AN EXPOSITION OF HAMLET'S EXHORTATION TO USE REASON

Proemium

In an age as unreasonable as our own, the twentieth century, where mad men and fools have so often misled nations (it is the plague of the times, says Shakespeare, when "mad men lead the blind") and where individuals prefer to follow their own fantasies and feelings rather than reason, and where even scientists are willing to admit contradictions in things and where the irrational followers of Nietzsche and others run amuck, we surely have need of an exhortation to use reason.

And the philosopher has a special concern with such an exhortation. For the true philosopher is a lover of wisdom and wisdom is the chief and greatest perfection of reason. Therefore, the philosopher most of all should love reason and the use of it. Hence, it belongs most of all to the philosopher to exhort or urge men to use reason.

And like the saying "physician heal thyself", the philosopher also needs an exhortation to use reason, especially one that tells us what reason is and what it is to use reason. It is laughable to pursue wisdom which requires a long and most difficult use of reason without seeing first what it is to use reason and why we should use reason.

The Best Short Exhortation to Use Reason

Perhaps the best short exhortation to use reason is that found in just forty-nine words of Hamlet written on seven lines of blank verse in Act IV, Sc. 4 of *Hamlet:*

> .....What is a man,
> If his chief good and market of his time
> Be but to sleep and feed: a beast, no more.
> Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not

That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us un'used.

Hamlet's Exhortation is useful for understanding and defining what is order, and what it is to be first or second (etc.) or last and what is a beginning or a middle or an end.

The words of the Exhortation are also useful for understanding and defining what is the act and use of reason and what is reason (the ability).

Further, they are useful for understanding what is the difference between a man and a beast, why man is more than a beast, what a man is and what a beast is.

In addition, they are useful for understanding the connection between good and end, the necessary connection between what man is and his chief good and the end of his life, that the chief good of man is better than the chief good of the beast and why the chief good of man is more than the chief good of a beast, what the chief good of man has above that of the beast, and what the chief good of man or the end of his life is.

The words of the Exhortation are also useful for seeing the order among these definitions.

At last, they are useful for understanding why man should use his reason or use it more fully than he does. Hamlet touches upon five most excellent and powerful general reasons why man should use his reason or use it more than he does.

The Exhortation is Written in Blank Verse

We should first consider the exterior form of Hamlet's words, their verse form, and then the infinitely more important meaning of those words.

Hamlet's exhortation is written in what is called *blank verse*. Blank verse, for those not versed in these matters, is unrhymed iambic pentameter. An *iamb*

in English verse is two syllables with the accent falling upon the second syllable. *Pentameter* means that there are five such feet in a line or ten syllables with the accent falling upon the even numbered syllables. (To avoid monotony, the number of syllables or the place of the accent is sometimes varied.) Since the thought of the exhortation begins with the seventh syllable of the first line and ends on the sixth syllable of the seventh line, the exhortation amounts in quantity to six lines of blank verse. But for the purpose of referring to specific words in Hamlet's Exhortation, we will number seven lines (the first having only four syllables and the last six syllables)

Why is the exhortation written in verse?

First, verse is more pleasant than prose. The use of verse occasionally is not below the dignity of the philosopher. Boethius wrote verse alternating with prose in each part of his great work *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Hamlet, however, has chosen the meter closest to daily speech.

But a second and far more important reason is that verse is more easily memorized and remembered. It is necessary to always remember this exhortation since it is a permanent and universal beginning of the whole use of our reason. And one must think of these words carefully and frequently before one begins to understand them fully. One should not be altogether surprised by the attention given to the words of Hamlet's exhortation in what follows and the length of the consideration of their meaning and significance. Indeed, many words in the play *Hamlet* have for a long time engaged the minds of many authors. And one cannot think often of these words if one cannot remember them. William J. Rolfe has preserved a general observation on the attention which has been given to the words of Hamlet in his edition of the play:

> The play is one of the longest...and the amount that has been written about it far exceeds that on any other of Shakespeare's works. Furness does not exaggerate when he says: "No one of mortal mould (save Him 'whose blessed feet were nailed for our advantage to the bitter cross') ever trod this earth, commanding such absorbing interest as this Hamlet, this mere creation of a poet's brain. No syllable that he whispers, no word let fall by anyone near him, but is caught and pondered as no words ever have been, except of holy Writ. Upon no throne built by mortal

> hands has ever'beat so fierce a light' as upon that airy fabric reared at Elsinore."[1]

In the more recent edition of the play Harold Jenkins has written:

> ...such is the fascination of this play, the most discussed in the world, that hardly a line of dialogue has failed to attract comment and an article or two in the journals.[2]

A third reason why the exhortation is written in verse or meter is to call our attention to the likeness between what is said in the exhortation and numbers and what is found in numbers. Shakespeare often calls what is written in verse *numbers*. And Hamlet himself in his letter to Ophelia, after some verses addressed to her, calls them *numbers*:

> O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers. I have not art to reckon my groans.[3]

Numbers and what is found in them are like what is in the exhortation first as regards definitions. There are many definitions in the exhortation and Aristotle notes the likeness of definitions to numbers.[4] Hence, Hamlet speaks of man without reason or the use of reason as being *no more* than a beast.

Proportion, or the likeness of ratios, is first seen in numbers and the exhortation rests upon many proportions as can be seen especially in the first part (the first three lines).

Moreover, although thoughts are like numbers rather than continuous quantities,[5] nevertheless as ratios of numbers are said to be in continuous proportion by a certain likeness to the continuous, so too, definitions and syllogisms can be said to be continuous by the same likeness. In Hamlet's Exhortation, for example, the definitions of order, of the act of reason, of reason, and of man are continuous and it is necessary to see this. Hamlet syllogizes and syllogizing is like reckoning with numbers and especially when one syllogizes from a proportion like one does in mathematics.

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[1] *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, Preface, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1894, p. 5
[2] The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, edited by Harold Jenkins, Preface, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1982, p. viii
[3] *Hamlet* , Act II, Sc. 2
[4] *Metaphysics*, Book Eight, 1043b 32-1044a 14
[5] Aristotle, *About the Soul* (*De Anima*), Book One, 407a 7-10

There is also the symbolism of the numbers to exercise the minds of the Pythagoreans and Platonists and Straussians amongst us who will, of course, note that Hamlet writes his *wise* exhortation on seven lines beginning on the seventh syllable of the first line. Seven is an old symbol of wisdom and seven is also the age of reason. Further, there are exactly forty-nine words in the exhortation and forty-nine is the square of seven and the age in which Aristotle said reason is best. Further, Hamlet *completes* the exhortation using the equivalent of six lines of blank verse by ending on the sixth syllable of the last line. Six is the first perfect number with parts perfectly ordered. And this signifies then the perfection and order of his exhortation. There can also be seen deep significance in his writing ten syllable lines of iambic pentameter. Ten, the number of syllables on a line of iambic pentameter, is a symbol of the law which is something of reason. And the five and two in iambic pentameter is also deeply significant. Five is the number of the virtues of reason in Book Six of the Nicomachean Ethics which perfects the two parts of reason - looking and practical. Two is also a symbol of reasoned out knowledge for Plato, as we learn in the first book *On the Soul*. But perhaps this way madness lies.

The Division of Hamlet's Exhortation

Hamlet's exhortation has two parts.

In the first part (the first three lines), Hamlet asks a question and answers it on the basis of a proportion between man and beast and the chief goods of each. The question is: "What is a man if his chief good and market of his time be but to sleep and feed?" and the answer is: "a beast, no more".

In the second part (lines four through seven), Hamlet brings out what man has, or what God has given him, in addition to what the beast has and also what is found in man's chief good that is not found in the chief good of the beast. In this second part, Hamlet also defines order, the act and use of reason, and reason (the ability) itself and (with the help of the first part) enables us to complete the first definitions of man and beast.

In the two parts together, Hamlet touches upon at least five general reasons why we should use reason, or use it more than we do. We can see these five reasons after we have examined the two parts in some detail.

The difficulty of fully understanding Hamlet's Exhortation comes from its brevity and universality. But as Polonius says (while exemplifying the opposite), "brevity is the soul of wit" (*Wit* here means wisdom). Considerable laying out of Hamlet's words, then, and much leading by the hand from less universal statements, examples, likenesses and opposites are necessary before we can hope to rise to the level of Hamlet's thought. This is especially true when we consider Hamlet's definition of reason. Other words of *Hamlet* help us here, but we must also go to the words of many other thinkers and our own experience.

The First Part of the Exhortation

The proportion and implicit syllogism of the first part

When we examine more carefully the first part of Hamlet's exhortation, we can see that the question and answer in it are based on a proportion or likeness of ratios among four things. And that this proportion involves implicitly if-then statements from which if-then syllogisms arise. Each of these should be unfolded.

The four things in the proportion are man and his chief good and the beast and his chief good. Aiming at clarity and avoiding the pedantry of teaching, Hamlet speaks *exemplariter* of the beast's chief good as "to sleep and feed". This fits our cat Tabitha who purrs when she's fed and when she sleeps.

The proportion could be first stated thus: the chief good of man is to man as the chief good of the beast is to the beast. Then, alternating the proportion, as the chief good of man is to the chief good of the beast, so is man to the beast.

From this proportion, we could form if-then statements something like what the mathematician does. If the mathematician sees that A is to B as X is to Y, he can form any of three if-then statements. If X is more than Y, then A is more than B; If equal, equal; if less, less. Hamlet's question and answer differ only in form from this if-then statement: if man's chief good is no more than the good of the beast, then man is no more than a beast.

And this if-then statement is the beginning of a powerful hypothetical or if-then syllogism which can be stated thus: If man's chief good is no more than the chief good of a beast, then man is no more than a beast. But man is surely more than a beast. Hence, it cannot be true that man's chief good is no more than the chief good of the beast.

No man wants us to treat him as if he were no more than a beast. We would all think it wrong, if faced with the choice between saving the life of a man or a beast, we were to save the life of the beast. But despite thinking themselves better than a beast, many men pursue the goods we have in common with the beast as if they were our greatest good. But this statement upon which their life seems to be based, that is, that our chief good is eating and sleeping and sexual pleasure is refuted by the rejection of its consequence, that man is no more than a beast.

One could also, of course, reason from the statement that if man is more than a beast, then the chief good of man is more than the chief good of the beast. Affirming the antecedent "man is more than a beast" and we are forced to admit the consequent, the chief good of man is more than the chief good of the beast.

These syllogisms have something of the power and certitude of the mathematician's syllogisms based on proportions. It is as if the mathematician had seen this proportion: Half of six is to three and as half of four is to two. And then said: What is a three if it be half of four? A two, no more.

The Connection between What a thing is and its End or Chief Good

But what is seen explicitly in the first part of the exhortation is the necessary connection between what man is and what is his chief good. Just as there is a necessary connection between three and half of six, and between two and half of four, so likewise, there is a necessary connection between what man is and his chief good and between what a beast is and his chief good. Plato and Aristotle have taught us why there is a necessary connection between what a thing is and its end and good. The middle terms are *a thing's own act* and *a thing's own perfection*. A thing's own act done well is its end or purpose and a thing's own act (what it alone can do or do better) is determined by what it is.

Likewise, a thing's own perfection is its end and the perfection of things different in kind is different. The perfection of the eye is not the same as the perfection of the ear because *what an eye is* is not the same as *what an ear is*.

Hence, when we see in the second part what is necessary to complete the definition of man, that is, what he has in addition to the beast, we are prepared again to reason more perfectly to what man's chief good is.

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Before turning to the second part of Hamlet's Exhortation, there are some words to look at more closely in the first part.

The words *chief good*

The word *chief* added to good signifies both that it is the greatest good and also the good under which all other goods are placed. Antony says about Cleopatra

> Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end.[6]

Why Hamlet use the metonym *time* for our life

The word *time* here is a metonym for the life of man. The name of the measure is used for the measured. Man's life is measured by time for it begins and ends in time. But it is especially appropriate to use this metonym for the life of man rather than the life of a beast or a plant. Man lives in time more than the other animals. Hence, in the third book *About the Soul*, Aristotle calls man the animal with the sense of time:

> Desires come to be contrary to each other. This happens when reason and concupiscence are contrary. This comes about in those having the sense of time: for the mind urges us to hold back on account of the future while concupiscence on account of the

[6]Shakespeare, *Antony & Cleopatra*, Act IV, Sc. 8. The Yale Shakespeare says there that "'Crown' was used in the sense of fulfillment, the last final achievement."

> present - for what is pleasant now seems to be simply pleasant and simply good on account of not seeing the future.[7]

Thomas Aquinas comments on these words:

> In man there are contrary desires, one of which the continent follow and others resist. He says therefore that desires are able to become contrary to each other and this happens "in those having the sense of time"; that is, those who not only know what is in the present, but who consider the past and the future - because the understanding sometimes commands one to draw back from something concupiscible on account of the consideration of the future, as when to one with a fever, it seems from the judgment of the understanding, that he ought to abstain from wine lest the fever become warm.[8]

Man begins to differ from the beast in his acts when he considers not just the here and now, but takes into account the past and the future before he acts. And as we will see in the second part, man is the animal with reason and reason is the ability to look before and after and the first meaning of *before* and *after* is that of time. Indeed, as Aristotle shows in the fourth book of *Natural Hearing*,[9] time would not fully be without the numbering soul.

The word *market*

The word *market* can be explained in two ways. It can mean more or less the same as *mark* which means the end or goal aimed at. Or it can be taken for what man spends his time or life on or trades them for. But since that for the sake of which is the definition of end, the second explanation does not differ in substance from the first. Thus York says:

> For that's the golden mark I seek to hit[10]

Why Hamlet couples *his chief good* and *market of his time*

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[7]*De Anima*, Book III, Chapter 10, 433b 5-10
[8]Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Book III of About the Soul*. Lectio 15, n. 829
[9]*Physics*, Book IV, 223a 21-29
[10]Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part II*, Act I, Sc. 2

By this coupling, Hamlet points out two things. One is that the *good* and the *end* are the same. And the second is that the good or end of *man* is the same as the end or good of *human life*.

Why Hamlet says *no more*

The definitions of things are like numbers. When Hamlet says that man would be "a beast, no more" if his chief good were no more than that of the beast, he also insinuates by the words *no more* that man does have something in common with the beast (which is to be an animal) and that the difference between man and the beast is like that of numbers, as Aristotle, following Plato, teaches us in the eighth book of the *Metaphysics* [11] where the addition or subtraction of a unit gives a different species. Hence, we can begin to understand better the likeness of the implicit syllogisms in Hamlet's question and answer to the reasoning of the mathematician. To say it again, it is as if the mathematician were to ask: What is a three if it be half of four? And the answer would be: a two, no more.

Hence also when, in the second part, we consider what man has in addition to the beast, namely reason, we can complete the first definition of man as an animal with reason.

The Second Part of the Exhortation

In the second part, Hamlet tells us what man has in addition to the beast and what therefore will be found in his chief good (but not in the chief good of the beast).

But if we examine more closely the second part, we can see that Hamlet has given us implicitly five continuous definitions. Definitions are said to be continuous when one definition, or what is defined by it, enters into another. In geometry, for example, the definitions of rectilineal plane figure, of quadrilateral and of square are continuous. In logic, the definitions of sign, name, predicable

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[11] 1043b 32-1044a 14

and genus are continuous. In the philosophy of nature, the definition of motion is continuous with both the definition of nature and that of time. (Something like this is also found in syllogisms. When the conclusion of one syllogism is the premiss of another, the two syllogisms can be called *continuous*. Even elementary theorems in Euclid are based on continuous syllogisms.)

In the second part of Hamlet's Exhortation, the definitions of order, of the act or use of reason, of reason, (and with some help from the first part) of man and of beast are continuous. The definition of order is found in the definition of the act of reason and reason is defined by its act and man is defined by reason and the beast by negating something in the definition of man.

Order is defined as a before and after. Hamlet uses the definition of order (before and after) in his definition of the act of reason which is a discourse in which there is looking before and after. And reason is defined as the *capability*, or (I shorten this to) the *ability, for large discourse, looking before and after.* (Reason, like every ability, must be defined by what it is an ability for.) Man can then be defined as the animal with reason. And the beast as an animal without reason.

Hamlet gives us the act (large discourse, looking before and after) for which reason is the ability in lines four and five before he speaks in line six of reason as a capability or ability.

Since we know that we have an ability for some act only through the presence of that act in us (as we know, for example, that we have the ability to see by seeing and the ability to hear by hearing), it is reasonable that Hamlet mentions the act of reason before speaking of our having the ability called *reason*.

Further, we must know the act of reason before we can define reason. For every ability is known and defined by the act for which it is an ability.

Hence, in lines four, five and six, Hamlet gives us the elements of a definition of reason. Reason is the *ability for large discourse, looking before and after*.

The definition of man is also a beginning for knowing man's own act. Since man is an animal with reason, the act with reason must be man's own act. And since a thing's own act done well is its end, we can be led into ethics from

Hamlet's exhortation since ethics is based on a knowledge of the end of man. Likewise the definition of man enables us to know what is the natural road in human knowledge. Since man is an animal with reason, the natural road in human knowledge must be the road from the senses into reason. But let us return to the exhortation itself.

We should now examine some key words in the definition of reason and of order. Hamlet tells us that reason is the ability for large discourse, looking before and after and order is a before and after. Four words should be examined here: *discourse, large, looking* and *before*. Each of these words has more than one meaning and not by chance. We cannot attempt here a complete exposition of any one of them. But we can indicate some of the main senses and their order so as to better understand Hamlet's definition of reason and order.

The Word *Discourse*

The words *discourse* and the shorter *course* come from the Latin word for *running*. Both the Latin and the English words name first, of course, the well-known act of our legs. Close to this meaning of *course* is the place where we run, as when we speak of a *race-course*.

Then the word *course* or *running* is carried over and applied to all other outwards motions and changes and actions. A river is said to run. Or a man is said to be run down. And since motion is measured by time, we also use the word *running* in talking about time; as when we say that "time is running out". Likewise, we speak of a *course of action*. The famous American *Declaration of Independence* begins with these familiar words:

> When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another...

And in *King John*, when Prince Henry at the death of his father sees the course of human life and how it ends. Prince Henry on death of father:

> Even so must I run on, and even so stop.[12]

[12]Shakespeare, *King John*, Act V, Sc. 7

In one famous line, Shakespeare manages to use both the Latin derived word and the English word:

> The course of true love never did run smooth.[13]

Then the word is applied to the movement of the eyes as when our eyes run down a column of figures or a list of names.

And at last, the word is placed upon an inward act of reason that is like running or motion, an inward running or going from this to that and upon the speech in which that movement is expressed.

The discourse of reason is like even the definition of motion:

> scientia quae in nobis invenitur, habet aliquid perfectionis et aliquid imperfectionis. Ad perfectionem eius pertinet certitudo ipsius, quia quod scitur, certitudinaliter cognoscitur; sed ad imperfectionem pertinet discursus intellectus a principiis in conclusiones, quarum est scientia; hic enim discursus non contingit nisi secundum quod intellectus cognoscens principia cognoscit in potentia tantum conclusiones; si enim actu cognoseret, non esset ibi discursus; cum motus non sit nisi exitus de potentia ad actum.[14]

Thus we find *discourse* used in *Othello* both for the inward movement of reason and the speech in which that movement is expressed. When Desdemona protests her innocence, she uses *discourse* (as a noun) for the inward movement of the mind:

> If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love,
> Either in discourse of thought or actual deed...[15]

But when Cassio speaks of his drunkenness, he uses the word *discourse* (as a verb) meaning to speak:

> Drunk! and speak parrot! and squabble, swagger, swear, and discourse fustian with one's own shadow![16]

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[13]*A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Act I, Sc. 1
[14]Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, Q. 2, Art. 1, Ad 4
[15]*Othello*, Act IV, Sc. 2
[16]*Othello,* Act II, Sc. 3

In *Hamlet*, we also find these same two meanings. Hamlet speaks of the inward movement of our reason in these words:

> And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?
> But in our circumstance and course of thought
> 'Tis heavy with him.[17]

The phrase *course of thought* is also found in this subtle passage on how uncustomary novelty disturbs the course of our thoughts:

> In this the antique and well noted face
> Of plain old form is much disfigured;
> And, like a shifted wind unto a sail,
> It makes the course of thoughts to fetch about,
> Startles and frights consideration,
> Makes sound opinion sick and truth suspected,
> For putting on so new a fashion'd robe.[18]

But when Guildenstern says to Hamlet (feigning madness) in the same play:

> Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not
> so wildly from my affair.[19]

he seems to be thinking of Hamlet's wild words, a sign of the disorder in his mind.

And in *Henry VI, Part Three*, when York speaks to Clifford, he uses the native English word of *running*:

> O Clifford! but bethink thee once again,
> And in thy thought o'er-run my former time[20]

In one play, Shakespeare speaks of a course of argument as a *chase*:

> Celia: Is it possible, on such a sudden, you should fall into so strong a liking with old Sir Rowland's youngest son?
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> Rosalind: The Duke my father lov'd his father dearly.

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[17]*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 4
[18]Shakespeare*, King John,* Act IV, Sc. 2
[19]*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 2
[20]*Henry VI, Part Three*, Act I, Sc. 4

> Celia: Doth it therefore ensue that you should love his son dearly? By this kind of chase, I should hate him, for my father hated his father dearly; yet I hate not Orlando.[21]

And Henry says:

> For now we have no thought in us but France,
> Save those to God, that run before our business.[22]

The meaning of discourse in the definition of reason is, of course, the inward motion of reason. For it is this that most of all and first separates us from the beast, as pointed out in Hamlet's exhortation to use reason. When Hamlet complains of his mother's hasty marriage in his soliloquy, he says:

> O God! a beast that wants discourse of reason,
> Would have mourn'd longer.....[23]

Here the beast is said *to want,* that is, *to lack* the discourse of reason.

There are perhaps some reasons why the movement of reason is named from, among outward or sensible motions, that of the legs and from running rather than walking. The reason here is, of course, in general one of likeness.

Reason goes forward step by step as do the legs. The movement of reason is not continuous like that of a falling stone or the rolling of a bowling ball. Thoughts are like numbers rather than like the continuous. The continuous is divisible forever and between any two continuous quantities, there is an infinity of possible quantities. But between the two premisses of a syllogism and the conclusion, there is no other possible thought. There is no statement closer to the conclusion than the premisses. In this way, statements resemble numbers. There is no number closer to four than three as we ascend from one. As there is a next number, so there is a next thought or statement. Further one cannot divide premisses forever. One comes to statements known through themselves. Likewise between the genus and the differences on the one hand and the species on the other hand, there are no other thoughts. The speech composed of the genus and the differences, the convertible speech, is next to

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[21]*As You Like It*, Act I, Sc. 3
[22]Shakespeare, *Henry V,* Act I, Sc. 2
[23]Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* Act I, Sc. 2

the species. Likewise, definitions are not divisible forever. Hence, the motion of reason is like the step by step motion of the legs.

Reason goes forward step by step as do the higher animals. But why does the swiftest of these motions, running, give its name to the movement of reason? The reason seems to be that the movement of reason is very swift in comparison to the movement of bodies. Hence, the movement of reason is named from the swiftest of the movements of the legs.

Indeed the proverbial speed of thought (compared to the body) makes the word *running* in some ways more suitable for naming the movement of reason than *walking*. Hence the complaint of the old, fat Falstaff:

Lancaster: Now, Falstaff, where have you been all this while?
When everything is ended, then you come.
These tardy tricks of yours will, on my life,
One time or other break some gallows' back.

Falstaff: ....do you think me a swallow, an arrow, or a bullet? have I, in my poor and old motion, the expedition of thought? I have speeded hither with the very extremest inch of possibility.[24]

Rosalind speaks as if her thoughts outrun her actions or go before them:

Rosalind: I might ask you for your commission.
But I do take thee, Orlando, for my husband.
There's a girl goes before the priest, and
certainly a woman's thought runs before her actions.

Orlando: So do all thoughts; they are wing'd.[25]

And King John urges Richard to go swiftly to the nobles and back in these words:

Be Mercury, set feathers to thy heels,
And fly like thought from them to me again.[26]

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[24]Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part Two*, Act IV, Sc. 3
[25]Shakespeare, *As You Like It* , Act IV, Sc. 1. Yale Shake speare note 32. **chase** pursuit of an argument
[26]Shakespeare, *King John*, Act IV, Sc. 2

Indeed, thought is sometimes said to have wings because of its swiftness:

> Heave him away upon your winged thoughts
> Athwart the sea[27]

And in a Prologue to announce the swift change of scene, it is said:

> Thus with imagin'd wing our swift scene flies
> In motion of no less celerity
> Than that of thought.....[28]

In this passage, we also see how the movement of the imagination, like that of reason, is swift in comparison to the movement of bodies. Perhaps the likeness of reason to wings and of thinking to flying touched upon in several passages above is more metaphorical than the word *running*. The movement of the imagination is more like flying than is the movement of reason. The movement of reason is or should be grounded in things while the flight of the imagination can be without a foundation in things. Perhaps there is this deep significance in the swift motion of reason being named from a motion on the ground than from the motion of flying. Air seems to be insubstantial or nothing. Shakespeare points to the "poet's eye" or imagination as "in a fine frenzy rolling" (rather than proceeding step by step) and as giving to "airy nothing a local habitation and a name":

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.....
> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And, as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination,
> That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
> Or, in the night, imagining some fear,
> How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear.[29]

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[27]Shakespeare, *Henry V,* Act V, Prologue
[28]Shakespeare, Prologue to Act III of *Henry the Fifth*
[29]*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V, Sc. 1

From the foregoing, then, four things can be known about the act for which reason is an ability. This act is a movement or like a movement from this to that. It is, in general, a movement much faster than that of bodies. It is a movement which is not continuous, but step-like. Reason goes forward step by step. And unlike the movement or the flight of the imagination, the movement of reason is, or should be, grounded in things.

Although the movement of reason is swift in comparison to that of the body (Newton's mind went from the earth to the moon and back again much faster than the astronauts did), nevertheless it not true that the swifter the mind goes, the better will be its thinking. It does not mean that the movement of reason is always easy or that the faster reason goes, the better it will be. We can apply to the running of reason, the words of Friar Lawrence to Romeo:

Romeo: O let us hence! I stand on sudden haste.

Friar: Wisely and slow: they stumble that run fast.[30]

The words of Friar Laurence can be said of *running* in the sense of the act of the legs, in the sense of action, and in the sense of the act of reason. Although Friar Laurence is giving Romeo advice about *running* in the sense of action (Romeo is apt to act in too great a haste), his advice clearly looks back to, and is applicable to, the original sense where a person stumbles who runs too fast with his legs, and it is also most applicable to the movement of reason: those who do not go forward wisely and slowly in the discourse of reason, will stumble or fall into mistakes. Reason makes mistakes when it moves too quickly to a conclusion. Hence, we sometimes tell people not to *jump* to conclusions because this is the way they stumble or make mistakes. It is interesting to note how the same advice (in words) could be applied to all these meanings of *running*. People stumble or make mistakes when they run too fast or act in haste (hence the proverbs "Act in haste, repent in leisure", "Haste makes waste") or jump to conclusions.

And Malcolm says well to Macduff:

modest wisdom plucks me from over-credulous haste.[31]

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[30]Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Sc. 2

[31]Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* Act IV, Sc. 3

It is not by chance that the greatest mind of the Middle Ages was nicknamed at one time by his fellow students, *The Dumb Ox*. Gamow pointed out that the great Niels Bohr seemed to be the last man to get a new idea presented by some visiting physicist at his Institute in Copenhagen, but he was the first man to get the idea correctly. Reason makes mistakes when it jumps to conclusions. Thus although the movement of reason is swift in comparison to that of the body, it does not mean that the faster a mind comes to conclusions the better is that mind. It is especially in the beginning that a great mind proceeds slowly, as Poe pointed out in *The Purloined Letter*.

Just as the word *running* is carried over, so also is the word *foot:*

> There is a play tonight before the king;
> One scene of it comes near the circumstance
> Which I have told thee of my father's death:
> I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
> Even with the very comment of thy soul
> Observe mine uncle; if his occulted guilt
> Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
> It is a damned ghost that we have seen,
> And my imaginations are as foul
> As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;
> For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
> And after we will both our judgments join
> In censure of his seeming.[32]

Notice the word *afoot* in line four. In like manner, we speak of *foot* or *feet* in meter. Here not only *running* is carried over, but also that by which we run - the *foot*. In like manner, Shakespeare speaks of the plot as going forward. *Foot*, however, is more metaphorical than analogous (just as the word eye applied to reason as in the "eye of the soul" is more metaphorical than the word *see*.)

We have now proceeded perhaps as far as an analysis of the likeness underlying the carrying over of the word *running* or *discourse* can take us. But we can now seek a deeper knowledge of the discourse of reason by distinguishing the discourses of reason.

Every discourse of reason is a going from this to that, but there are four ways in which these discourses of reason can be distinguished. We can

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[32]Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 2

distinguish them first by how reason goes from this to that. And then we can distinguish them by the differences of the this and that between which reason runs. Third, they can be distinguished by their ends or that for the sake of which reason runs. And fourth, they can be distinguished by what the discourse is about.

In the following text, Thomas distinguishes the discourse of reason by how reason goes from this to that:

> In scientia enim nostra duplex est discursus.
>
> Unus secundum successionem tantum: sicut cum, postquam intelligimus aliquid in actu, convertimus nos ad intelligendum aliud.
>
> Alius discursus est secundum causalitatem: sicut cum per principia pervenimus in cognitionem conclusionum...
>
> secundus discursus praesupponit primum: procedentes enim a principiis ad conclusiones, non simul utrumque considerant
>
> ...discursus talis est procedentis de noto ad ignotum...quando cognoscitur primum, adhuc ignoratur secundum. Et sic secundum non cognoscitur in primo, sed ex primo. Terminus vero discursus est, quando secundum videtur in primo, resolutis effectibus in causas: tunc cessat discursus.[33]

This can be translated thus:

> In our reasoned-out knowledge, there is a twofold discourse.
>
> One by succession only: as when, after we understand something in act, we turn to understanding another thing.
>
> The other discourse is by causality: as when through beginnings we arrive at a conclusion...
>
> The second discourse presupposes the first; for those proceeding from beginnings to conclusions, do not consider both at once.
>
> ...Such a discourse belongs to one proceeding from the known to the unknown...when the first is known the second is still unknown. And thus the second is not known in the first, but from the first. The end of the discourse however is when the second is seen in

[33] *Summa Theologiae,* Prima Pars, Q. 14, Art. 7, c.

> the first, the effects having been untied in the causes: and then the discourse stops.

In the light of this text, the question arises about the word *discourse* in the definition of reason. Should we understand the first or the second discourse?

Although both could be understood by the word *discourse* in Hamlet's definition, it seems nevertheless that one should have chiefly in mind the second discourse. Three reasons can be given for this.

The first reason is based on the truth that we should define an ability by its utmost.[34] For example, we define a person's weight-lifting ability by the greatest weight they can lift, not by any lesser weight they can also lift. Now, as Thomas points out, the second discourse presupposes and includes the first, but the reverse is not true. Whoever is capable of the second discourse must also be capable of the first, but not vice-versa. Hence, we should define reason by the second discourse which is the utmost to which its ability (for discourse) extends.

The second reason is that the second discourse seems to be properly of reason, the discourse that is appropriate or proper to reason. The eyes can run down a column of figures or names. But they do not see one thing through seeing another or by seeing another. Reason not only goes from one thing to another (as in a course in which many different things are taken up, one after the other), but it also reasons from one thing to another. A sign that the second discourse is proper to reason is that *discursus* became for the Latin logicians often a synonym for *reasoning*. And, of course, the fact that the second discourse is called *reasoning*, but not the first; and that *reasoning* is named from reason, as if its own act, is a sign that the second discourse is the one to define reason by what is proper to it. In this discourse, reason not only goes from one thing to another, but knowing or accepting the former is the *cause* of one's coming to know or accept the latter. When reason is defined as the ability for discourse, it is especially or mainly this discourse which is had in mind. Indeed, the eyes and the imagination go from one thing to another in this common way. When one walks through a picture gallery, one's eyes see one painting after another. But seeing one painting does not cause one to see another. One does not come to see one painting through seeing another. Hence, Thomas speaks as if *discurrere* properly names this second discourse:

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[34]See Aristotle, *De Caelo*, 281a7-25

> discurrere proprie est ex uno in cognitionem alterius devenire....tunc dicitur aliquid *ex* aliquo cognosci, quando non est idem motus in utrumque; sed primo movetur intellectus in unum, et ex hoc movetur in aliud; unde hic est quidam discursus, sicut patet in demonstrationibus. Primo enim intellectus fertur in principia tantum, secundario fertur per principia in conclusiones.[35]

The author of *La Division Des Ordres de Thomas D'Aquin* makes the same point:

> Tout cela revient a dire qu'on ne trouve pas transpose sur le plan sensible le discours au sens propre dont j'ai parle precedemment, c'est-a-dire le discours *secundum causalitatem*. Notre connaissance sensible est cependant discursive *secundum successionem*, en tant qu'on y retrouve une certaine succession d'actes distincts.[36]

Another passage where Thomas identifies *discursus* with the movement of reason from what is known before to what is unknown before, but afterwards known as a result of the discourse is the following:

> *discursus* quendam motum nominat. Omnis autem motus est de uno priori in aliud posterius. Unde discursiva cognitio attenditur secundum quod ex aliquo prius noto devenitur in cognitionem alterius posterius noti, quod prius erat ignotum.[37]

We have spoken of how the Latin logicians would use *discursus* as a synonym for *reasoning*. Since reasoning is coming to know or guess a statement from other statements and because of them, reasoning is clearly a discourse *secundum causalitatem*.

One edition of *Hamlet* gives the following explanation of *discourse* from Samuel Johnson:

> 36. *discourse*] power of reasoning. 'The act of the understanding, by which it passes from premisses to consequences' (Johnson, *Dict.*). Cf. I.ii 150 and LN[38]

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[35]*De Veritate,* Q. 8, Art. 15, c.
[36]pp. 112-113
[37]*Summa Theologiae*, Prima Pars, Q. 58, Art. 3, Ad 1
[38]The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, edited by Harold Jenkins, Footnotes on Act IV, Sc. 4, line 36, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1982, p. 345

There are other discourses or movements of reason whereby reason comes to know something before unknown through something already known. Foremost among these is defining. Reason comes to a definition by a movement. Such a way of coming to know what a thing is pertains to a mind that discourses, as Thomas explains in the following passage:

> In operatione autem intellectus qua apprehendit *quod quid est*, non accidit falsum nisi per accidens, secundum quod in hac etiam operatione permiscetur aliquid de operatione intellectus componentis et dividentis.
>
> Quod autem contingit inquantum intellectus noster non statim, sed cum quodam inquisitionis ordine ad cognoscendam quidditatem alicuius rei pertingit: sicut cum primo apprehendimus *animal*, et dividentes per oppositas differentias, altera relicta, unam generi apponimus, quousque perveniamus ad definitionem speciei. In quo quidem processu potest falsitas accidere, si accipiatur ut differentia generis quod non est generis differentia.
>
> Sic autem procedere ad cognoscendum de aliquo quid est, est intellectus ratiocinando discurrentis de uno in aliud.[39]

In this passage, Thomas uses the word *ratiocinando*. Thomas even goes so far as to say that reason comes to know the universal (from the senses or experience) by a discourse when contrasting man's reason with the angelic understanding in this passage:

> intellectus et ratio differunt quantum ad modum cognoscendi: quia scilicet intellectus cognoscit simplici intuitu, ratio vero discurrendo de uno in aliud. Sed tamen ratio per discursum pervenit ad cognoscendum illud quod intellectus sine discursu cognoscit, scilicet universale.[40]

Thomas even uses the word *ratiocinatio* when describing the process whereby the universal comes to be in our reason from experience and in regard to experience itself:

> Sed tamen experimentum indiget aliqua ratiocinatione circa particularia per quam confertur unum ad aliud, quod est proprium rationis. Puta cum aliquis recordatur quod talis herba multoties

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[39] *Summa Contra Gentiles,* Liber III, Caput 108
[40] *Summa Theologiae*, Prima Pars, Q. 59, Art. 1, Ad 1

> sanavit multos a febre, dicitur esse experimentum quod talis est sanativa febris.
>
> Ratio autem non sistit in experimento particularium, sed ex multis particularibus in quibus expertus est, accipit unum commune, quod firmatur in anima, et considerat illud absque consideratione alicuius singularium; et hoc commune accipit ut principium artis et scientiae.[41]

The third reason is that we can see much better in the second discourse the difference between the movement of reason and the movements in the sensible world. When my body goes from being in Boston to being in New York, my being in Boston is not a cause of my coming to be in New York. Likewise, if my body goes from being healthy to being sick, my being healthy is not the cause of my becoming sick. But when reason goes from knowing the premisses to knowing the conclusion, knowing the premisses is a cause of coming to know the conclusion. And in the further discourse of reason, we come to know the conclusion not only from the premisses, but *in* the premisses. But how could we be in New York by being in Boston?

Defining and demonstrating and counting and calculating are main forms of discourse *secundum causalitatem*. In all of these, reason comes to know or understand by a movement rather than all at once.

Thomas also distinguishes the discourses of reason by the *this* and *that* between which reason runs when explaining why natural science is said to proceed *rationabiliter* or reasonably:

> cum sit rationis de uno in aliud discurrere, hoc magis in scientia naturali servatur. ubi ex cognitione unius in cognitionem alterius devenitur, sicut ex cognitione effectus in cognitionem causae.
>
> Et non proceditur solum ab uno in aliud secundum rationem, quod non est aliud secundum rem, sicut si ab animali proceditur ad hominem.
>
> In scientiis enim mathematicis proceditur per ea tantum, quae sunt de essentia rei, cum demonstrent solum per causam formalem; et ideo non demonstratur in eis aliquid de una re per aliam rem, sed per propriam definitionem illius rei. Etsi enim dentur aliquae demonstrationes de circulo ex triangulo, vel e converso, hoc non est nisi inquantum in circulo est potentia triangulus, et e converso.

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[41] *In II Posteriorum Analyticorum,* Lectio XX, n. 592

> Sed in scientia naturali, in qua fit demonstratio per causas extrinsecas, probatur aliquid de una re per aliam omnino extrinsecam. Et ita modus rationalis in scientia naturali maxime observatur, et ideo scientia naturalis inter alias est intellectui hominis magis conformis. Attribuitur igitur rationabiliter procedere scientiae naturali, non quia ei soli conveniat, sed quia ei praecipue competit.[42]
>
> Since it belongs to reason to run from one thing to another, this is more observed in natural science where, from the knowledge of one thing, reason comes to knowledge of another, as from the knowledge of the effect to a knowledge of the cause.
>
> And it does not only go forward from one to another in reason that is not other in things, as when it goes forward from animal to man.
>
> In the mathematical sciences, one goes forward only through what belongs to the essence of the thing, since they demonstrate only through the formal cause; and therefore in them, something is not demonstrated of one thing by another thing. For although some demonstrations are made about the circle from the triangle, or the reverse, this is not except insofar as the triangle is in the circle in ability and vice-versa.
>
> But in natural science, in which there is demonstration through extrinsic causes, something is proven about one thing by another thing altogether outside of it. And thus the way of reason is most of all observed in natural science; and therefore natural science among the others is more in conformity with the understanding of man. To proceed then by way of reason is attributed to natural science, not because it belongs only to it, but because it especially belongs to it.

Sometimes reason runs from a *this* to a *that* when these are not other things. But the utmost of reason's ability to discourse is when it runs from one *thing* to another *thing*.

The first of these discourses is found when reason goes from the sensible singulars to the universal or from the image of a thing to the thought of it and when reason goes from one thought to another thought of the same thing. Thomas points out that reason knows the universal by a discourse:

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[42]*In Boetii de Trinitate,* Lectio II, Q. II, Art. 1, Ad primam quaestionem

> aliter ratio transcendit sensum, et aliter intellectus, rationem. Ratio enim transcendit sensum, secundum diversitatem cognitorum: nam sensus est particularium, ratio vero universalium...Sed intellectus et ratio differunt quantum ad modum cognoscendi: quia scilicet intellectus cognoscit simplici intuitu, ratio vero discurrendo de uno in aliud. Sed tamen ratio per discursum pervenit ad cognoscendum illud, quod intellectus sine discursu cognoscit, scilicet universale.[43]

The first discourse of reason is from the sensible to the understandable. Thomas speaks of this thus: :

> Ex hoc enim quod anima corporis forma et actus est, procedunt ab essentia ejus quaedam potentiae organis affixae, ut sensus et huiusmodi, ex quibus cognitionem intellectualem accipit,
>
> propter hoc quod rationalis est habens cognitionem decurrentem ab uno in aliud; et sic a sensibilibus in intelligibilia venit,
>
> et per hoc ab angelo differt, qui non a sensibilibus discurrendo ad intelligibilia, cognitionem accipit.[44]
>
> From the fact that the soul is the form and act of a body, certain powers fastened to organs proceed from its nature, as the senses and others of this sort, from which it takes the knowledge of understanding
>
> because of this it is reasonable, having knowledge running from one thing to another; and thus it comes to the understandable from the sensible,
>
> and by this it differs from the angel who gets knowledge without running from the sensible to the understandable.

And in another text, Thomas sees reason as knowing the *what it is* by a discourse:

> intellectus secundum suum nomen importat cognitionem pertingentem ad intima rei. Unde cum sensus et imaginatio circa accidentia occupentur quae quasi circumstant essentiam rei, intellectus ad essentiam ipsam pertingit. Unde secundum Philosophum in III De Anima, objectum intellectus est quid.

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[43] *Summa Theologiae*, Prima Pars, Q. 59, Art. I, Ad 1
[44] *Scriptum Super Lib. II Sent.,* Dist. III, Q. I, Art VI, Solutio

> Sed in apprehensione hujus essentiae est differentia.
>
> Aliquando enim apprehenditur ipsa essentia per seipsam, non quod ad eam ingrediatur intellectus ex ipsis quae quasi circumvoluntur ipsi essentiae; et hic est modus apprehendendi a substantiis separatis, unde intelligentiae dicuntur.
>
> Aliquando vero ad intima non pervenitur nisi per circumposita quasi per quaedam ostia; et hic est modus apprehendendi in hominibus, qui ex effectibus et proprietatibus procedunt ad cognitionem essentiae rei.
>
> Et quia in hoc oportet esse quemdam discursum, ideo hominis apprehensio ratio dicitur, quamvis ad intellectum terminetur in hoc quod inquisitio ad essentiam rei perducit.[45]

From the above texts and others below, it can be seen how the explanation of *rationabiliter* from what characterizes reason (taking from the senses and discoursing) does not prevent us from using discourse in a broader sense to include even this taking from the senses. In that discourse, *large* would mean that from many memories collected in experience, we come to the universal.

The use of *signs* which is so distinctive of man is also tied up with the discursive nature of his reason:

> signum proprie loquendo, non potest dici nisi aliquid ex quo deveniatur in cognitionem alterius quasi discurrendo; et secundum hoc, signum in angelis non est, cum eorum scientia non sit discursiva...
>
> Et propter hoc etiam in nobis signa sunt sensibilia, quia nostra cognitio, quae discursiva est, a sensibilibus oritur.
>
> Sed communiter possumus signum dicere quodcumque notum in quo aliquid cognoscatur; et secundum hoc forma intelligibilis potest dici signum rei quae per ipsum cognoscitur.[46]

Although one might be said to reason to a definition and even to reason to the universal, these reasonings or discourses are not the utmost of reason's ability to discourse. For the universal is ordered to definition and definition to reasoning by syllogism to conclusions. Hence, the discourse in the definition of

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[45]*Scriptum Super Lib. III Sent.,* Dist XXXV, Q. II, Art. II, Sol. I. Resp.
[46]Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, Q. 9, Art. 4, Ad 4

reason is more the last (just as the Latins took *discursus* as a synonym of the third act of reason). This does not mean to eliminate the others for they are included in the ability to reason to conclusions and they all indicate how discourse in general and in the second sense is so characteristic of reason.

The discursive character of reason is seen not only in the above acts, but also in calculating and counting. From two numbers already known, reason comes to know another number unknown before by adding, subtracting, multiplying or dividing. But since one must know some numbers before on can begin to add or subtract or multiply or divide, there must be another way of coming to know the first numbers we know. Counting is also a way of coming to know by a step-like movement rather than all at once or in a continuous way.

The discursive nature of reason is also seen in practical reason as it moves from the end to means in counsel.

When reason runs or goes from the sensible to the understandable, it is not going from one thing to another thing. It is the same thing that is singular when sensed and universal when understood. When we go from experience to the universal, the universal is also contained in some way in the singular. Thomas explains this:

> ...singulare sentitur proprie et per se, sed tamen sensus est quodammodo etiam ipsius universalis. Cognoscit enim Calliam non solum inquantum est Callias, sed etiam in quantum est hic homo, et similiter Socrates in quantum est hic homo.
>
> Et exinde est quod tali acceptione sensus praeexistente, anima intellectiva potest considerare hominem in utroque. Si autem ita esset quod sensus apprehenderet solum id quod est particularitatis, et nullo modo cum hoc apprehenderet universalem naturam in particulari, non esset possibile quod ex apprehensione sensus causaretur in nobis cognitio universalis.[47]
>
> The singular is sensed properly and as such, but nevertheless sense is in some way also of the universal itself. For it knows Callias not only insofar as he is Callias, but also insofar as he is this man, and likewise Socrates insofar as he is this man.
>
> And hence it is that, such taking by the senses coming before, the understanding soul is able to consider man in both. If however it were the case that sense grasped only that which is of the

[47] *In II Posteriorum Analyticorum*, Lectio XX, n. 595

> particular, and in no way with this grasped the universal nature in the particular, it would not be possible that universal knowledge is us could be caused from the grasping of sense.

Reason also goes from one thought to another thought of the same thing. We have seen Thomas use the example of going from the genus to the species. When we go from animal to man, or from quadrilateral to square, we are not going from one thing to another thing. Likewise, in mathematics, as Thomas explains in the above text from his Exposition of Boethius' work *On the Trinity*, we do not go from one thing to another thing outside of it.

The discourse *ab uno in aliud secundum rem* is the high point of reason's ability. Not only is reason's discourse not confined within the limits of one thing, but it enables reason to know things it has not experienced. Thomas touches upon these things and also gives us a division of this kind of discourse in this key text:

> scientia rerum acquiri potest non solum per experientiam ipsarum, sed etiam per experientiam quarandam aliarum rerum: cum ex virtute luminis intellectus agentis possit homo procedere ad intelligendum effectus per causas, et causas per effectus, et similia per similia, et contraria per contraria.
>
> A knowledge of things is not only able to be acquired by an experience of those things, but also by an experience of certain other things: since by the power of the active understanding's light man is able to go forward to understanding effects through causes and causes through effects, and like things through like things, and contraries through contraries.[48]

There are four main runs that reason makes between things.

Sometimes reason runs from a cause to its effect, as is done most in mathematics.

But more often, reason runs from an effect to its cause, as is usually done in natural and human things. For example, when we hear a sound, our reason runs from the sound to its cause.

Reason also runs from like to like as when we try to foresee future events from like past ones or when we reason from one ratio to another like one in a

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[48] *Summa Theologiae*, Tertia Pars, Q. 12, Art. 1, Ad. 1

proportion. Reason could not understand the word *running* without running in this way from the first meaning through the middle to the last meaning

And reason also runs from one opposite to its opposite, as from the good to the bad and vice-versa. Perhaps the discourse from opposite to opposite can be divided according to the four kinds of opposition.

When Aristotle, following Plato, speaks of the first two discourses, he compares reason to the runners in a race:

> It should not remain hidden to us that arguments from the beginnings and those to the beginnings differ. For it was well that Plato asked about this and investigated whether the road was from the beginnings or to the beginnings; just as in the race-course from the judges to the end or the reverse.[49]

In the Greek race-course, the runners sometimes would run from the starting-point to some post down the field and then from that post back to the starting-point. Likewise, our reason sometimes runs from a cause towards its effect, but more often in the contrary direction, from an effect towards its cause. (It depends upon which is known, or more known, to us.)

Hamlet adds the word *looking* immediately after *discourse* because in its discourse, reason is trying to see or understand. This brings out that our understanding is by way of a motion. Thomas makes this point while distinguishing again the four discourse from one *thing* to another *thing:*

> Ipsum autem intelligere animae humanae est per modum motus;
>
> intelligit enim anima discurrendo de effectibus in causas, et de causis in effectus, et de similibus in similia, et de oppositis in opposita.[50]
>
> However the understanding itself of the human soul is by way of motion.
>
> For the soul understands by running from effects to causes, and from causes to effects, and from like to like, and from opposites to opposites.

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[49]*Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 1095a 30 - 1095b 1
[50]*Quaestiones Disputatae de Spiritualibus Creaturis,* Art. 10, c.

We should note here that Thomas uses the words *per modum motus* and *discurrendo* as equivalent. Hamlet's phrase that reason in its *discourse* is *looking* indicates that reason tries to understand by way of motion or discourse.

Reason then is the ability for all the discourses we have touched upon, but especially the discourse whereby it understands one thing from another thing. For this shows the utmost of its ability.

In the two passages where Thomas touches upon this last discourse, it is significant that he gives the same four ways that understanding one thing can help us to understand another thing. The question can be asked whether Thomas has divided completely the kinds of discourse in which reason comes to know one thing from another. Either one thing depends upon the other (hence the first two discourses) or one is like the other or one is the opposite of the other. (It is possible that two things have more than one of these.) This is perhaps an example of three is enough. It is difficult, or impossible, to think of any other way in which understanding one thing could help us to understand another. If there is no dependence of one thing upon another and no likeness or opposition of one to the other, how could understanding one help us to understand the other?

We can also distinguish the discourse of reason in a third way by its end. The end is either knowing (alone) or doing. If the end of the discourse is knowing alone, we have the discourse of looking reason. We can consider under this, the discourse of the dialectician, the discourse of the demonstrator and the discourse of the wise man. If the end of the discourse is some doing, we have the discourse of practical reason. The discourse of practical reason can be divided into the discourse of foresight and the discourse of art. A discourse is necessary both for doing and making. The discourse of art is more certain than that of foresight for the means of making are determined while those in doing are variable.

The discourse of reason can also be distinguished by what it is about.

Even when we enjoy the beatific vision (in which there is not discourse), Thomas still maintains that our nature or the nature of our reason will lead us to discourse:

> ...beati conformantur angelis quantum ad dona gratiarum: manet tamen differentia quae est secundum naturam.

> Et ideo uti collatione et discursu est connaturale animabus beatorum, non autem angelis.[51]

St. Thomas speaks of *collatio* before *discursus* because the latter presupposes the former. For example, in reasoning we bring together the premisses before we can go from the premisses to the conclusion. And we must bring together the singulars before we can go from the singular to the universal. *Discursus* presupposes *collatio* as order presupposes distinction.

The Word *Large*

Hamlet adds that reason is the ability for *large* discourse. The word *large* brings out many things about the discourse of which reason is capable.

The discourse of reason can be called *large* because it is about the large or because its limit is large or because the discourse is itself large or long. We find similar distinctions elsewhere. Knowledge can be called *natural* because the knowledge itself is natural as is our first understanding of axioms, such as the whole is larger than one of its parts; or because it is about the natural, as is the reasoned-out knowledge of natural things. Likewise, a knowledge can be called *human* because it is had by humans or because it about human things. Ethics is human in both senses while natural science is human only in the first sense. Wisdom is also called *divine* because God especially has it or because it is about God.

The discourse of reason can be about the large in two senses, one more quantitative and the other more qualitative

First, the discourse of reason can be about the large or cover a large area in that reason can discourse about the universal. Hence, Locke in the *Essay on Understanding* speaks of the *enlargement* of our ideas by the general. A thing is singular when sensed or imagined (for example, the triangle we sense or imagine); but when we understand by reason what it is (for example, what a triangle is), it is universal. Thus, unlike the senses and the imagination which know only the singular. Reason knows the universal. But the universal covers many things or even an infinity of things insofar as it is said of many or even an

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[51] *Summa Theologiae*, Tertia Pars, Q. 11, Art. 3, Ad 3

infinity of particulars. When reason thinks about the difference between a man and a beast, its discourse extends in general to all human beings and beasts. And when reason discourses about odd and even number, its discourse covers an infinity of numbers. When the Greeks said that something cannot come to be out of nothing, their discourse was touching upon all things - for everything is something. Likewise, when they discoursed about the statement that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be at the same time and in the same way, their discourse was about all things.

Second, the discourse of reason can be about the *large* in the sense of great. *Large* in this sense is opposed to *small* as in *small talk*. The latter is talk about small or unimportant things. As the word *great* can be taken, not only in a quantitative sense, but also in a more qualitative sense, so too the word *large* can be taken in the second sense of *great*. Shakespeare touches upon this sense of large in *The Winter's Tale* when Perdita says:

> O Doricles! Your praises are too large [too great][52]

And also in *Julius Caesar*, Brutus speaks of *large honours:*

> .....What! shall one of us,
> That struck the foremost man of all this world
> But for supporting robbers, shall we now
> Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,
> And seal the mighty space of our large honours
> For so much trash as may be grasped thus?[53]

Mark Twain uses this sense in his work on Joan of Arc:

> The minister lifted his brows in amused surprise, and said, with a touch of sarcasm. "I am the King's chief minister, and yet you had the impression that matters connected with my department are not matters of state? Pray how is that?" Joan replied, indifferently: "Because there is no state." "No state!" "No, sir, there is no state, and no use for a minister. France is shrunk to a

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[52]Act IV, Sc. 4

[53]Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act IV, Sc 3. The Yale Shakespeare here has this note: "The infinite spiritual extent of true honor is contrasted with the petty material extent of a handful of money."

> couple of acres of ground; a sheriff's constable could take care of it; its affairs are not matters of state. The term is too large."[54]

The discourse of reason can be about great things, such as the purpose of man, the immortality of the human soul, the order of the universe and even about the existence and nature of God. We do not understand fully the ability which is reason if we do not see that it is capable of discourse about great things as well as little things.

The discourse of the philosopher is larger than that of other men in both of these senses. And the discourse of the wise man is the largest in both senses.

The discourse of reason itself can be called large insofar as its limit is large. The limit of a discourse is its beginning or its end. Insofar as the discourse of reason is from many things or to many things, it is large in its limit. It begins or ends in many things

Reason, as Boethius and Thomas teach us, gathers one simple truth from many things. This is first seen when reason separates out the common from experience by induction. If we understand the discourse of reason from the sensible to the understandable or from experience to the universal, *large* refers to the *many* singulars collected in experience. Washington Irving places before his paper "The Bermudas" a passage from a work contemporary with Shakespeare:

> Who did not think, till within these foure yeares, but that these islands had been rather a habitation for Divells, than fit for men to dwell in? Who did not hate the name, when hee was on land, and shun the place when he was on the seas? But behold the misprision and conceits of the world! For true and large experience hath now told us, it is one of the sweetest paradises that be upon earth.[55]

Experience is here called *large* because it involves many things.

And again from one simple truth that is a beginning, reason deduces many things and makes many applications. From a beginning well considered,

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[54]*Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc,* Nelson Doubleday Inc., N. Y., Chapter 23, p. 197
[55]*A Plaine Descript. of the Barmudas*, 1613

reason is able to come to see many conclusions or applications of the one beginning. And thus the discourse of reason is large in its end.

The discourse of reason can also be called *large* because it is long. Perhaps in Shakespeare's time, *large* could be used more readily in the sense of *long*. In the following passages, *large* seems to refer to length of the discourse (usually with the discourse in speech in mind)

Northhumberland says to Bolingbroke:

> The manner of their taking may appear
> At large discoursed in this paper here.[56]

And Harcourt says to the King:

> The manner and true order of the fight
> This packet, please it you, contains at large[57]

And the Abbess says to the Duke:

> Renowned duke, vouchsafe to take the pains
> To go with us into the abbey here
> And hear at large discoursed all our fortunes[58]

And in *A Midsummer Night's Dream:*

> Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
> At large discourse, while here they do remain[59]

And in *Richard II,* Act III, Sc. 1:

> A gentleman of mine I have dispatch'd
> With letters of your love to her at large.[60]

And in *Much Ado about Nothing:*

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[56]Shakespeare, *Richard II,* Act V, Sc. 6
[57]Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part Two,* Act IV, Sc. 4
[58]Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, Act V, Sc. 1
[59]Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V, Sc. 1
[60]Shakespeare, *Richard II,* Act III, Sc. 1. The Yale Shakespeare explains in a note: " at large at great length"

I'll tell you largely of fair Hero's death.[61]

And in the following passage, *large* modifies *lengths* :

Th 'advantage of his absence took the king
And in the mean time sojourn'd at my father's;
Where how he did prevail, I shame to speak.
But truth is truth, large lengths of seas and shores
Between my father and my mother lay,
As I have heard my father speak himself
When this same lusty gentleman was got.[62]

The discourse of reason is long insofar as it goes through many steps or insofar as it is goes between things greatly distant. In the first way, the discourse of reason can be long even in geometry or arithmetic. A mathematical discourse can be long in the sense of going through many steps. But it is not long in the second sense of going from one thing to another thing outside the first.

Those who have studied *Euclid's Elements* and seen the many steps in one theorem and how the conclusion in one is a premiss in the next and so on, are aware of reason's capability for long discourse through many steps.

But in the second way, the discourse of reason is long in the philosophy of nature and especially in wisdom. The discourse of the natural philosopher is long in the sense of going from one thing to another thing outside of the first. Eventually one goes all the way from motion to an unmoved mover, a very long discourse in the sense that it goes between things very far apart. The discourse of reason in natural philosophy may go from an effect to a cause outside that effect. And since a cause may itself have a cause, this movement of reason can be very long, going from an effect all the way to its first cause. Reason goes from motion to moved movers and at last to an unmoved over, a very long discourse.

Likewise, the discourse of reason between things that are alike may not only be between particulars of the same kind (as in the argument called *example*), but also between things that are only proportionally alike. Hence, Aristotle says about the fourth tool of dialectic that reason is more exercised in

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[61]Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, Act V, Sc. 4
[62]Shakespeare, *King John* , Act I, Sc. 1

seeing the likeness of ratios which is a likeness between things far apart than it is in seeing the likeness of species in the same genus or of individuals in the same species.

Reason is, of course, capable of *small* discourse in all the senses opposed to *large* discourse. But Hamlet rightly defines the ability of reason by *large* discourse. For as has been said, an ability is always to be defined by its utmost. (If someone can lift two hundred pounds but no more, we define his ability by two hundred pounds, not by one hundred.) If reason is capable of large discourse, it is also capable of small discourse. But the reverse is not true. We do not fully understand the ability that is reason if we do not see that it is capable of large discourse.

Of course, most discourses of reason may be short and about small things. Most men may discourse no more than does Roger in Anthony Trollope's novel *The Way We Live Now*:

> To a man not accustomed to thinking there is nothing in the world so difficult as to think. After some loose fashion we turn over things in our mind and ultimately reach some decision, guided probably by our feelings at the last moment rather than by any process of ratiocination; - and then we think we have thought. But to follow out one argument to an end, and then to found on the base so reached the commencement of another, is not common to us. Such a process was hardly within the compass of Roger's mind...[63]

And if someone were to say that *large* means not only long, but *many* long, he would also be saying the truth even more fully about reason's capacity. For reason is capable of *many long* discourses.

The word *looking*

Hamlet completes the definition of reason with the words *looking before and after.* What do these words mean and how are they ordered with the word *discourse* and why was it necessary to add them to complete this definition of reason?

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[63]Vol. II, Chapter XCIII, Worlds Classics, Oxford Univ. Press, 1975, p. 406

The word *looking* here means *trying to see*, just as the word *listening* means *trying to hear*. But the word *to see* or *seeing* is also a word with many senses by reason or in an order.

Its first meaning is, of course, the well-known act of the eye.

Then the word is carried over and placed upon imagining. This is not by chance. Imagining is like the act of the eye. A sign of this is found in dreams when we think we are seeing with our eyes and instead we are only imagining. Likeness is the cause of deception. Hamlet uses the word *seeing* in this second sense, but his friends, who have seen with their eyes the ghost of Hamlet's father, think he is speaking in the first meaning:

Hamlet:	My father - methinks I see my father.
Horatio:	O, where, my lord?
Hamlet:	In my mind's eye, Horatio[64]

Notice how the imagination is here called metaphorically the "mind's eye"

Then the word *seeing* is carried over from imagining and placed upon the understanding of reason. (Hence, too, the reason is sometimes called metaphorically the *eye of the soul* as when Gregory says that "anger disturbs the eye of the soul.") Understanding is clearly further from seeing with the eyes than is imagining. Even in dreams, we do not confuse understanding with seeing with the eyes. But imagining is closer to understanding than is the act of the eye. Thinking which leads to understanding is sometimes confused with imagining and a thought with an image. Hence, in English, we sometimes call both an image and a thought an *idea* without clearly distinguishing between them. And when we are not sure, we say interchangeably "I think that is so" and " I imagine that is so." Imagining is like thinking in many ways. In imagining something, we form an image of it; and in thinking about something, we form a thought of it.

Since Hamlet is defining reason, he is using the word *looking* as defined by the third sense of *seeing*. Reason is trying to understand by its discourse. Reason seeks to understand by its discourse. We don't understand the

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[64]Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 2

discourse of reason if we don't know that reason is trying to understand by its motion. Motion is not for the sake of motion.

We saw that *discourse* names an act that is like motion. But motion is not for the sake of motion. Motion is not the purpose of motion. The movement of reason, thinking and reasoning, is for the sake of understanding. If reason was always thinking and reasoning but never coming to understand anything, its movement would be in vain or without purpose. Hence, Hamlet could not define reason by its motion and make sense of that motion (and hence, of reason) without bringing in the end or purpose of that motion which is understanding. He had to say what reason was trying to accomplish by its movement or discourse.

Further, having begun to define reason as an ability for discourse, Hamlet rightly says *looking* rather than *seeing*. For when in motion, reason is more looking than seeing. When reason sees, its motion has come to an end. When we are thinking and reasoning, our reason is in motion. When we have thought out or reasoned-out something, we understand it and our reason has come to rest.

We have seen that *discourse* names the movement of reason, its thinking and especially its reasoning. Now the discourse of reason, its thinking and reasoning, are to understanding as motion is to rest. (We have seen how *discourse* is taken from the Latin word for running and *understanding* is taken from *standing*) So long as we are thinking about something or reasoning, but have not thought it out yet, or reasoned it out yet, our reason does not yet understand. But when we have thought it out or reasoned it out, our reason comes to a rest and this rest is understanding. Since Hamlet then is defining reason by the looking in the discourse of reason, clearly he is using the word *looking* in the sense of *trying to see* (rather than a prolonged seeing). Otherwise, the movement would be over.

We can also see from the above why it was necessary for Hamlet to define reason not by *discourse* alone, but adding *looking*. Motion is never itself the end, but always for the sake of something further. The discourse of reason is for the sake of understanding. It was necessary for Hamlet to bring out what was the end or rest for which the discourse of reason exists.

But perhaps the word *understanding* is itself in need of being understood. The etymology of the word is a key to understanding the kind of knowing that

is understanding. Shakespeare likes to pun on the meaning and etymology of the word *understanding*. Three places where he does this are as follows.

In the *Comedy of Errors:*

Adriana:	Say, is your tardy master now at hand?
Dromio:	Nay, he's at two hands with me, and that my two ears can witness.
Adriana:	Say, didst thou speak with him? Know'st thou his mind?
Dromio:	Ay, ay, he told his mind upon mine ear. Beshrew his hand, I scarce could understand it.
Luciana:	Spake he so doubtfully, thou couldst not feel his meaning?
Dromio:	Nay, he struck so plainly, I could too well feel his blows; and withal so doubtfully, that I could scarce understand them.[65]

And in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*:

Speed:	What an ass art thou! I understand thee not.
Launce:	What a block art thou, that thou canst not! My staff understands me.
Speed:	What thou sayest?
Launce:	Ay, and what I do too. Look thee, I'll but lean, and my staff understands me.
Speed:	It stands under thee, indeed.
Launce:	Why, stand-under and under-stand is all one.[66]

And in *Twelfth Night:*

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[65]Act II, Sc. 1
[66]Act II, Sc. 5

Toby: Taste your legs, Sir; put them to motion.

Viola: My legs do better understand me, Sir, than I understand what you mean by bidding me to taste my legs.[67]

If there is a connection between its etymology and meaning, the word understanding would properly mean to know what is said to stand under something or to know something by what is said to stand under it. To understand a word or name means to know the thing(s) or meaning(s) that are said to stand under that name. We are said to place a name *upon* a thing. In Latin, Thomas speaks of the *impositio nominis*. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Master Ford fears standing under the name *cuckold*:

> Who says this is improvident jealousy? my wife hath sent to him, the hour is fixed, the match is made. Would any man have thought this? See the hell of having a false woman! My bed shall be abused, my coffers ransacked, my reputation gnawed at; and I shall not only receive this villainous wrong, but stand under the adoption of abominable terms, and by him that does me this wrong. Terms! names! Amaimon sounds well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are devils' additions, the names of fiends; but Cuckold! Wittol! - Cuckold! the devil himself hath not such a name.[68]

Reason is sometimes called the understanding. And indeed this does separate reason from the ear and the eye which hear or see the word, but do not know what stands under that word as such. (I say *as such* because even if the eye or the ear knew in some case what stands under the word, they would not know it as standing under that word.)

The distinction between reason or the understanding and the senses is even more strict when we consider that the senses know only what are called accidents while substance is known only by reason. In *The Tempest*, Prospero calls the vision he has conjured up both baseless and insubstantial:

> Our revels now are ended... these our actors -

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[67]Act II, Sc. 1
[68]Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* Act II, Sc. 2

> As I foretold you - were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And like the baseless fabric of this vision
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
> And like this insubstantial pageant faded
> Leave not a rack behind: we are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.[69]

And indeed the etymology of *substance* in Latin is the same as that of *understanding* in English. The first object of reason or the understanding is substance. This is, of course, tied to its object being the what it is. One meaning of substance is what it is. Hence, Aristotle calls definition the *logos of the ousia* (*ratio substantiae* in Latin) in the *Categories* and, in distinguishing the genus substance from the genera of accidents, he calls substance what it is. But substance is said to stand under accidents as their subject.

But perhaps all the connections between the etymology and meaning of the word *understanding* can be reduced to the meaning of knowing the cause of something or knowing something by its cause. For we speak of the *underlying* cause. The cause is said to stand under its effect, as it were supporting its effect. Here we can see how the English word for cause *ground* and the word *understanding* fit together. Shakespeare puns upon the two meanings of *ground* in these lines:

> Pitiful sight! here lies the County slain,
> And Juliet bleeding, warm and newly dead,
> Who here hath lain this two days buried.
> Go tell the Prince, run to the Capulets,
> Raise up the Montagues, some others search.
> We see the ground whereon these woes do lie,
> But the true ground of all these piteous woes
> We cannot without circumstance descry.[70]

The "true ground" or cause of all those bodies lying on the ground is not yet clear. In that most conservative profession of the law, we still speak of "grounds for divorce" or cause for divorce. There are other places where

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[69]Shakespeare, *TheTempest*, Act IV, Sc. 1
[70]*Romeo and Juliet*, Act V, Sc. 3

Shakespeare touches upon the use of *ground* for cause. In *Twelfth Night,* Olivia says to Malvolio:

> This practice hath most shrewdly pass'd upon thee;
> But when we know the grounds and authors of it,
> Thou shalt be both the plaintiff and the judge
> Of thine own cause.[71]

Even without the word *ground*, it is common to use the word *upon* in speaking of the cause. For example, Blunt says:

> But to my charge. The king hath sent to know
> The nature of your griefs; and whereupon
> You conjure from the breast of civil peace
> Such bold hostility, teaching his duteous land
> Audacious cruelty.[72]

It is striking that we speak of *cause* or *reason* almost interchangeably. Indeed the best reason we can give for something is the reason why it must be so. This is a reason that brings out the cause. Reason seeks a reason for things and, if the best reason contains the cause, reason is seeking understanding, that is, to know a thing by the cause that is said to stand under it.

Before and after

But Hamlet says not only that reason is *looking* in its discourse, but that it is looking *before and after*. Why must reason look before and after when it tries to understand?

Since reason knows or understands most of all when it comes to know the cause, and a cause is said to be before its effect, clearly reason cannot come to understand without looking before.

Moreover, since we name things as we know them, a thing and our knowledge of it come before naming it. Hence, trying to understand a word is

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[71]Act V, Sc. 1

[72]*Henry IV, Part I*, Act IV, Sc. 1. Kittredge's note on *whereupon:* "whereupon: for what reason. On or upon was common in a causal sense. This use survives in on compulsion, on purpose"

also looking before. And when a word is equivocal by reason, as are all the common words, and there is a before and after in the meanings of such words, clearly these key words cannot be understood without looking before and after. It is impossible to understand these words without seeing the order (the before and after) in their meanings.

We cannot understand a course of action or someone's reasoning if we cannot follow it. And we cannot follow it without seeing the before and after in it.

Hence, Hamlet speaks well of reason's trying to understand by, or in its discourse, as looking before and after.

But it should not remain hidden to us that the word *before* is equivocal by reason (and, hence, also the word *after* and therefore also the word *order* and all other words defined by before and after such as *first* and *last*, *beginning, middle,* and *end* and so on).

Like other words in the definition, the word *before* has many meanings in an order. Aristotle has distinguished in order the central and chief senses of the word:

> One thing is said to be *before* another in four ways.
>
> First and most strictly according to time, by which one thing is older and more ancient than another. For something is said to be older or more ancient in that its time has been longer.
>
> Second, that whose existence does not follow reversibly, as one is before two. If two exists, it follows right away that one exists; but if one exists, it is not necessary that two exist; so that the existence of the other does not follow reversibly from the one. Thus the *before* is such that from it, existence does not follow reversibly.
>
> In a third way, *before* is said according to a certain order, as in the sciences and speeches. The order of before and after belongs to the demonstrative sciences: the elements are in order before the diagrams; and in grammar, the letters are before the syllables. Likewise, in speeches, the proemium comes in order before the narration.
>
> Further, besides the aforesaid, the better and more honorable seems to be before by nature. For even the many say that those honored or loved by them come before with them. But this is perhaps the strangest of the ways.

> *Before* would seem to be said in that many ways.
>
> There would seem to be another way *before* is said in addition to the above. Of those things whose existence follows reversibly, the cause in whatever manner of existence to the other would reasonably be said to be before by nature. That there are such things is clear. The existence of a man follows reversibly in existence to the true statement about him. For if a man exists, the statement by which we say the man exists is true. But the true statement is in no way a cause of the thing being, but the thing being would seem to be a cause in some way of the statement being true. For the statement is said to be true or false as the thing is or is not.
>
> Thus, one thing is said to be *before* another in five ways.[73]

And, of course, the word *after* has as many meanings in like order, corresponding one to one, to the meanings of *before*.

It is necessary to study the text of Aristotle on *before* most carefully at length, but here we can only briefly touch upon it.

The first meaning of *before* is *in time*, as the American Revolution was before the French Revolution To this sense is also reduced the sense of before in motion or in place.

The second sense is *in being*, as one is before two. One can be without two, but two cannot be without one.

The third sense in the discourse of reason, as the prologue comes before the play in *Romeo and Juliet* and premisses before the conclusion. To this sense is reduced any before and after in our knowledge.

The fourth and last sense is in goodness. *Before* in this sense means *better*. The end is before the means in this sense even though the means may be before the end in time or being.

Aristotle gives a most important additional sense of *before* after he has distinguished in order the above four. This is the sense in which the cause is said to before the effect even if they are simultaneous, as a man's sitting and the truth of the statement that he is sitting. The former is before the latter, as a cause is before its effect, for the man's sitting is a cause of the truth of the

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[73] *Categories*, Chapter 12

statement, even though his sitting and the truth of the statement are simultaneous. This additional sense is very important, especially to reason that wants to know why, but it escapes many because of its subtlety and distance from the first two senses. It is difficult to see how of two things that exist at the same time and neither of which can be without the other, one is before the other.

In what sense does reason look before and after? Clearly, in all five of the above senses. Hamlet is thus saying much in few words when he says that reason looks before and after.

The ability to look before and after includes or presupposes the ability to see the distinction of things. Since nothing is before or after itself, one could never see that this is before that without distinguishing this from that. But one could distinguish this from that without seeing that this is before that. Hence, Hamlet rightly defines reason as the ability to look before and after since, as has been said, an ability must always be defined by the utmost of which it is capable

But we must also consider how the words *looking before and after* are ordered with the word *discourse* and why was it necessary to add them to complete this definition of reason.

We cannot here enter into an exposition of this magnificent text of Aristotle and show that he has perfectly ordered the central senses of the word *before*. But even a cursory examination of this text will begin to reveal how much lies under the words of Hamlet. Reason looks before and after in all five senses given here, as well as in the senses attached to them.

Reason looks before and after *in time*. We recall the past and try to foresee the future. We put past events in chronological order, before and after the birth of Christ. We plan our future, putting things we intend to do in a temporal order.

Reason also looks before and after *in being*. What can be without another, but not vice-versa, is said to be before the latter in being. One is before two in being. Bricks are before a brick wall or patio in being. Water also seems to be before animals and plants in being.

Reason also looks before and after *in its own discourse* (and, in general, in our knowing). The prologue comes before the play in *Romeo and Juliet*. And the premisses of an argument come before the conclusion. And plane geometry comes before solid geometry. And we sense before we understand.

Finally, reason looks before and after *in goodness*. What is *better* is said to be before in this sense. Shakespeare is before Chaucer in this sense (although Chaucer is before Shakespeare in time.) The end is before the means in this sense even thought the means might be before in time or being.

Besides the above four ordered central sense of *before*, there is another sense sufficiently different from the above and yet extremely important for reason. This is the sense in which a cause is before its effect. Although this resembles the second sense because of the dependence of the effect upon the cause, one cannot have a cause (in act) without an effect (in act). When we ask *why*, we are looking before in this sense. If *looking* means here *trying to understand*, we can see why looking before in this sense perfects reason. For we fully understand a thing only when we know its underlying cause.

It can be seen that nothing prevents what is before in one of the above senses from being after in another sense. Thus in things the cause is before the effect, but in our knowledge the effect is usually before the cause. And what is after in time or being may be better or before in goodness.

The word *before* has many meanings, not by chance, but by reason. Hence, there is an order among them. The first meaning of before is in time. That is before in the past which is further from the present. Thales is before Socrates. That is before in the future which is closer to the present now.

Since time arises by numbering the before and after in some motion (like that of the sun), to this sense is reduced that of the before and after in motion. And since motion is over some distance, we can also reduce to this sense the before and after in a road or path.

This sense of *before* comes first because it involves the before and after in motion. Since we name things as we know them and our knowledge begins with the senses and "things in motion sooner catch the eye than what not stirs", the before and after in motion is first named by us.

Before in place and before in motion are reduced to the first sense of *before* (just as to the first sense of beginning in the fifth book of the *Metaphysics* are attached beginning in motion and in time) In Sonnet 60, we see the connection:

> Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
> So do our minutes hasten to their end;
> Each changing place with that which goes before,
> In sequent toil all forwards do contend.[74]

The reason why of their close connection is given in Book Six of Aristotle's *Natural Hearing* (the so-called *Physics*).

Although reason looks before and after in the sense of time, it often fails to foresee the future. Hastings does not foresee his own downfall and death due to the treachery of Lancaster in *King Henry IV, Part II*, Act IV, Sc. 2:

Hastings:	And though we here fall down, We have supplies to second our attempt: If they miscarry, theirs shall second them; And so success of mischief shall be born, And heir from heir shall hold this quarrel up Whiles England shall have generation.
Lancaster:	You are too shallow, Hastings, much too shallow, To sound the bottom of the after-times.

Likewise, in *Henry the Fourth, Part One*, Act III, Sc. 2, K. Henry speaks to the Prince of Wales:

> The hope and expectation of thy time
> Is ruin'd, and the soul of every man
> Prophetically do forethink thy fall.

But all were deceived in their expectations.

Ecclesiastes, Chapter Four, v. 13:

> Better is a child that is poor and wise, than a king that is old and foolish, who knoweth not to forsee for hereafter.

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[74]Shakespeare, Sopnnet 60, lines 1-4

The second sense of *before* is in being. What can be without another when that other cannot be without it, is said to be before in being. In this sense, the letters A, C, and T are before the word CAT. What is before in being is never after in time. But sometimes it is not before in time. If one has a stamp or printer which produces the word CAT with all its letters at once, the letters are not before the word in time (but still in being).

The third sense of before is in the discourse of reason and, in general, in our knowledge. This resembles the first two senses, but it comes after them being inward in our knowledge and not outward to our senses as the first two senses. Discourse is like a motion and just as one thing can be without another (but not vice-versa) so likewise one thing can be known without another but not vice-versa. But many times what is after in time or in being is known before.

The fourth sense of *before* is in goodness. Before in this senses means *better*. This sense is the furthest from the first sense. Things that grow and develop in time become better later in time. One of the ways that Aristotle shows in the in the ninth book of the *Metaphysics* that act is before ability in perfection (and therefore goodness) is that what is later in generation is more complete and perfect than what is before and what is after in generation is to what is before as act to ability. Fourth sense of before is used in these lines spoken by Iachimo (*Cymbeline* Act V, Sc. 2):

> If that thy gentry, Britain, go before
> This lout, as he exceeds our lords, the odds
> Is that we scarce are men and you are gods.

The sense which Aristotle brings in after he has distinguished the four central senses in order is not, I think, fifth in order. Rather, it is a distant relative of the second sense. It is like the second sense in that what is after in being depends upon what is before in being and an effect depends upon its cause. But it is mentioned among other senses that attach in some way, or are reduced, to one of the four central senses because it is the crowning sense for our knowledge (to which, of course logic is ordered) and because it perfects all the other senses. Our knowledge that *this is before that* is perfected when we see *why* this is before that.

Shakespeare is, of course, well aware that *before* has many meanings. In accord with his custom, he puns upon a meaning attached to the first and the fourth meaning of *before* in the words of Helena's confession to the Countess of her love in *All's Well That Ends Well* (Act I, Sc. 3):

> .....Then I confess,
> Here on my knee, before high heaven and you,
> That before you, and next unto high heaven,
> I love your son.

Puns, of course, take the most distant meaning as a way of being clear. (Hence, the punning saying "I see said the blind man; but he couldn't see at all" punning on the first and last sense of *seeing*.)

Hamlet himself touches upon the first and fourth senses of *before* in his soliloquy complaining of his mother's hasty marriage to a man so inferior to his father:

> .....That it should come to this!
> But two months dead! nay, not so much, not two.
> So excellent a king, that was, to this
> Hyperion to a satyr.....
> O God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
> Would have mourn'd longer - married with my uncle,
> My father's brother, but no more like my father
> Than I to Hercules. Within a month.....[75]

Hamlet's reason goes back and forth, looking before and after in the fourth sense (how much better was his father than his uncle) and in the first sense (how soon after his father death, she married his uncle).

Hamlet not only indicates that reason is trying to understand in its discourse (its thinking or reasoning), but also what and how it comes to understand. Reason is trying to see the before and after in things. One cannot see the order in things before one has seen their distinction or difference. But Hamlet defines reason as trying to see order, or a before and after, because we define ability by its utmost. Now the last thing reason's ability extends to is not seeing the differences among things, but seeing the order among those things

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[75] *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 2

whose differences it has already seen. (We might add that reason also seems to have gone further when it see the differences among things than when it sees their likenesses. For the one who sees the likeness of things but not their difference would seem to have a confused or indistinct and hence imperfect knowledge of them.)

But Hamlet's words not only indicate *what* reason is trying to see or understand, but also *how* it comes to understand. For it is by looking before and after that reason comes to see the before and after.

capability

Henry IV, Part Two, Act I, Sc. 1, Morton to Northhumberland about the death of Hotspur:

> You knew he walk'd o'er perils, on an edge,
> More likely to fall in than to get o'er;
> You were advis'd his flesh was capable
> Of wound and scars and that his forward spirit
> Would lift where most trade of danger rang'd

Here the word *capable* is said of the ability to undergo. Understanding is also in a way an undergoing.

Godlike

Since God understands all things at once by understanding Himself and there is no discourse or movement in Him, it seems simply false to say that reason or the ability for large discourse, looking before and after, is *god-like*.

Reason is god-like insofar as it is able to understand and to the extent that it understands in act. But Hamlet has told us that reason understands by a discourse in which it looks before and after. The greatest virtue of practical reason is called *foresight* which word itself points to before and after. And the Latin word for this virtue (*prudentia*) is also derived from the Latin word for foresight (*providentia*) When Thomas explains the word *Deus*, he does so by *providentia.*

> hoc nomen *Deus*...imponitur...ab universali rerum providentia: omnes enim loquentes de Deo, hoc intendunt nominare Deum, quod habet providentiam universalem de rebus. Unde dicit Dionysius, 12 cap. *de Div. Nom.* quod *deitas est quae omnia videt providentia et bonitate perfecta*. Ex hac autem operatione hoc nomen Deus assumptum, impositum est ad significandum divinam naturam.[76]
>
> This name *God* (*Deus*) is imposed from the universal providence of things: for all speaking of God intend to name that which has universal providence over things. Whence Dionysius says, in the twelfth chapter *About the Divine Names,* that "Godhood is what sees all things by providence and perfect goodness." The name *God*, taken from this operation, is laid down to signify the divine nature.

Just as reason looks before and after, and before and after is the definition of order, so order is seen as the proper effect of providence whence God is named:

> Convenientia ordinis perfectionem providentiae demonstrat: cum ordo sit proprius providentiae effectus.
>
> The suitableness of order shows the perfection of providence: since order is the proper effect of providence.[77]

And in general Thomas will often quote St. Paul in his Latin text:

> Quae a Deo sunt, ordinata sunt.
>
> The things which are from God, are ordered.[78]

And in the Latin text of *Iudith:*

> Tu fecisti priora, et illa post illa cogitasti, et hoc factum est quod ipse voluisti.[79]

One man is wiser than another and more like God by his reason when he sees what is before or after what the other man sees or, in general, when he sees a before and after which the other man does not see. It is not the discourse of reason or its coming to know what it did not know that is Godlike (for God is

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[76]*Summa Theologiae*, Prima Pars, Q. 13, Art. 8, c.
[77]*Summa Contra Gentiles*, Liber III, Caput LXXVII
[78]*Rom.*, XIII, v. 1. Quoted for example in *Summa Contra Gentiles,* Liber III, Caput LXXVI
[79]Chapter IX, v. 4

never ignorant or in need of a discourse), but rather the knowing itself or the end of the discourse, as the King tells Biron:

> Biron: What is the end of study? let us know.
>
> King: Why, that to know, which else we should not know.
>
> Biron: Things hid and barr'd, you mean, from common sense?
>
> King: Ay, that is study's god-like recompense[80]

Hence, Hamlet speaks of man as *like a god* in his apprehension, not in his need of discourse or reasoning:

> What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals![81]

Only what pertains to perfection can be properly carried over to God. Thus, the certitude of our science, but not the need of discourse can be carried over:

> illud quod in Deo est absque omni imperfectione, in creaturis cum aliquo defectu invenitur; propter hoc oportet, ut si aliquid in creaturis inventum Deo attribuitur, separemus totum quod ad imperfectionem pertinet, ut solum maneat hoc quod perfectionis est, quia secundum hoc tantum creatura Deum imitatur.
>
> Dico igitur, quod scientia quae in nobis invenitur, habet aliquid perfectionis, et aliquid imperfectionis.
>
> Ad perfectionem eius pertinet certitudo ipsius, quia quod scitur, certitudinaliter cognoscitur; sed ad imperfectionem pertinet discursus intellectus a principiis in conclusiones, quarum est scientia; hic enim discursus non contingit nisi secundum quod intellectus cognoscens principia, cognoscit in potentia tantum conclusiones; si enim actu cognoseret, non esset ibi discursus; cum motus non sit nisi exitus de potentia ad actum.
>
> dicitur ergo in Deo scientia ratione certitudinis, non autem ratione discursus praedicti, qui nec etiam in angelis invenitur, ut Dionysius dicit.[82]

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[80]Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I, Sc. 1
[81]*Hamlet*, Act II, Sc. 2
[82]*De Veritate*, Q. 2, Art 1, Ad 4

Thus as Shakespeare teaches us elsewhere, it is never the course in any sense that is the end and the perfect:

> All's well that ends well: still the fine's the crown;
> Whate'er the course, the end is the renown.[83]

What is the end of the course of reason? Understanding and ultimately understanding God. Reason is godlike insofar as its end is to know God who in knowing himself knows everything, but chiefly himself.

fust

The word *fust* means *to be become musty*.[84]

Five General Reasons Why We Should Use Reason

Hamlet touches upon at least five general reasons why we should use reason (or use it more than we do).

One reason is in comparison to what is below man; two reasons are in comparison to what is above man; and two reasons are in comparison to man himself.

The beast is below man. If man does not use his reason, he falls to the level of the beast.

God is above man. If man uses his reason, he obeys God who has given us reason so that we might use it. "Sure he that made us with such large

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[83]*All's Well That Ends Well,* Act IV, Sc. 4

[84]The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, edited by Harold Jenkins, Footnote on Act IV, Sc. 4, lines 9, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1982, p. 345: 39. *fust*] become musty

discourse, Looking before and after, gave us not That capability and god-like reason To fust in us un'used."

And in using reason, man becomes like God who is above him.

Having looked above and below man, we can now look at man himself. Since man is an animal with reason, man cannot be true to himself if he does not use his reason. And as Polonius says elsewhere in the play: "This above all: to thine own self be true"

And since the chief good or end of man involves the use of reason, man cannot achieve his chief good or end without the use of reason.

Anyone of these five reasons by itself is a powerful motive for using reason. Taken together, they are overwhelming.

Duane H. Berquist