, there and the supposit must be one per accidens (the body is only a corpse). Sometimes there is a unity, and sometimes there isn't – reasonable judgement must decide which.

Common sense will spontaneously think that there are things[xxx]; still, I think that we are left with quite a curious notion! An accident, as conjugate form, is not so strange, perhaps: we can measure it, and define it. That is, we define it improperly, for the very notion of an accident points outside of itself the way snubness points to the nose. What it points to is substance: substance enters into the definition of accident. Substance can be defined – that is, substance is essence; substantial forms are real. But we understand that we understand substance *not* as we understand accident. That is, we do not understand it through another, or in another. Rather, we do understand it 'through itself,' that is, per se. We understand that we are not dealing with an abstraction. This is its intelligibility. Lonergan will maintain that as it is understood to be, so it is. 'Just as substance exists per se, so too it is understood and defined per se.'[xxxi] This is how substance is, and how it can support what it supports, like the spokes of a wheel in a hub.[xxxii] Lonergan's conception of insight gives him the way of conceiving form.

Whilst it is clear that the matter/form relation can be thought of as parallel to that that-to-be-determined/that-which-is-determined, it is also clear that Lonergan seeks to get a more precise grasp of the relationship.[xxxiii] In fact, his careful elaboration of insight – a subtle point, he thinks[xxxiv] - tries to make progress in this regard. Moreover, Lonergan will account for matter as 'the empirical residue,' a notion formed by abstracting from any intelligibility that insight grasps. It is form, then, that must account for the 'same' thing unifying all its parts.

It is not that we grasp central form as 'that kind of form' the way we might grasp an accidental form as a kind (of colour, say). Rather, by attending to insight Lonergan hopes to get at something that 'pivots between concrete and abstract.' It is *because* things have forms that we can grasp that they are this kind of thing – grasping that a thing is a 'kind' (as a

logician might), grasping a universal, is not simply speaking, grasping the form. The concept of insight, then, plays a fundamental strategic role in Lonergan's system.

Lonergan carefully continues to argue his case making a judgement in chapter on the *Self-Affirmation of the Knower.* It is not that he is especially concerned with whether we know (we do) or how we are to cross the bridge from the inner world to the external world. Lonergan regards such inquiries as wrong-headed. He never practices Cartesian doubt. But in part he is presenting an accessible way in which we can appropriate the substantial form that is us. For example, he will claim that his method makes it more readily understandable why it is true that it is 'I who understands through my intellect' rather than it being the case that it is 'my intellect that understands' than does the method that takes its cue from an analysis of the categories.[xxxv]

To put the matter another way, the central form is not to be thought of as some hidden thing residing inside the shell like the kernel of a nut. We cannot remove the accidents and so be left with the substance! If I go into the sun, my skin goes red – and thus, I go red. Accidental change is, *of course*, a change in the substance – though the sun doesn't kill me! The insight that grasps central form is a grasp of a unity-identity-whole in a set of data which includes both yesterday's skin colour and today's as belonging to one and the same person. This point is grasped perspicuously when we realise that the distinction between the insights is between the same data taken, on the one hand, in its totality as individual, and on the other hand, as a kind. Not, then, like a kernel inside a shell, but like the planet Venus 'underlying' the Morning Star.

Thus Lonergan achieves a novel breakthrough into what he regards as traditional metaphysical doctrine. To tease out all the nuances and relations between the six elements would be very desirable, but to get the general idea we can simply illustrate by way of an example. Lonergan claims (in his notes to theology students) that analysis into these elements is relatively unproblematic and gives the following example:

> Suppose that Peter is this existing human being endowed with knowledge and actually understanding: then as 'this,' Peter is resolved into matter (substantial potency), as 'human being' into a human soul (substantial form), as 'existing' into an act of existence (substantial act),

Lonergan then continues to exemplify conjugate forms with terminology familiar to anyone acquainted with the Thomist account of intellect:

> as 'endowed with knowledge' into a mental habit (accidental form) received in the possible intellect (accidental potency), and as 'actually understanding' into an act of understanding (accidental act).[xxxvi]

In introducing these traditional ideas in his own terms Lonergan explains how his complex accounts of scientific method, in its two complementary heuristic structures, leads him to adopt the traditional position.

In a chapter on *Metaphysics as Science*, Lonergan also warns about the traps that we fall into in transposing statements regarding the truth of sentences to their metaphysical equivalents, in particular regarding their concreteness.[xxxvii] He is fully aware of how words such as 'essence,' 'substance,' or 'accident' are understood differently in the predicamental and metaphysical perspectives.[xxxviii] Metaphysics is not abstract, but it is general and anticipatory – heuristic, as Lonergan puts it. We grasp relations just as we grasp that science, as attained, can be understood in general as 'theory verified in instances.'

To take an example from Kenny we could speak of 'the essence of a hawk' meaning the understanding that, if possessed by some future scientist would enable her to construct a fully functioning bird.[xxxix] Clearly, this would necessarily be detailed and concrete – but of course, in this sense we do not know the essence of a hawk, and so can speak only generally of such an insight. Such ignorance is quite different from that of the child who has not even learned that hawks are birds of prey.

I shall leave this superficial account of Lonergan here. As with the soul, in order to understand it we must engage in a 'subtle and diligent inquiry,' and the same is true of the soul of Lonergan. I do not think I have answered all the problems I have raised, but perhaps the problem of substance has once again shown its power to perplex. I think we can see that Kenny and Lonergan are drawing from different streams. 'The Rhine and the Danube rise quite close to one another and for a while pursue roughly parallel courses, only to diverge in utterly different directions and flow into different seas.'[xl] If this is true we may want to ask: what were the well-springs of Lonergan's thought?

VERBUM: DEFINITION AND UNDERSTANDING

Those familiar with Lonergan will be aware that above all other texts of Aristotle, Lonergan was enthused by the seventeenth chapter of *Metaphysics Zeta*. This, surely, was the guiding star for his thought. He never tired of trying to communicate what he had hit upon.

Lonergan draws on *Zeta 17* for the first time in the first of the *Verbum* articles, published in *Theological Studies* in 1946. Lonergan sought to understand the idea (in Thomas) of how we utter a word because we understand. The analogy is used in his Trinitarian theology to provide some insight into the procession of the Son from the Father. The first half of his study is devoted to the cognitional rather than the metaphysical aspects of the question.

Thomas had distinguished two operations of the mind, that whereby we understand, and that whereby we judge, and the first article is devoted to the first operation, the formation of the 'non-complex word,' namely, our ability to define (or form scientific concepts) because of what Lonergan refers to as 'insight into phantasm.' After surveying the data he wishes to study (the index of loci extends to a dozen pages) Lonergan takes his point of departure from Socratic questioning. Here he draws on a text that is discussed on about ten occasions in the collected works.[xli]

In the second section entitled *Definition* Lonergan seizes on the Socratic zeal to 'prick complacent bubbles of unconscious ignorance.' His practice was to ask people just what things are. Although Lonergan does not put it this way, we could say that Socrates was interested in a 'scientific ethics.' What is virtue? What is moderation? Courage? Justice?

Lonergan notes how Aristotle made capital of this formula. Lonergan refers to the catch, or what he will even call a 'trick.'[xlii] Aristotle's conceit is to reformulate a question. Not only is the Socratic quest for defining virtue difficult, 'but what makes things hopeless is the difficulty of saying what one wishes to find out when one asks, even of the most familiar things, "What is it?".'

Lonergan traces Aristotle's concern for questions to the second book of the *Posterior Analytics.* Aristotle tries to fix the meaning of this question. Four types are identified: 'Either one asks (1) whether there is an X, or (2) what is an X, or (3) whether X is Y, or (4) why X is Y.' Lonergan draws attention, not to the first and third pair, but to the fourth. This question is not empirical; rather it asks for a cause or reason. Sometimes it can be identified with the second type of question, thus: 'Why does light refract?' is equivalent to, 'What is refraction?' Aristotle's stock example is that of an eclipse of the moon. We see the moon darkened and

we ask why. This is the same as asking for a definition of an eclipse. When we understand that the earth blocks the light of the sun you understand what the eclipse is.

Very briefly in this article, Lonergan alludes to the purpose of the syllogism – especially that of the 'scientific' syllogism. When we argue: If S then M; and if M then P; therefore, if S then P, our first two premises contain a common term, M. Discovering this term allows us to see the link between S and P. The cause supplies the middle term for a scientific syllogism, and when we grasp it, we see that the effect follows with necessity. This technique can unproblematically be employed when we are dealing with questions in which we can naturally transpose the question of the fourth type to that of the second, but Lonergan notes that it was not in his logical works, but in his metaphysics that Aristotle attempts the answer. In fact, Aristotle does this only at the end of *Zeta*. After subjecting the ideas of substance and form to a dialectical analysis Aristotle recommends the need for the fresh start.

Before turning to the seventeenth chapter Lonergan returns to Socrates. It is clear that he seeks to use the idea of 'insight into phantasm' as an interpretive key or lens with which to view *Zeta*. This is obvious, for he interrupts his exposition of insight into phantasm by considering Aristotle's analysis of questions. In the previous section I gestured at the manner in which Lonergan developed the notion of insight in order to present a new angle on substantial form. He was, so to speak, perfecting and augmenting the old with the new, where in part, the 'old' included insights he gleaned from Aristotle.

Lonergan cites the *Meno*. Famously, Socrates was able to draw out of an untutored slave-boy what was in effect Pythagoras' theorem. Plato had been impressed by the fact that Pythagoras had found mathematics at the heart of nature, and even attempts to argue from the boy's anamnesis that the soul is immortal. But Lonergan attends to the fact that Aristotle was more impressed by the questions and the diagram. Lonergan would frequently explain very simple acts of understanding in this fashion, for example:

> [W]hy is this symbolically imagined uniformly round plane curve a circle? What has to be grasped to effect the transition from empirically given uniform curvature to the essentially defined circle. It is the formal cause of the circle, what grounds both the circularity of the circle and, as well, all of its demonstrable properties. But such a formal cause is the equality of radii in the circle.[xliii]

In *Verbum* Lonergan notes how in the *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle remarks how if a man were to stand on the moon during an eclipse he would simply see the earth blocking the light of the sun and producing shadow, and know immediately what an eclipse was. He would know the cause and the universal. We are able to grasp the universal because we understand. Aquinas reasoned that if 'one reached the universal from such brief acquaintance, that would be a matter of conjecturing that eclipses of the moon always occurred in that fashion.'[xliv] Lonergan's methodology aims at refocusing attention on acts of insight (rather than just acts of concept formation) because image is to insight is to universal concept as matter is to form is to essence, and Lonergan is convinced that form can be neglected, for example, when we focus simply on predication.[xlv]

Lonergan, then, returns to the last chapter of the seventh book of the *Metaphysics*. The main problem is how to transform questions of the fourth type into questions of the second type in such ultimate cases as, What is a man? What is a house? Aristotle's trick will be to recast a question and so yield the idea of the formal cause. For Lonergan, this move stands at the very genesis of the scholastic tradition within which he stands and to which he contributed.

The question, 'What is a man?' can be seen as manifesting the desire to understand. Just as we can wonder what an eclipse is even though we know how to use the word 'eclipse' and we recognise one when we see it, we can wonder what it is that makes a man a man. Just as we can regard the eclipse as a sensible datum into which we inquire, so we can wonder what sort of body this is – or if we are inquiring about a house, we wonder why the bricks and stones arranged in such a way. We change a 'what' into 'why.' Just as we grasp the reason for the eclipse by an insight, so Aristotle hits upon the cornerstone of his system – he originates the tradition that the scholastics will develop. Lonergan is immensely impressed. He is quite clear that Aristotle has not developed a fully consistent technical vocabulary, but he finds it a wonder that Aristotle managed to do as much as he did. Although there are some inconsistencies that Lonergan will carefully address, he will argue that Aristotle presses the Greek language into service for his metaphysical purposes. To simplify greatly, *to ti ên einai*, 'what a thing was to be' corresponds to the form, or formal cause: the cause of being, the cause that makes matter to be what it is, which in the case of man is his soul. Whilst it is not always clear-cut, this is not to be identified with the essence (the word '*ousia*' can be rendered as substance or 'entity,' and is sometimes 'essence'). Form makes matter to be an essence.

So, man is not his soul. In the eighth book Aristotle will return to the question of the composite, matter and form – man as body and soul. For essence is the composite of body and soul. Aristotle had inquired about man, *to ti estin*: what something is. This, properly, is the answer to our second question: what is it? giving the Latin invention, 'quiddity.' Essence, as Thomas remarks, is equivalent to quiddity. He notes the different perspectives in the first chapter of *On Being and Essence*: 'The name quiddity however is taken from what is signified by the definition. But essence means that through which and in which the thing has its existence.'[xlvi] Quiddity, so to speak, is the thing, not as viewed from nowhere, but as viewed in the light of human puzzlement, whereas essence is the thing in the light of what it can be and that it can be (its possibility of being is grounded in intelligibility, and this is referred to as essence).[xlvii] Aquinas, incidentally, is aware of the instability of the terminology. His early work, records a rare example, outside of his Aristotelian commentaries, of the transliteration, *quod quid erat esse*.

> Since that by which a thing is constituted in its proper genus or species is what is signified by the definition expressing what the thing is, it can be seen why philosophers changed the name essence to the name whatness, and this is what the Philosopher frequently calls that-which-it-was-to-be –namely, that through which a thing is some thing. It is also called form, insofar as form signifies the certainty of anything whatsoever, as Avicenna says in book 2 of his *Metaphysics*.'[xlviii]

To revert to Lonergan's article, Lonergan explains that because man is not his soul (a whole is not the part) an adjustment has to be made. Although we started with a question of the second type (what is man?) and recast it as type four (why is this body a man?) to arrive at an answer, (the soul) we still have to transpose back into the question of the second type. 'That transposition is from formal cause to essence or quiddity. Neglect of this second transposition by Aristotle had led to considerable obscurity: for among the meanings of 'substance' Aristotle will write the *causa essendi*, the *to ti en ên einai*, the form.'

Lonergan then notes how Thomas was quite clear about this. In a passage not mentioned by Kenny in his work on *Aquinas and Being*, Thomas explains, in effect, how the question, what makes F the thing it is can be understood in two ways.

> Essence and form are alike in this, that that by which something is said to be can be understood of both of them. But form is related to matter, which it brings to act; and

> quiddity is related to supposit, which is identified as having such and such an essence.[xlix]

Questions of the second type ask about the *suppositum*: for example, 'What is a man?' Transposed to the fourth type, they ask about the matter: for example, 'Why is this type of body a man?' Lonergan points out that both inquiries ask about *quo aliquid est* – that by which something is – which relative to the matter, is the form, but relative to the *suppositum*, is the essence, that is, the form plus common matter. In the former case, the cause of being is discerned; in the latter, the reason why the supposit is the kind of thing it is. Lonergan thus concludes the section, giving us, I think, some idea of what he regards metaphysical analysis is about – an attempt to get at the constitutive causes of being, an understanding of that upon which the being of things depend. In the next section Lonergan will claim that: 'the denial of the soul today is really the denial of the objectivity of the intelligible, the denial that understanding, knowing a cause, is knowing anything real.'[l]

CONCLUSION

For Aquinas, the practice of metaphysics involved untying knotty problems. The clarity and erudition of Kenny, I think, help us wrestle again with those questions that baffled Aristotle. Whilst I have not attempted to answer all the questions I have highlighted, and have made no attempt to tackle questions surrounding essence and existence, I have, I hope, indicated that Lonergan wrestled with these problems too, and pointed out his basis for a different set of answers. Lonergan maintained that the insight that leads to central form was quite different from that which leads to conjugate form. Kenny's critical account of predication, at least, seems to confirm that the two cannot be assimilated. Lonergan's method, however, is able to accommodate the idea that 'substance is essence.' Substance is not to be taken exclusively as the ultimate subject of predication. Whether or not one agrees, at least one might appreciate Aristotle's curtain raiser: 'From this we can draw an interesting conclusion, and it is this: from the dawn of philosophy continuously down to, and very much including the present, philosophers have been uninterruptedly engaged with, and uninterruptedly baffled by, the question "*What is that which is*?" Now this question *just is* the question "*What is substance?*"'[li]

ABBREVIATIONS

I have used the following abbreviations for the following works of Bernard Lonergan published by the University of Toronto Press. The date refers to publication by UTP.

CWL 2: Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas, 1997.

CWL 3: Insight: A Study of Human Understanding, 1992.

CWL 4: Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan, 1988.

CWL 5: Understanding and Being, 1990.

CWL 7: The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ, 2002.

CWL 10: Topics In Education The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education, 1993.

CWL 12: The Triune God: Systematics, 2007.

CWL 18: Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism, 2001.

Published in Geoffrey Chapman in Great Britain, 1985, there is:

Third: A Third Collection, Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.

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[i] Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 60. Hereafter, 'Aquinas.'

[ii] Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 37. Hereafter, 'On Being and Essence.'

[iii] Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Being* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p. 10, 73, 128, 144, 146, 192-3. Hereafter, '*Aquinas on Being*.'

[iv] CWL 7:47-51.

[v] *Aquinas on Being*, p. 29-30.

[vi] *Aquinas on Being*, p. 21, 54.

[vii] *Aquinas*, p. 45. See also, *Aquinas on Being*, p. 193.

[viii] 'Despite appearances, he did not mean to identify the essence (e.g. humanity) with the substance ('human being').' *Aquinas on Being*, p. 10. Lonergan explains the sense in which 'substance is essence' in CWL 7: 49-51.

[ix] This position, and the materialism it entails, is mooted by Aristotle in *Zeta* 2.

[x] The following argument is intended to contain both sense and nonsense.

[xi] Note how Aquinas speaks of 'conjunction' in *On Being and Essence*, p. 47.

[xii] Kenny thinks that Aquinas thinks that 'matter … is what individuates form.' Aquinas, p. 49.

[xiii] Aquinas on Being, p. 31.

[xiv] CWL 3:24. This phrase is also used of 'transcendental method.'

[xv] CWL 3:31-4.

[xvi] CWL 4:103; CWL 2:37 n. 120, 187 n. 197. Lonergan also recalled Aristotle's example of an eclipse, and again, he was quite explicit that an eclipse was an accident – where this word simply means that it has its being in another: our intellect and our respiratory system are accidents. There is no suggestion that 'accident' is opposed to 'essence.' On the contrary, accidents can be defined, and so are essences – albeit in a broad, qualified sense.

[xvii] CWL 3:460-1.

[xviii] CWL 3:162.

[xix] CWL:73.

[xx] CWL 7:31-3. Lonergan refers to 'transcendental one.'

[xxi] CWL 3:465-6.

[xxii] CWL 3:102-6.

[xxiii] 'Again, I will be asked for the operational meaning of the highly theoretical coincidental aggregate. The answer is that the appropriate operation occurs on the methodological level.' CWL 3:89.

[xxiv] CWL 3:91.

[xxv] CWL 3:105, 279. Cassirer, and the traditional definition 'rational animal' are mentioned in the original preface to *Insight*.

[xxvi] CWL 3:270-295.

[xxvii] CWL 3:271.

[xxviii] 'This is the critical point in philosophy.' CWL 2:189 n. 199.

[xxix] In other words, we grasp that when we grasp an accident we are distinguishing something in thought that is not separate in reality, and cannot be separate in reality (from the substance). To grasp the substance without grasping the accident, however, is to grasp what can be distinguished in thought even though it might be united (to the accident).

[xxx] For example, we think that there are termites. Moreover, we know termites are blind, not by inspecting their eyes, but in realising that they behave the same way in the dark as in the light. That is to say, we understand the functioning of the organ in the context of the behaviour of the organism – the part in the context of the whole. That is to say, we realise that organs must be understood not simply as similar to things that are apparently the same kind of thing (for termite eyes are not like the eyes of bees) but as a part of this individual organism. The intelligence of common-sense, in fact, is grounded in the insight that allows us to distinguish substance and accidents – data considered as a) of a kind ('such') and b) individual ('this'). The example, available online is McCabe's. Search for: *The Immortality of the Soul.* Reproductive termites are not blind.

[xxxi] CWL 7:47.

[xxxii] This metaphor is not meant to put us in mind of a pin-cushion, though. We can remove pins to leave the cushion, but not accidents to leave the substance.

[xxxiii] CWL 5:203.

[xxxiv] CWL 12:367.

[xxxv] CWL 5:211.

[xxxvi] CWL 7:55-7, or equivalently, the proportion: eye, sight, seeing.

[xxxvii] CWL 3:526-30.

[xxxviii] CWL 7:49-51.

[xxxix] Aquinas, p. 66.

[xl] Dummett, M. *The Origins of Analytic Philosophy* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996) p. 26.

[xli] CWL 2:26-29, 195 nn. 12 & 13; CWL 3:390-1; CWL 18:103-5 and n. 135-8, 158; CWL 10:170-2; CWL 12:579-87, 723; CWL 4:96-7, 134-5, 144 n. 4, 175 n. 39; CWL 5:50-2; Third:206.

[xlii] CWL 5:51

[xliii] CWL 4:96.

[xliv] This morning a perfectly formed rectangle of frost appeared in a band on my car roof. After a while I realised that the lamp-post had blocked the early morning sun. A little later I realised that the sun must have melted the residue more quickly than it was traversing the sky.

[xlv] Thus, when Lonergan discusses Aristotle on predication he is especially concerned to point out the 'scientific syllogism' whereby insight is communicated (see CWL 18:101-6) and the way that this is a step on the way to discovering form (see CWL 5:50).

[xlvi] *On Being and Essence,* p. 32.

[xlvii] The difference between 'quiddity' and 'definition' can be explained by regarding the question: what is it? Definition aims at the 'what' (what universal is this?) but 'quiddity' can pivot, so to speak, between 'what' and 'it' (what universal is this particular?). Lonergan acquired a fuller appreciation of this point only in 1949, as he worked out the meaning of 'conversion to phantasm.' See CWL 2:169 n. 96.

[xlviii] *On Being and Essence*, p. 31-2.

[xlix] CWL 2:29 n.63. The reference is *In V Metaphys*, lect. 10, §904.

[l] CWL 2:34

[li] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p168.