

Aristotele's and Islamic Philosophers'
Teachings in the Early Philosophical Writings
of Thomas Aquinas

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Summary

My objective is the way Thomas Aquinas thought on serious problems of philosophy and articulated his answers to them. To attain my object I use some early works of Thomas, particularly the one entitled *De ente et essentia*. In this work the Angelic Doctor discusses certain key metaphysical notions, such as being, essence, form, matter, potentiality and actuality. Furthermore, he explains the principle of individuation and provides the foundation for the distinction between essence and existence. Thomas closes his discussion by analyzing being itself.

Philosophers who help Thomas to achieve his aim are: Aristotle, Avicenna, Averroes, known as the Commentator, Boethius and the author of the *Book of Causes*. Thomas does not accept their teachings without critique. He scrutinizes them and either adopts or dismisses them according to their usefulness to the accomplishment of his objective. He accepts, however, the teachings of Aristotle he cites. This proves that Aristotle has exercised a decisive influence on Thomas and his entire age too.

The question arises as to what related Thomas, devout Christian, to Aristotle and the Arab philosophers Averroes and Avicenna. This is not a question of antiquarian interest; it needs, therefore, to be discussed with great caution. Based on the way the philosophers I mentioned philosophized, I express the opinion that all these philosophers acted within the proper limits of *thought* (*Nous*); they believed that *thought thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object*

of thought... thought seems to contain a divine element. The philosophers I referred to did not get entrapped in unproductive argumentation. Guided by Nous they set their differences aside and reached, each one in his own way, to the light of being.