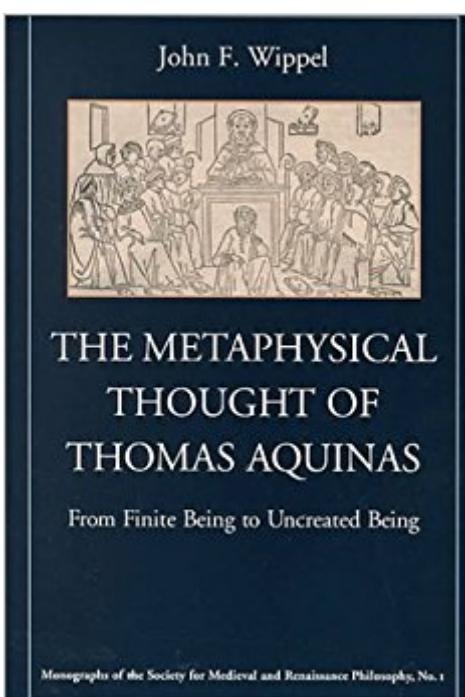


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# The Metaphysical Thought Of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being To Uncreated Being (Monographs Of The Society For Medieval And Renaissance Philosophy, 1)



## Synopsis

Written by a highly respected scholar of Thomas Aquinas's writings, this volume offers a comprehensive presentation of Aquinas's metaphysical thought. It is based on a thorough examination of his texts organized according to the philosophical order as he himself describes it rather than according to the theological order. In the introduction and opening chapter, John F. Wippel examines Aquinas's view on the nature of metaphysics as a philosophical science and the relationship of its subject to divine being. Part One is devoted to his metaphysical analysis of finite being. It considers his views on the problem of the One and the Many in the order of being, and includes his debt to Parmenides in formulating this problem and his application of analogy to finite being. Subsequent chapters are devoted to participation in being, the composition of essence and esse in finite beings, and his appeal to a kind of relative nonbeing in resolving the problem of the One and the Many. Part Two concentrates on Aquinas's views on the essential structure of finite being, and treats substance-accident composition and related issues, including, among others, the relationship between the soul and its powers and unicity of substantial form. It then considers his understanding of matter-form composition of corporeal beings and their individuation. Part Three explores Aquinas's philosophical discussion of divine being, his denial that God's existence is self-evident, and his presentation of arguments for the existence of God, first in earlier writings and then in the "Five Ways" of his *Summa theologiae*. A separate chapter is devoted to his views on quidditative and analogical knowledge of God. The concluding chapter revisits certain issues concerning finite being under the assumption that God's existence has now been established. John F. Wippel, professor of philosophy at The Catholic University of America, was recently awarded the prestigious Aquinas Medal by the American Catholic Philosophical Association. In addition to numerous articles and papers, Wippel has coauthored or edited several other works, including *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas* and *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines*, both published by CUA Press. PRAISE FOR THE BOOK: "The quality of Wippel's historical research and interpretation and the detail of his argumentation make this a work that will have to be taken account of in any further studies of this topic." - John Boler, *International Studies in Philosophy* "A carefully and solidly argued presentation of Aquinas's metaphysics by a scholar of medieval philosophy and a superb metaphysician. It should stand on the library shelf of every student of medieval philosophy, sharing the stage with Wippel's other dependable works." • Prof. Stephen F. Brown, Boston College "In Wippel we have a master of medieval metaphysics who is at the height of his powers and who can bring to bear on this work of interpretation years of study, not only of Aquinas but also of the whole context of medieval metaphysics in which Aquinas thought and wrote."

The result is a monumental work which will quickly become the definitive work on Aquinas's metaphysics."•Prof. Eleonore Stump, St. Louis University" Wippel proposes to 'set forth Thomas Aquinas's metaphysical thought, based on his own texts, in accord with the philosophical order. . . .' This is a bold, even audacious proposal, but one that Wippel succeeds in realizing, thanks to his expansive and detailed knowledge of a field in which he has worked for more than twenty years. He has total command not only of the works of Thomas, of his sources, and of his earliest commentators, but also of the secondary literature of this century in English, Italian, French, German, and Spanish."•Gregorianum

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Admittedly, I did not finish the study. However, granted the time and the cabin in the woods I'd return for a closer inspection. But...

I enjoyed this work. In particular, Wippel's discussion of the three meanings of participation as found in Thomas' "Commentary on the Hebdomads of Boethius" is something which is not brought out often enough in discussions of metaphysics. I was, however, somewhat perplexed by Wippel's insistence on delaying so long the question of God's existence. This would have made some sense if the demonstration of God's existence somehow depended upon the "logical" participation that all

created beings have in "esse," namely the "esse commune" of creatures. But since that is not the case, and we could equally prove the existence of God from one creature rather than all creatures in common, why spend so much time avoiding the issue of God's existence? And since creatures have their "to be" (esse) only by analogy with God's, and this is most certainly an analogy of attribution, not the internal analogy of proper proportion between "esse" and "essentia" in creatures, does not the very "logical" community of creaturely "esse" depend upon the existence of God as the ground of that community? Perhaps I am risking misunderstanding by saying this, but it strikes me as a somewhat Heideggerian move, rather than a Thomistic one. It raises Heidegger's "Sein" to a philosophic preeminence rather than ground "Sein" by analogy in God's transcendence. There is the real risk that God will indeed simply become the Highest Being (ens), rather than "Ipsum Esse Subsistens." Surely, this is not Wippel's intention, but by putting this forward in such an order, he seems to adopt a doctrine of analogy at variance with Thomas'. Perhaps this order of exposition is one of the things the previous reviewer objected to. Gilson maintained a theological order of exposition beginning with God and descending to creatures, the very pattern of the Summa. Perhaps the order can be inverted in a purely philosophical mode, but not lightly so, nor without investigating and defending explicitly the repercussions for a doctrine of participation and analogy. Certainly, in any exposition real relations and communities must precede logical ones, and I do not see that one can posit a real community of beings when the Prime Analogate is missing, without making ens commune into another supposit. To sum up then, this is a valuable book, but I have some reservations about the order of exposition.

A classic.

Really just a wonderful monograph. It is, so far as I know, the most in-depth treatment on the market today of St. Thomas' metaphysics. Msgr. Wippel has a thoroughness and attention to detail that is very hard to find elsewhere. It is not an introductory text, or even decipherable by those unfamiliar with Aristotelian or Thomist metaphysics. (But a careful reading of Feser's "Scholastic Metaphysics" should at least help reveal to the curious mind what he needs to learn in order to follow Wippel's text.) As another reviewer noted, many of the footnotes are in the original Latin. Fortunately, most of the texts which these footnotes indicate can be found translated into English online by the Dominicans, or otherwise on [for quite cheap](#). Do be sure to read them -- especially those from Aquinas' commentaries on Aristotle's works. My only complaint, if only it were due, is that I would like to see Wippel make a book-length treatment of the five ways. Those short passages from the

Summa Theologica easily deceive us as to how much is implicit in them. (Actually, I would be overjoyed to see each way given its own volume at the level of scholarship Wippel has demonstrated more generally in this text. But I value the health and sanity of our Thomist authors.)

This was one of the assigned texts for my course on Metaphysics and it is a worthwhile one. Wippel approaches every question from every angle. As others have said, it can be difficult to follow so I'd also recommend taking a course on the great Angelic Doctor and on metaphysics in general to go along with your reading of this text. I'd also issue a caution. Unfortunately, the footnotes seem to be in Latin which is great if you're a Thomistic scholar who knows the language, but not so great if you're the average American. That says something however if that is my greatest concern. I do recommend this book.

I read the author's classic History of Philosophy book in 1971 (published in 1969) and that's what really got me fascinated with philosophy. This book is no different - he begins with how Aquinas lays the foundation for metaphysics thru Epistemology in answering question 5 of the commentary of Boethius on Aristotle and then moves into Parmenides question of the One and the Many that Aquinas rewrites to prove the necessity of "Being". The "Being" Aquinas comes up with though isn't Parmenides unchanging material universe but pure spirit (GOD) that creates "intelligences" (angels) that are potency and form and then composite substances like man who are form and matter.

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