

However, if I am convinced that Dom Vagaggini is mistaken, I am far from thinking that he stands alone. The meaning of the question, quid sit,^{thought} is a rather recondite point and, as far as one can make out from text-books in Thomist philosophy and Thomist theology, quite a number of people are quite ready to think themselves Aristotelians and Thomists without paying much attention to

However, there is more in this issue than meets the eye. Many a reader will be asking himself ~~just~~ what on earth is meant by quid sit, by knowing an essence. It is not a point that the text-books make very clear. Still less is it a point that they tend to exploit. The answer commonly given to Anselm's ontological argument is in terms of an illegitimate transition from the ideal to the real orders. If St. Thomas regularly conceives the beatific vision as knowing God by his essence, still the common run of theologians much prefer the less technical vocabulary, quite comprehensible to Scotists, that was employed in the constitution of Benedict XII

The second condition is not easily understood. In the second study on verbum in the pages to follow some help, I hope, will be provided for those who wish to master this basic point of Aristotelian and Thomist thought. However, though the meaning of quid sit is recondite, its implications are quite manifest in the writings of Aquinas. The proper object of human intellect in this life is quidditas seu natura in materia corporali existens.¹² Hence, man in this life can know what material things are ~~xxxxx~~ and what the human soul is,¹³ but he cannot know what immaterial substances are but must have recourse to similitudes or analogies.¹⁴ In particular, while the fact that we naturally ask quid sit Deus bears witness to a natural desire to know God by his essence,¹⁵ still the fulfilment of that desire is vision of God enjoyed only by the blessed,¹⁶ and in this life we do not know quid sit Deus.¹⁷

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There are two aspects to the issue, one direct and the other reflexive or, if you prefer, one material and the other formal. The direct or material aspect is that both Anselm and Aquinas attempted to work out logically coherent accounts of the trinitarian analogy proposed by Augustine. The reflexive or formal aspect regards the logical or scientific status of these efforts (1) in ~~the~~ fact, (2) in the opinion of St. Anselm, (3) in the opinion of St. Thomas, ^{expressed} (4) in the actual procedure of St. Thomas, (5) in the opinion of Dom Vagaggini, (6) in the opinion of the present writer.