**METAPHYSICS PROGRAM**

**PART I**

**I. Origin And Nature Of Metaphysics**

1. ***The origin of metaphysical speculation***. The birth and inevitability of the radical question on the origin, nature and ultimate meaning of reality and human existence. Diverse answers to the fundamental question. The insufficiency of scientific answers. Contribution of cultural traditions, of myths and of religion. Basic ontological principles of man and metaphysics as a developed knowledge. The birth of metaphysics as a speculative and rational knowledge.

2. ***Nature of metaphysical knowledge***. Different meanings of the terms metaphysics (as a noun and adjective) and ontology. Metaphysics as knowledge of the first principles and the ultimate causes of reality. Its object: the radical aspect of reality (the being of things). Metaphysics and the particular sciences. Its intrinsic relation with the other branches of Philosophy. Metaphysics and theology: theological knowledge is also metaphysical; openness of metaphysical understanding to Christian revelation.

3. ***Aspects of the metaphysical method***. Wonder and the grasping of speculative problems. The notion of metaphysical experience. The search for foundations: from phenomena to radical nature. Intellectual understanding; dialectical and demonstrative processes. The possibility of a metaphysical language. The use of analogy. Sapiential character of metaphysics: its positive role in human life and culture. Its significance in Christian life and in theology. Metaphysics and mysticism.

**II. Historical Overview**

4. ***Some historical milestones***. Eastern thought and metaphysics. Greek metaphysics and the question of being. "Christian metaphysics": creation and person. Modern gnoseologism. Rationalistic metaphysics and its consequent Idealism.

5. ***Anti-metaphysical views***. Kantian critique. The Positivist and Neopositivist critique. The nihilism of Nietzsche and the "bracketing" of being in Heidegger's propositions. Metaphysical doubt and uncertainty. Openness to metaphysics in the modern philosophies of language. The crisis of metaphysical thought and the different attitudes of "post-modern culture".

**III. The Paths to Metaphysics**

6. ***Approach to being and the first metaphysical questions***. The fundamental experiences: external, internal, interpersonal, ethical and religious. Complementary paths (logical, linguistic, cosmological and anthropological) which lead to the metaphysical problem. The understanding of being, basis of human knowledge (the primum cognitum). Some primary metaphysical problems: being and becoming; unity and multiplicity; being and being perceived; real being and ideal thought. Critique of the absolute beginning of metaphysics in a rationalist sense.

7. ***The knowledge of "being" and the different meanings of the "act of being"***. The linguistic experience of the meanings of the term "to be" (esse). Abstraction and the initially unclear notions about the act of being: "to be", to exist, reality, etc. The act of being and existential judgment. Analogy in the conceptualization of the "act of being'. The impossibility of a univocal or equivocal notion of being. Indeterminate being and some positions during the Scholastic period. The Aristotelian division of the meanings of being. A sketch of some topics: being, manners of being, non-being or nothing and other oppositions or distinctions. The Categories and Transcendentals. Degrees of being.

8. ***The first ontological principles***. The ontological bases of knowledge. Their difference with logical and mathematical axioms. The habit of the first principles according to Aristotle. The principle of non-contradiction: its knowledge, its different formulations and its metaphysical scope. Rational discussion of the principles and their indirect proofs. Other metaphysical principles of being (identity, causality). Their enlightening role. Erroneous use of the first principles. Critique of dialectical metaphysics (Hegel).

**IV. Act of Being and Being**

9. ***Introduction***. Multiplicity, mutability, finiteness and contingency of beings in the world. The concrete being and its different simultaneous and successive aspects. Principles of being and "physical parts". The physical and metaphysical structure of beings. The distinction between metaphysical principles and logical aspects. Progressive study of the metaphysical principles: in the material being, in the personal being and in God.

10. ***Diversity of modes of being: substance and accidents***. The substance as subsistent being, as substrate and as essence. The distinction between substance and metaphysical accidents. Essential and accidental properties (the being per accidens). The substance as a primary mode of being. The rationalist notion of substance. Analogy of the notion of substance. The active properties and the activity of the substance as a manifestation and unfolding of its being. The development of the substance in the living being. Substance and event. The relationships and order among things. Real relations and relations of reason. The "transcendental" relation. Substance and communication.

11. ***Act and potency***. The notions of act and potency and their relevance in metaphysics. Act as action and first act. Different levels of actuality. Passive potency and the active power. Distinction between potency and logical possibility. The relation act-potency: primacy of the act; the limitation and diversification of the act through potency.

12. ***Essence***. Essence as the specific core of the act of being of a thing. Essence, nature and definition or quiddity. The essence in abstract: the possible being. "Essentialist" metaphysics. Essence and concrete individuals. The imperfect human knowledge of the essences of things. The Aristotelian hylemorphism: corporeal nature, essential form and prime matter as potency. The metaphysical problem of individuation: universal essence and essence of a concrete being. Essence and evolution.

13. ***The act of being***. Importance of the distinction between "act of being" and essence in the philosophy of St. Thomas. Divine Being and created being (Ex. 3:14). The participation in the act of being. The actus essendi as radical and primary act of the being. Degrees of being. To be, to live, to understand (vivere viventibus est esse). The synthesis between being as act and essence as potency (potentia essendi) in the concrete being. The concepts of composition and metaphysical participation in ontological analysis (Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas). The composition of the "act of being-essence" as the basic structure of the finite being. Finite being and infinite being. The act of being and the relation of creatures, of the finite being, with God as Ipsum Esse Subsistens and Creator. The distinction between essence and existence according to the Scholastics. The act of being in St. Thomas and the Sein of Heidegger.

14. ***The subsisting subject***. The notion of the subsisting subject (hypostasis or suppositum). The disregard of the subsisting subject in some metaphysical doctrines. The existing subject and its operations. The convergence of the different metaphysical aspects in the subject. The personal subject as the highest fulfillment of the characteristics of being: anthropology, a necessary step for metaphysics. Person, the world and orientation to God.

**PART II**

**V. The Transcendentals**

15. ***Being and the transcendentals***. Unfolding of the knowledge of being in the analogical transcendental notions. The transcendentals in classical philosophy (something, thing, unity, etc.). Their different connotations and their unity. The transcendentals in the Kantian sense. Anthropological aspects: the relation of man with the transcendentals (human unity, social union, to live in the truth, to seek and find the good, etc.) as the fullness of human life. Openness of man to being and to the transcendentals: man as a "metaphysical animal".

16. ***Transcendental unity***. Historical aspects: metaphysics of the pluralists, dualists and monists. Unity in Neoplatonism. The undividedness and identity of each thing and its distinction from other beings. Degrees and types of unity. Unity and unification in things and in man. The plurality of things and their unification through intercommunication. Multiplicity, diversity, difference and distinction; identity, equality and similarity. Unity in God.

17. ***Truth***. Being and intelligibility. The predominance of intelligibility in Idealism. Ontological truth and logical truth. The intelligible thing and the intelligence. The intelligent being as the most complete manner of being.

18. ***Goodness***. Being, goodness, perfection. Being and desirability. The Neoplatonic metaphysics of goodness. Ontological good and moral good. The tendency of goodness to spread: good and communicability. Good and value. The desirable thing and love. Personal love as the highest fulfillment of being. Evil as privation.

19. ***Beauty***. Beauty and perfection. Types and degrees of beauty. Contemplation and creative participation of man in beauty.

20. ***Conclusion***. Material being, biological life, spiritual life as ascending fulfillment of the transcendental demands of being. Understanding and loving in relation with transcendental being. Human existence from the viewpoint of the transcendentals. Passage from the created person to God.

**VI. Ontological Causality**

21. ***The experience and knowledge of causality***. The internal and external experience of causality as relationship and interaction among beings in the world. The metaphysical problem of causality: the principles of dependence of beings; the why of causality and human reason's search for its basis. The restricted use of causality in the sciences. The principle of causality and its expressions. The notion of causa sui. Causality, creativity and self-perfection.

22. ***The nature of causality***. Cause, condition, occasion, reason and principle. Cause and origin. Analogy of causality. The four kinds of causes in Aristotle and their interrelationship or concausality. Partial causes and total cause; remote and proximate causes; the cause per accidens. Complex causality. Physical cause and spiritual influence.

23. ***Material cause and formal cause***. The unity between material cause and formal cause as components of the material being. The metaphysical notion of matter. Form as an essential element of material things. Form, structure and order. Form and harmony as intrinsic ends. The form as model and exemplary cause. Natural forms and artistic forms.

24. ***Efficient cause***. Analogical notion of efficient cause. The physical agent cause and the intelligent and free cause. Determinism and indeterminism in the material, biological and human causality. Causal necessity and free cause. The influence of what is spiritual on the material order. Efficient cause and creation. Causality as a generous giving.

25. ***Operation and activity***. The distinction between being and acting in the finite being. Activity as an expansion and perfection of being. Transient and immanent activity (actions and operations). Actions and habits. Being and freedom in the person.

26. ***Final cause***. Finality as intentionality of intelligent agents. Finality in natural beings and its connection with other causes. The Thomist notion of "natural appetition". The end as causa causarum. Intrinsic and extrinsic ends, principal and concomitant ends. Predetermined and induced ends. Finality and chance. Intermediate ends and ultimate end. Finality and intelligence. Acquisition of goods and their communication. Immanent and transcendent end of the universe. The ordering of materials things to the person, and of the created person to God. The metaphysical notion of disorder and evil. The step towards ethics.

27. ***The Uncaused Cause***. The ultimate theological solution of the metaphysical problem of causality. The concept of first and uncaused cause at all levels. God as infinite and creative cause. First causes and secondary causes. The step towards theology.