

A History of Philosophy

23 Problem of Universals

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Okay, our topic today, as we continue the discussion of the early medieval period, working up to Thomas Aquinas, is the problem of universals. And I want to start with the formulation that Boethius gave to this problem there in the 10th century. And so, let's see.

Oh, I guess I need to come closer, don't I? There we go. Now all we need to do is to focus it. Got it.

Boethius' formulation of the problem of universals, he posed it in three questions to which, in the immediately ensuing discussion, a fourth question was added. First, do genera and species really exist in nature, that is to say, outside of the mind, or are they merely mental constructs? In other words, are there real forms? And, of course, the positive response to that question yields a realist conclusion. So we speak of a realistic theory of universals to the effect that there are real universals independently of simply universal concepts or universal application of terms.

Okay, realism. The second question, if they are realities, if they are realities, are they material or immaterial? That is to say, are they transcendent in some Platonic sense, or are these universals materialized in particulars? And there you have basically the distinction between the Aristotelian and Platonic traditions, two different kinds of realism, transcendent or imminent forms. The third question, therefore, is whether they exist apart from particulars or within them. And the fourth question that gets added is whether universal concepts are thought separately from particulars? That is to say, can we think of universals in abstraction? From any reference to particular examples, so that normally if I say brown, you tend to picture a certain kind of brown, or do you? If I say square, do you picture a certain drawing or not? Now, to think them separately from particulars is without reference to any particular example or mental image of that sort.

To think abstractly, to employ, would come to be known as abstract general ideas. We can talk of general ideas referring to a particular, but abstract general ideas without reference to particulars. And that view that there are universal concepts which we think separately from particulars produces the conceptualist as distinct from the nominalist theory.

Okay? Well, you can see how those questions could well have elicited quite a lot of discussion, which they did, and as a result, the problem of universals, as it developed, as the discussion developed, generated these initial four views. Aquinas subsequently takes it further. I've already mentioned that Bonaventure took it a little

bit further, and then we'll have to refer to Duns Scotus, who takes it further still, before finally William of Ockham repudiates the whole thing.

Okay? So, some words initially, then, about the first position, often labeled as extreme or exaggerated realism. A view that is ascribed to John Scotus Erugina, sometimes ascribed to Anselm, though he may be somewhat ambiguous in that regard. Now, exaggerated realism is the view that forms, the forms of species and genera, genera is the plural of genus, of course, that forms of species and genera exist in reality separately from particulars, while each particular participates in that one and the same form.

But forms not only exist in that transcendent fashion; somehow or other, they exist in particulars as well, so that there is an identity between particulars by virtue of participating in that one and the same form, numerically one, recurring in every particular case. This kind of strong realism. And the thing that differentiates individuals is simply whatever degree of privation there is, privation of participation fully in the form.

So, in varying degrees, each of us as individuals is less fully human than the ideal human would be. And our individuality consists in that appropriate degree of, what do you want to call it, ness, privation is the word that's used. And how do we know these forms? By dialectic and the illumination of the mind by the divine locus.

So, that's a sort of platonic view, very much so. And it was for a while at least, given theological application, which made it particularly attractive. If three particulars can participate in the essence of one form, then you can talk of three personal subsistences within the essence of one godhead.

So, it became the metaphysical scheme by virtue of which to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity. Similarly, with the idea of a church universal, a church in which particular individuals participate in the same way. Similarly, with regards to original sin as the universal, which is evidenced in all of our particular cases, or transubstantiation, where it is the particular accidents that we taste that remain the same, although the essence is changed, the underlying reality is changed from the essence of bread to the essence of body, from the essence of wine to the essence of the blood.

And so, the real presence in that transubstantiation sense of Christ in the Eucharist. So, exaggerated realism then was given all sorts of theological application, and understandably, people initially were very defensive of that kind of realism, because they saw it as theologically essential. One of the principal advocates of exaggerated realism was a man named William of Champeau.

Translate the French, and it comes out as Bill Field. Does it not? Later on, you'll come to Robert Grossetest, who comes out as Bobby Fathead, but okay. Sure, that's the literal translation, isn't it? 16th-century French didn't have the séquan-flex; it had an s instead of the séquan-flex, so Grossetest is Grossetat, Fathead, big head, okay.

Well, talking of William of Champeau, Bill Field, he seems to have advocated this position, but came under a great deal of criticism from Rosalind and Abelard, you can read about that in Stumpf, and so he retreated to an alternative position that is usually referred to as indifferentism, indifferentism, in which he admitted that forms exist in reality, yes, but only in the reality of the particulars, not in a transcendent sense, only in the reality of the particulars, and each particular, then, participates in that form, all members of a species indifferently participate in that one and the same form, so that in essentials, indifferent with regards to individual differences, in essentials we share the same form, in accidents, to use the Aristotelian terminology, in accidents rather than essence, that is to say in our individual differences, yes, we're different, but in essence, indifferent, and these forms, then, are known by virtue of the fact that all members of the species share these essential properties, which it's possible to recognize and to think of in abstraction, from those recurrent similarities in every member of a class, so the retreat, then, was to an immanentistic realism, the forms are imminent rather than transcendent, and are forms known by abstraction rather than by dialectic, it sounds as if he's moving closer to an Aristotelian kind of position, now, even that alternative was unacceptable to Rosalind, who was arguing for a nominalist position, so, according to the nominalist, there are no real forms, no real forms of a transcendent sort, and no real forms of an imminent sort, no real forms, nothing of them exists outside of the mind, now, within the mind, moreover, we do not think in terms of universals, there are no abstract general ideas, no universal concepts, oh, there are words that seem to have general reference, general terms, common nouns, the word human, the word brown, the word square, the word justice, well, sure, these are general terms, but the terms are only universal in the sense that they refer to the, every member of a certain class, the term is a particular term, the sound is a particular sound, it's written in a particular way, the word is a particular, but it is used universally for a whole class without reference to particulars, take it back, it is used for the whole class without reference to anything but particulars, okay, it's used with reference to all of the particulars in the class indiscriminately, indiscriminately, and so the term nominalism indicates that the only thing universal is the way the name, nominalism, the way the name is used in referring universally to a whole class, so for the nominalist, the only thing that's universal is the universal reference of a particular word, a particular term, there are no real universals, and we don't think universal concepts. Now, can you see the implications of that? Well, theologically, and Rosalind was accused of tritheism, three gods, similar, but not one, three similar particulars, tritheism, and he was accused of denying that there is any church universal, or any original sin, simply because those doctrines had been defended in terms of a theory of real universals, but quite apart from the theological questions, which incidentally led to the

condemnation of nominalism at the Council of Soissons in 1093, 1093, the Council of Soissons. In addition to those theological problems, you have the further philosophical consequence that if there are no real universals, there is no natural moral law inherent in the essence of human nature.

There is no natural moral law, and as you realize, the theory of moral law, natural moral law, had been developed in Augustine, and became very significant in Thomas Aquinas, but even at this stage in the 10th and 11th century, it had become a major part of the medieval philosophical tradition. No, Rosalind was able to draw that conclusion because natural moral law gives you universal moral obligations by virtue of the universality of human nature. How is the moral law within us? By virtue of the form, which gives us this essential nature and essential intentions, purpose.

So, nominalism. While it was condemned back there in the 11th century, when we get to William of Ockham in the 14th and 15th centuries, we find that he revived nominalism. He's usually spoken of as a major nominalist, and it is William of Ockham's nominalism that was assimilated by Martin Luther and had a tremendous impact in 16th and 17th-century philosophy.

Okay? So watch for this to recur. In effect, what nominalism is saying is that the classic kind of metaphysical explanation for the orderliness of nature and for cosmic justice, the classic explanation that goes back to Anaxagoras' noose, Heraclitus' logos, and the developing theory of forms, is false. So it would, in effect, destroy the whole metaphysical substructure of Greek and medieval thought.

It would be radically revolutionary. So understandable that it was rejected in that way. Now, a compromise position began to emerge, uh, represented by the conceptualism of Abelard, the conceptualism of Abelard, who was prepared to agree with Rosalind that no forms exist in reality, transcendent or eminent, but he disagreed with Rosalind about whether we think universal concepts.

Abelard insisted that universal concepts exist, occur within our minds, and that we do think them separately from particulars. We develop abstract general ideas. Now, admittedly, abstract general ideas aren't always very clear.

They may be very general, but we are able to conceive them abstractly, and that made possible the conceptualizing of universal principles, the conceptualizing of species, etc., though without corresponding reference to real forms of an extra mental sort. Now, those are the four main views. Uh, you get the general picture.

Admittedly, it's a little bit confusing at first, but, um, let's distinguish the question of whether there are universal concepts from the question of whether there are real universals. Okay, and you can begin to see how these positions line up. Extreme realism wants to say yes to both.

Extreme realism wants to say yes to both, and to affirm that there is a one-to-one correspondence between our concepts and real universals. And as much as dialectic gets at them with illumination, we're able to have the sort of knowledge that Plato envisioned. On the other hand, indifferentism will say yes, there are real universal concepts and real universals.

We do think universal concepts, and there are real universals. Though, um, not as clear about the relationship. It's much more approximate, the relationship between our concepts and things.

It's not as fine. Third, the nominalist wants to say no to both, and the conceptualist wants to say yes to the concepts and no to the real universals. Okay.

Well, I think he would say we simply learn to use the same sign for every kind of cat. Um, so what's magic about that? If you think of cat in general, you either have simply an image of a roughly cat-shaped thing, undefined with regards to particulars, not big or small, et cetera, et cetera. Or perhaps you don't picture something at all, but the cat simply, um, is a sound that rings in your mind that you can pick up on in referring to.

Yeah, though ask yourself, when we think abstractly, what do we think? You see, and in the final analysis, I think you have to say that abstract thought, independently of visualizing particulars, abstract thought uses symbols, either verbal symbols or some other kinds of what, um, Harold Best and the Conservatory calls language. You see, musical symbols or whatever. Yeah.

Uh, you think using symbols. Now, the symbol, then, is a way of thinking about an abstraction. Uh, when you think of America, what do you think? You think stars and stripes? National anthem at a football game? Picture of a map? What do you think? Um, or do you think of, um, um, what, certain ideals? What do you think? You see, and I think it's obvious that you can think of America in terms of, say, a picture of a map.

Uh, as I suspect somebody, um, uh, growing up in another culture might. I confess, as a kid growing up in Britain, uh, I thought of America in terms of skyscrapers and Hollywood movies. Um, you see, I didn't have an abstract idea of America.

I simply had certain picture images. Um, so it's not implausible to say, as Russell intends to, that the only universal things are words, and they're not universal; they're particular words. You see, it's not implausible, and I think it's only when you scrutinize the mental processes that you realize when you're thinking abstractly, you're not thinking the words, you're thinking with the words.

The words are the tools for abstract thinking. They're not abstract thinkers. You're not thinking the words.

Now, I grant you, in the first few weeks of an Intro to Philosophy course, you think the words. Do you remember that process? How the words are what you were thinking. Now, what does this word mean? What does that word mean? How do they fit together? You know, that sort of process is like learning a new language.

You think the words. Whereas by this stage, you learn to think in abstraction about theories of universals, and to ask rather abstract questions, in which the words are the vehicles for doing the thinking. But you're not thinking the words.

You're thinking about the ideas. Yeah, we don't know much about Rosalind's developed view, but I can tell you the way it developed when we get to William of Ockham. We'll deal with it more fully then.

But essentially, what William of Ockham did was to develop what nowadays we call a divine command theory. What's your ethic? Well, what God tells you to do. It's an ethic of obedience to God's commands.

An ethic of loving God as he's told you to love him. And what if God hasn't given specific commands? Then Ockham talked about the exercise of right reason. What's the right reason? Oh, it's figuring out the consequences of an action to see whether it contributes to the sort of things that God tells you to contribute to.

Okay? So basically, it goes back to a divine command theory of some sort. Now, that's the way it does, obviously, within a theistic setting. Outside of theistic settings, all you have without that metaphysic is likely to be pure empiricism.

You see? What does a pure empiricist do about ethics? Well, he becomes a consequentialist. Like John Stuart Mill, it is utilitarian. Or she becomes, you see, I said he on the consequentialist, now I'm switching genders to the she.

No, you know, we smile, we laugh, because we're adjusting to careful ways of using language. But you'll find that a lot of writers tend to alternate the gender of the pronouns. Out of deference to both.

I think it's a good way to do it. Alternatively, then, the empiricist might turn and develop some sort of ethic rooted in moral feelings, certain kinds of sentiments. David Hume does this.

The kind of ethical subjectivism, where there are subjective feelings that you're referring to when you say something is right or wrong. So subjectivism,

consequentialism, those are the typical outcomes of an empiricist approach rooted in a nominalist rejection of real universals. Now, you notice I didn't say relativism.

I didn't say relativism. Because not all empiricism leads to relativism. Obviously, if there's a divine command ethic, it's not relativistic, you see.

And a utilitarian has at least a utility principle, which isn't a relative principle. That's the one fixed point of reference, you see. So it isn't necessarily relativistic.

It's not fair to say that without universals, it's bound to be relativistic. No, it doesn't talk. No, he's saying there are no real, metaphysically real universals.

Plato was wrong. It's not that we don't know. That would be skepticism.

Why would we need to? Well, how would you do mathematics if you didn't think in terms of abstractions? The number two is an abstraction apart from particular sets of two. A straight line is an abstraction because it has length but no breadth, you see. So your question becomes, why do we do mathematics? Or if doing theology requires abstractions, why do we do theology? If metaphysics requires abstractions, if theoretical science was, why do we do those things? And you might say, well, they're interesting, aren't they? Or you might want to say, oh yeah, but think of the implications, the way we can use what we find in those areas.

Yeah. Or if you're a pure empiricist again, like John Stuart Mill or the 20th-century logical positivist, you'll say that sort of talk that has no direct reference, no reference to particulars, directly or indirectly, that sort of talk is utterly meaningless. Forget it.

Which is precisely what A.J. Ayer, 20th-century logical positivist, said, and we'll be reading him at the end of the second semester. Yeah. In which case, ethics becomes simply not even a matter of talking about your subjective feelings.

Ethics becomes a matter simply of emoting. So to say something is wrong doesn't say anything because the word wrong is an abstraction that doesn't have reference to anything. So instead of saying something's wrong, you just emote about it, you shout about it, you boo it.

Yeah. Once again. Yeah.

Well, there are really two ways to talk about the church as a whole. You can talk about it as a particular collection of individuals, in which case you use empirical generalization, you see. Or you talk about it as something other than or more than a particular collection of individuals, in which case you need to deal with an abstraction, like the abstraction, the body of Christ.

Notice the symbolism of the word, you see. Or the notion of the church universal. Or as the Apostles' Creed puts it, one holy catholic church, where the word catholic, of course, means universal.

So you can talk about something like the church either by using abstractions or by using empirical generalizations. And the nominalist is happy to do it the second way. Empirical generalizations.

Does that answer the question? Yeah. You see, what I'm trying to do is, I disagree with nominalism, I think it's mistaken. But I want to defend the plausibility of the position, even though I think it's wrong.

I don't think it's nonsense. How would Rosalind view God? As a particular being. Isn't that the way you view God? Yeah, but I mean, don't we view God abstractly? I hope not too abstractly.

I hope he's more than an abstract idea. Yeah, but in a certain sense we do. Well, it depends on what you mean by viewing him abstractly.

You asked what his view of God is. Rosalind's view of God is that God is the maker of heaven and earth, who became incarnate in his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, was born of a Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, etc., etc. Do you disagree? What about before the creation of the world? Yes, he existed before the creation of the world.

That's not an abstraction. That's simply saying a particular being existed before a particular time. So did I exist before a particular time.

Nothing abstract about that. Try again. You see, I think, David, in your question, there may be sort of a hidden equivocation on two different senses of abstract, where one sense of abstract is you're speaking of God before the creation of the world, you say abstractly.

No, I would say by extrapolation, extrapolating backwards. And the other sense is of using abstract ideas of universals. No, but you see, I have difficulty if the exaggerated realist—I'm not sure the exaggerated realist did this—but if the exaggerated realist wanted to say that God is a universal, you see, within which universal there are three particulars.

What do you mean God is a universal? No, God is a complex particular, three in one, one in three, you see. Trinitarian doctrine doesn't say God is a universal in the sense of a Platonic form, does it? No, somehow or other, the doctrine of the Trinity is saying that God is not being itself in the abstract, but a particular being who's the source of all other beings, you see. And the fact that you are talking of a particular

being who is invisible doesn't mean you're talking in the abstract; it means you're talking about something you don't see.

Well, what is kind? You're a particular being who's kind. I mean, you look for behavioral manifestations when you want to talk about somebody who's kind, and you look for behavioral manifestations when you want to talk about somebody who's holy. But then wouldn't you say that that would lead to a universal statement, because each one has, I mean, coming from a conceptualist point of view? Yeah, but you see, be careful, because the fact that you make a universal statement may simply be a matter of generalization.

A universal statement logically might have this form. Take it back, you see, that's a universal statement. Or another universal statement would be something like, if everybody says that, that would be a universal statement.

Now, you're not concerned about universal statements; if you're talking about universals, you're talking about statements about universals. You see, in neither of those is a statement about universals. The first one's a statement about particulars, a general statement about particulars.

The second one is a particular statement about a particular morning. Neither of them are statements about universals. Okay, that's that subtle equivocation there again.

Yeah, Kristen. Yes, but you see, the doctrine of original sin doesn't just say that all people are sinners. It says that in some way we all participate in Adam's sin.

You see, that's a different statement. And to say, participate in Adam's sin, is like saying we're particulars participating in a universal, you see. Yes, could well be.

But what is the vehicle of participation? You see, is it that there is a common humanness, a common human nature, a real form imminent within, so that what Adam did messed up that one real form that we all have a part in, you see, which is one way of doing it. Even though in the Tertullian tradition and the Stoic tradition, it would be the particular soul that contained all the souls of the successors that was messed up, you see, so that in the reproductive process, we get messed-up souls. You see, because in that Traducian theory, the souls as well as the bodies of all of a person's descendants are contained within the seed of the parent, you see.

Yeah, and so the seeds carry the congenital weaknesses. Yeah, yeah. You mean, how does the view of original sin? Yeah, the argument, if one takes the Traducian view that the seed of the father contains the souls of the descendants, and Jesus Christ did not have an earthly father, you see, then he was immune from inheriting original sin.

So it ties in beautifully, which is often what made certain theories attractive, that it tied in beautifully. Well, let's get back to universals, shall we? Fascinating things. It makes me wish that somebody at the conference this week were doing a paper on the logic of original sin in some of the medievals, but we don't have one of those.

All right, now, what about Aquinas in relationship to this theory of thorns, these theories of thorns? Now, can you hark back in your mind to what I was saying yesterday in surveying the beginnings of medieval thought about the influence of the Aristotelian tradition? What I was saying was about Averroes, the Arabian philosopher, the Muslim philosopher, Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle, which involves the claim that matter is eternal and there is no individual immortality, and these two assertions were viewed as making Aristotle incompatible with Christianity, so that Bonaventure said a hearty no to Aristotle and continued with his Platonism. Actually, what Bonaventure proposes is that the archetypes, the forms as archetypes, are in the mind of God, so that a God who, like Aristotle's God, is thinking, is not just thinking on his own thinking processes, but is thinking on those archetypal ideas, those exemplars in his own mind. And inasmuch as those archetypes, those forms in the mind of God are forms not only of species and genera, but of all particular qualities as well, it follows that God can think on every particular combination of qualities that is imaginable, and in that sense can think on every possible individual.

God can know individuals, and a God who can know individuals can be said to create individuals and isn't stuck with simply being a final cause. He can be an efficient cause as well, the creator of the universe. So God creates individuals with those particular qualities which he has, in his wisdom, archetypes for, in combination, you see? And in creating those individuals, he then creates minds with particular qualities, bodies with particular qualities, and as I indicated last time, he conceives of a common matter that is neutral with respect to the distinction between bodily qualities and soul qualities, rational qualities, so that the combination of soul and body is able to survive the dissolution—did I say of soul and body?—of rational soul and matter, and the matter that makes up the rational soul is able to survive the dissolution of the physical, you see? And so individual immortality is possible.

Well, Bonaventure then developed his position in response to Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle, which said no individual immortality. God cannot create, let alone create individuals, because he only thinks on his own thinking, you see? But Aquinas—and this is where he comes in, you see—Aquinas chooses rather to modify Aristotle, if in other ways Aristotle's metaphysic with its teleology, a teleology that's much more explicit than in Plato, if Aristotle's metaphysic with its teleology is in other ways preferable to the Platonic tradition, can we then doctor up Aristotle's metaphysic to make it compatible with Christianity? And taking a cue from the things which Bonaventure had found missing, what Aquinas does is to add to Aristotle's metaphysic first the exemplarism of Augustine, the view that forms are exemplars,

archetypes, in the mind of the logos. Now, you don't find the logos wandering around in Aristotle's metaphysics.

All you have is an unmoved mover, not a logos in embodying all of the wisdom of eternal ideas, you see? So Aquinas adds the logos doctrine with its exemplars in the mind of God, and with that, the assertion that God is the good. So that for Aquinas, you see, his ethic is not going to be one in which human fulfillment is the good, as it was for Aristotle. You see, human fulfillment is not the highest good.

God is the highest good, and Aquinas wants to follow Augustine in that regard. Now, that's the first thing he adds, that exemplarism. God the logos, God the highest good, God ultimately is the exemplar for all creation, and all creation seeks to be like God.

It's the inner teleology. Now, he also wants to add the claim that God knows his creatures, and so could create individuals of various kinds, and create them out of nothing rather than out of matter, out of an eternal matter. So God knows his creatures, knows them in advance, and so could create them.

Exni, hello. Now, that's what he wants to add. And the question is, how does he do it? This is what he wants to do.

How does he do it? Well, let me sketch something in now that we'll be tracing through in more detail next week. Let me first point out that his *Summa Theologica*, which is one of his two major works, we have some excerpts from it in the anthology. His *Summa Theologica* was written in response to Averroists, in response to people with that interpretation of Aristotle. Averroism, of course, among Christians, to handle the problems in Aristotle had that doctrine of twofold truth, so that there are truths of faith and truths of reason.

What, then, is the first topic that he takes up in his *Summa Theologica*? The relation of faith and reason. Well, the Averroists had this insufficient, inadequate conception of God. What's the second topic he takes up in his *Summa Theologica*? The conception of God.

And when we get to those five proofs of his that are famous for the existence of God, what I want to show you is that what he establishes is that you can use Aristotelian premises to argue for a non-Aristotelian God. Because the God that, in the conclusion of his proofs, is a God whose essence is to exist, a God who is the source of being as well as order and good, a God who knows exemplars, forms, in his own mind, an intelligent God who directs all things for a purpose. Those are things about God which Aristotle couldn't say.

In other words, the conception of God, even at the beginning of the *Summa Theologica*, is much more of God open to being the Christian God than is the case of

Aristotle's unmoved mover. Now, what is the crux of this? Well, the crux, as I see it, is twofold, and you can see how he takes the cues from Bonaventure. One, God is the logos.

God knows the forms in his mind, but in knowing the forms within his own mind, those exemplars, God knows every individual creature he has created or ever will create. How come? Well, you see, in knowing exemplars, God knows all that is possible. God knows all of the possibilities that are implicit in a material universe.

He knows the various possibilities, all of them, which he could draw out of prime matter. Now, prime matter is primary matter, apart from any form. A matter which already has some sort of form is called signate matter.

It's sort of designated matter, designated matter. But God understands all of the potential that there is in prime matter, potential which can be drawn out by the imparting of form. Now, it's not that prime matter already exists eternally.

It's not that prime matter can even exist by itself. He's Aristotelian. Matter and form are always in combination.

But knowing all possible combinations, he knows all of the possibilities that exist in this hypothetical thing, prime matter, you see. So that even matter has good possibilities and is to some degree good. Where did you hear a Greek saying that matter is good? You see.

Prime matter is good. So in the whole hierarchy of being, there are degrees of being and goodness all the way from God down to prime matter. And in actualizing some possibility that prime matter has, he brings something into being out of what? Nothing, because prime matter is nothing but an empty possibility.

He brings something into being, something out of mere possibility into actual existence. God imparts existence by giving form to what otherwise would be formless possibility. And every particular thing that he creates actualizes some such possibility.

Each individual thing then has its own possibilities, its own nature, which God knows. Each individual thing has its own telos, its own proximate end. A proximate end is its own particular end, as distinct from the ultimate end of all things of the creation as a whole.

The ultimate end of all things of the creation as a whole is to be like God, to glorify God, you see, to glorify God by virtue of achieving those proximate ends, those goods, which are the proximate ends. So every individual thing has its own good being like God in the way that, as an individual thing, its own nature is designed to be

like God in degree. And in that way fitting into the whole hierarchy of being such that the whole of creation, you see, in this hierarchy which doesn't have gaps and holes in it, so that as a whole it imitates God and is to the glory of God.

So what he does then with his theory of forms is, one, to say that forms are archetypes in God's mind, two, to say that these archetypes make it possible for every individual to have a God-given nature, and three, for that God-given nature to fit into the overall purpose of the cosmos, which is to be good like God is good, each part contributing in degree to the whole. And God, then, knowing the forms, knows the individuals, and the individuals within any species of every individual. Yeah, he doesn't call them forms of individuals; he calls them natures, but these individual natures include the essence of the whole species.