

# BEING &

Some  
*Twentieth-Century*  
*Thomists*

JOHN F. X. KNASAS

**BEING**  
and Some Twentieth-Century Thomists



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Thomists

JOHN KNASAS



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To J. O.



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## PREFACE

Alone one can write articles; only with friends does one write books. I want to thank publisher and philosopher Dr. Dalia Stančienė of Vilnius, Lithuania, for the many invitations to teach in her Thomistic summer schools and to lecture in other venues. From these opportunities the main lines of this book were drawn. Assisting her in these projects have been: Dr. Vaclovas Bagdonavičius, director of the Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology; Dr. Rita Šerpytė, director of the Religious Studies Center, University of Vilnius; and Dr. Kęstutis Dubnikas, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Vilnius.

In a sophomore philosophy of the human person course and while still a history major, I contemplated the department chair's emphasis on Bernard J. F. Lonergan's insistence for personal appropriation of the truth, "I am a knower (according to a definite cognitional structure)." As I interiorly said the words, I was struck by the additional meaning in uttering "I am" rather than simply "I." The meanings of the two utterances were starkly unequal. *Am* added something more to the meaning of *I* as clearly as a cry adds to a stillness. Moreover, the meaning of *am* was not simply additional but also most important, for without what was meant by *am*, what was meant by *I* was not yet anything. When I brought these observations to my teacher's attention, he feigned interest but insisted that the more significant meaning lay in going on to add *knower*. I was disappointed. Later others introduced me to Maritain, Gilson, and Owens, who in turn ushered me to Aquinas. Joyfully I discovered thinkers who, I believed, saw what I did and from whom I could learn. Throughout almost thirty years of teaching and writing, I have tried to stay faithful to that intuition. Where I have faltered the responsibility is mine alone.



# ABBREVIATIONS TO WORKS OF AQUINAS\*

<i>C.G.</i>	<i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i>
<i>De Ente</i>	<i>De Ente et Essentia</i>
<i>De Pot.</i>	<i>Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei</i>
<i>De Ver.</i>	<i>Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate</i>
<i>In de An.</i>	Commentary on the <i>De Anima</i> of Aristotle
<i>In de Trin.</i>	Commentary on the <i>De Trinitate</i> of Boethius
<i>In Meta.</i>	Commentary on the <i>Metaphysics</i> of Aristotle
<i>In Phys.</i>	Commentary on the <i>Physics</i> of Aristotle
<i>In de Sen.</i>	Commentary on <i>De Sensu et Sensato</i> of Aristotle
<i>In Sent.</i>	Commentary on the <i>Sentences</i> of Peter Lombard
<i>Quodl.</i>	<i>Quaestiones de Quodlibet</i>
<i>S.T.</i>	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>

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\*Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.



# INTRODUCTION

While a philosophy graduate student at the University of Toronto, I attended a reception at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. A priest of the Order of St. Basil and also a well-known expositor of St. Thomas remarked that only in this century have we finally understood Aquinas. He was referring to the *actus essendi* doctrine. Even with due regard for the effects of the wine, the remark accurately indicates the novelty of the *actus essendi* thesis. It has never had more attention than in the twentieth century. Yet for all that, the thesis is at best precarious. Western philosophers have found it easier to conceive the being or existence of a thing in terms of the *fact* of the thing rather than as a distinct *act*. Aristotle remarks that “‘one man’ and ‘man’ are the same thing, and so are ‘existent man’ and ‘man,’ and the doubling of the words in ‘one man and one existent man’ does not express anything different.”<sup>1</sup> Echoing Aristotle and while criticizing Avicenna, Averroës argued that a substance was essentially a being and not a being by reason of an addition.<sup>2</sup> Kant would observe that no difference exists between one hundred possible thalers and one hundred actual ones.<sup>3</sup> Also, contemporary logi-

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV, 2, 1003b 25–30. On Aristotle’s non-existential sense of the question *An est?* see Joseph Owens, “The Accidental and Essential Character of Being in the Doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas,” in John R. Catan, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 59.

<sup>2</sup> Averroës, *Des. Destructionum*, Disp. 5, ed. Juntas (1574), 78 A. Aquinas repeats Averroës’ argument at *In IV Meta.*, *lectio* 2, no. 555. For an Averroistic criticism of Aquinas’ position, see the text of Siger of Brabant as edited by Armand Maurer in “*Esse and Essentia* in the *Metaphysics* of Siger of Brabant,” *Mediaeval Studies* 8 (1946): 71. Siger points out that if existence results from the principles of the thing, yet is not an accident, it must be the thing itself.

<sup>3</sup> “The content of both [viz., the object and the concept of the object] must be one and the same; nothing can have been added to the concept, which expresses merely what is possible, by my thinking its object (through the expression ‘it is’) as given absolutely. Otherwise stated, the real contains no more than the merely possible. A hundred real thalers do not contain the least coin more than a hundred possi-

cians treat existence as a second order predicate that in the first order disappears into just the fact of individuals of a certain nature.<sup>4</sup> Even the Thomistic tradition lacks unanimity. In *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*, twentieth-century French Thomist Etienne Gilson describes the situation this way:

Existence may mean either a state or an act. In the first sense, it means the state in which a thing is posited by the efficacy of an efficient or of a creative cause, and this is the meaning the word receives in practically all the Christian theologies outside Thomism, particularly those of Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Scotus, and Suarez. In a second sense, existence (*esse*, to be) points out the interior act, included in the composition of substance, in virtue of which the essence is a “being,” and this is the properly Thomistic meaning of the word. The problem under discussion now is: how did Thomas Aquinas achieve the awareness of the very possibility of this notion? . . . The majority of philosophers will concede that it is a far cry from a possible thing to an actual thing. . . . This will be conceded by all, but if an actually existing being has been produced by its cause, why should one attribute to it an “existence” distinct from the fact that it exists? . . . What has divided the Thomist school from other schools of theology, ever since the thirteenth century, is a general reluctance to conceive the act of being (*esse*) as a distinct object of understanding. To tell the whole truth, even the so-called “Thomists” have been and still are divided on this point.<sup>5</sup>

Recently, and in the light of Frege’s logical analysis of existence statements, Analytic Thomism has insisted that Aquinas’ talk about the thing’s existence must be translated into statements about the fact of individuals of a certain nature.<sup>6</sup>

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ble thalers.” Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 599/ B 627, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1965), 505.

<sup>4</sup> See Patrick Lee, “Existential Propositions in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 52 (1988): 605–26.

<sup>5</sup> Etienne Gilson, *The Elements of Christian Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 142–43.

<sup>6</sup> “On Aquinas’s account, the existence of Thor is reportable by saying what Thor is. . . . To exist is to be or to have form. Hence, for instance, Aquinas can only make sense of statements like ‘Thor exists’ (*Thor est*) on the understanding that they tell us what something is. *Thor est*, said of Thor the cat, means, for Aquinas, ‘Thor is a cat.’ Or, to change the example, according to Aquinas names like ‘Socrates’ or ‘Plato’ signify human nature as ascribable to certain individuals. *Hoc nomen ‘Socrates’ vel ‘Plato’ significat naturam humanam secundum quod est in hac materia.* On Aquinas’s account, saying *Socrates est* or *Plato est* is not to inform people of a property

I wish to defend the continued vitality of the way of thinking called Existential Thomism found in the writings of Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson, and Joseph Owens.<sup>7</sup> Existential Thomism is a species of Neo-Thomism that I will describe in Chapter 1. Generally speaking, Existential Thomism is *a posteriori*. It is built up from extramental reality as presented in the data of sensible experience. It is specified by the perception of a basic intelligibility, or commonality, in those real things of sensation. Aquinas called this commonality “*ratio entis*: the notion of being.” The grasp of this commonality is one sense of Maritain’s “intuition of being.” As I will explain in Chapter 5, being not only *applies* to all that exists or could exist. Because of being’s analogical character, being also *englobes* all to which it applies. Unlike a univocal notion, being does not completely abstract from the differences of its instances. Being has an unspeakable richness to it. Though visual examples are often used for intellection, it might be better to use an auditory example. Just as a chord has an intensity and richness not found in any one note, which explains why certain harmonies pierce us, so too being is the chord heard by the ear of the intellect. Any thing in its uniqueness is just another note in the chord of being. All of reality is that chord, and just as an audi-

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of existence had by Socrates and Plato. It is to assert what Socrates and Plato are by nature, i.e., human.” Brian Davies, “Aquinas, God, and Being,” *The Monist* 80 (1997): 511–12. For a discussion of Davies’ treatment of Aquinas’ notion of *esse*, see Brian Shanley, “Analytic Thomism,” *The Thomist* 63 (1999), 125–37, and *infra*, Chap. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Especially for Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantieri and Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), chap. 1, “Being”; and *Approches sans entraves*, in Jean-Maire Aillon et al., eds., *Jacques et Raïssa Maritain: Oeuvres complètes* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg, 1992), vol. 13, 787–814. For Etienne Gilson, see his *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952), chaps. 2, 5, 6; and *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. L. K. Shook (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), chap. 1. For Joseph Owens, see *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985); *An Interpretation of Existence* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985); *Cognition: An Epistemological Inquiry* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1992). Other noteworthy “Existential Thomist” authors are: Mieczyslaw Albert Krapiec, *Metaphysics: An Outline of the History of Being*, trans. Teresa Sandok (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1991); Leo Sweeney, *Authentic Metaphysics in an Age of Unreality* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1993); Robert Henle, *Method in Metaphysics* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980); Yves R. Simon, *An Introduction to Metaphysics of Knowledge*, trans. Vukan Kuic and Richard J. Thompson (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990).

ence is entranced by the movements of a symphony, so too the ear of the philosopher can spend a lifetime listening to being. Nothing, if it is anything, ever leaves the chord and only adds to its richness. Patient reflection, especially in the light of Aquinas' novel use of Aristotle's *secunda operatio intellectus*, unveils that the proper definition of the *ratio entis* is "quasi habens esse: as if a possessor of the act of being." Informed by such an understanding of the *ratio*, the human intellect is in an unmatched position to understand the most important things: metaphysics, freedom, ethics, and religion.

I am inspired by John Paul II. I am fully cognizant that the attempt to revitalize something called "Neo-Thomist" will strike most as a fool's errand.<sup>8</sup> Even among orthodox conservative Catholics, the attitude is to let dead dogs lie. Neo-Thomism had its opportunity to deal with the Modernist challenge. It failed. Catholics ought to be considering other philosophical options. But consider the Pope's 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. Among encyclicals enjoining intellectuals to study Aquinas, *Fides et Ratio* stands out for one reason. Though trumpeting the name of Aquinas for strong Papal endorsement, previous encyclicals hardly, if ever, mentioned specific points of Thomistic doctrine.<sup>9</sup> Rather, they confined themselves to offering Aquinas as a general model, or an ideal case, of how Catholic intellectuals should strive to harmonize faith and reason. Intellectuals should

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<sup>8</sup> Gerald McCool eschews a Thomistic foundationalism for a more mediated understanding of our knowing in "Is Thomas' Way of Philosophizing Still Viable Today?" *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 64 (1990): 9–12; also his *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), chap. 9. Nicholas Lobkowitz, "What Happened to Thomism? From *Aeterni Patris* to *Vaticanum Secundum*," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69 (1995): 413, says that a conceptual relativism has unseated Thomism. Likewise, Adriaan T. Peperzak, "Widening the Horizon," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1998): 437–38; and John D. Caputo, "Philosophy and Prophetic Postmodernism: Toward a Catholic Postmodernity," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2000): 565. For an extended obituary of Gilsonian Thomism, see Wayne J. Hankey, "From Metaphysics to History, from Exodus to Neoplatonism, from Scholasticism to Pluralism: The Fate of Gilsonian Thomism in English-Speaking North America," *Dionysius* 16 (1998): 157–88. Finally, John Haldane wants to replace Neo-Thomism with "Analytic" Thomism: "[I]f St. Thomas were alive today he would be an analytical philosopher, whether he would have been a 'neo-Thomist' is another matter!" "What Future Has Catholic Philosophy?" *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 71 (1997): 81.

<sup>9</sup> For four Papal documents, vd. Jacques Maritain, *St. Thomas Aquinas* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1964), appendix 3.

try to do “the kind” of thing that Aquinas did, though not necessarily what he did. Hence, proponents of Teilhard de Chardin and of Liberation Theology, in their attempts to harmonize faith and science or faith and politics, could all claim to be following the recommendations of the Church to do “the kind” of thing done in such an exemplary way by Aquinas.

*Fides et Ratio* breaks the mold of these past Papal encyclicals. John Paul II recommends the study of a specific point of Thomistic doctrine. In paragraph 97, while discussing the help that the *intellectus fidei* (the understanding of the faith, or theology) obtains from philosophy, the Pope emphasizes the value of a metaphysics, or philosophy of being, that is based on the very act of being:

If the *intellectus fidei* wishes to integrate all the wealth of the theological tradition, it must turn to the philosophy of being [*ad philosophiam essendi*], which should be able to propose anew the problem of being—and this in harmony with the demands and insights of the entire philosophical tradition, including philosophy of more recent times, without lapsing into sterile repetition of antiquated formulas. Set within the Christian metaphysical tradition, the philosophy of being [*philosophia essendi*] is a dynamic philosophy which views reality in its ontological, causal and communicative structures. It is strong and enduring because it is based upon the very act of being itself [*quod actu ipso “essendi” sustentatur*], which allows a full and comprehensive openness to reality as a whole, surpassing every limit in order to reach the One who brings all things to fulfillment.<sup>115</sup> In theology, which draws its principles from Revelation as a new source of knowledge, this perspective is confirmed by the intimate relationship which exists between faith and metaphysical reasoning.<sup>10</sup>

What is this “philosophy of being based upon the act of being”? Affixed to the above text is note 115. The note refers to the Pope’s 1979 *Angelicum* address on the centenary of Leo XIII’s encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. In reiterating the Church’s tradition of recommending Aquinas, *Aeterni Patris* conferred a decisive impetus to the twentieth-century revival of Thomism. The reference to the *Angelicum* address includes the following:

The philosophy of St. Thomas deserves to be attentively studied and accepted with conviction by the youth of our day by reason of its spirit

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<sup>10</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, para. 97, in J. Michael Miller, ed., *The Encyclicals of John Paul II* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2001), 907.

of openness and of universalism, characteristics which are hard to find in many trends of contemporary thought. What is meant is an openness to the whole of reality in all its parts and dimensions, without either reducing reality or confining thought to particular forms or aspects (and without turning singular aspects into absolutes), as intelligence demands in the name of objective and integral truth about what is real. Such openness is also a significant and distinctive mark of the Christian faith, whose specific countermark is its catholicity. The basis and source of this openness lie in the fact that the philosophy of St. Thomas is a philosophy of being, that is, of the “act of existing” (*actus essendi*) whose transcendental value paves the most direct way to rise to the knowledge of subsisting Being and pure Act, namely to God. On account of this we can even call this philosophy: the philosophy of the proclamation of being, a chant in praise of what exists.<sup>11</sup>

No doubt should exist that *Fides et Ratio* is referring to Aquinas’ central metaphysical notion of *actus essendi*. Elaborating on *actus essendi* as the most direct way to rise to the knowledge of God, section 6 of the *Angelicum* address continues:

[I]t is by reason of this affirmation of being that the philosophy of St. Thomas is able to, and indeed must, go beyond all that presents itself directly in knowledge as an existing thing (given through experience) in order to reach “that which subsists as sheer Existing” (*ipsum Esse subsistens*) and also creative Love; for it is this which provides the ultimate (and therefore necessary) explanation of the fact that “it is preferable to be than not to be” (*Potius est esse quam non esse*) and, in particular, of the fact that we exist. “This existing itself,” Aquinas tells us, “is the most common effect of all, prior and more intimate than any other effect; that is why such an effect is due to a power that, of itself, belongs to God alone” (*Ipsium enim esse est communissimus effectus, primus et intimior omnibus aliis effectibus; et ideo soli Deo competit secundum virtutem propriam talis effectus: QQ. DD. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 7, c.*)<sup>12</sup>

Again, the Pope’s concern with the specific Thomistic doctrine of *actus essendi*, or *esse*, is patent. Through this *actus essendi* understanding of what is meant by the existence of a thing, Aquinas’ philosophy is so open to all of reality that the human intellect comes to

<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, “Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of Our Times,” *Angelicum* 57 (1980): para. 6, 139–40.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 140–41.

know God. By the notion of *actus essendi*, Aquinas' philosophy avoids the limitedness of viewpoint and framework that is the bane of "historical," that is, secular, forms of philosophy.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, in my opinion, the Pope's clear preference and recommendation in *Fides et Ratio* is that the *actus essendi* discovery of twentieth-century Thomistic scholarship be not eclipsed at century's end.<sup>14</sup> It is useless to counter this interpretation, though attempts include the following. First, the Pope remarks, "The Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonize any one particular philosophy in preference to others" (paragraph 49).<sup>15</sup> Does this remark contradict the specific recommendation of Aquinas' *actus essendi* doctrine? Not necessarily. The remark contradicts the recommendation only if the recommendation is treated as more than it is. But by this first remark, the Pope makes it clear that the Church will never place its infallible seal of approval on any one particular philosophy. The wisdom of this approach is that the Church both encourages philosophers who may need it and leaves them free to disagree with each other. This approach assures that their mutual agreement will be attained by a particular doctrine making the philosophical case for itself.<sup>16</sup>

Second, "[N]o historical form of philosophy can legitimately claim to embrace the totality of truth, nor to be the complete explanation of the human being, of the world, and of the human being's relationship with God" (paragraph 51). Why should this not include Thomism? And so how could the Pope recommend Thomism as the

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<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, para. 51, in Miller, ed., *Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 1880.

<sup>14</sup> Though missing this point, Gerald McCool discovers in the encyclical a positive reference to Blondel, "From Leo XIII to John Paul II: Continuity and Development," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 60 (2000): 176. McCool concludes: "Without recommending any particular system of philosophy, [John Paul II] has defended the Church's right to take a stand against those systems of philosophy whose principles and conclusions she has found to be incompatible with Christian revelation," 181.

<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, in Miller, ed., *Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 879.

<sup>16</sup> In his *Thomism in an Age of Renewal* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), Ralph M. McInerny details what he understands to be a minimal and a substantive response to the Church's recommendations of Aquinas. Minimally, all Catholic intellectuals should have Aquinas as a model for their attempts to integrate faith and reason (pps. 163–64). Substantively, the Catholic intellectual is antecedently obliged to begin his activities with a sincere study of Aquinas. Yet this antecedent obligation is not a consequent obligation to agree with Aquinas (pps. 197–98).

metaphysics that is universally and absolutely true? This second remark should not include Thomism for two reasons. First, as the previously cited *Angelicum* texts make clear, Aquinas' philosophy of *actus essendi* does not claim to embrace the totality of truth but to be "open" to all truth. Second, the "historical forms of philosophy" are secular philosophies that proceed with a deaf ear to the faith. Christian philosophy, of which Thomism is a model example, follows a methodology in which faith prompts one's thinking to the limits and so helps to avoid the limitedness of viewpoint that plagues historical, that is, secular, forms of philosophy.

Third, the encyclical notes: "[T]he Magisterium has repeatedly acclaimed the merits of Saint Thomas' thought and made him the guide and model for theological studies. This has not been in order to take a position on properly philosophical questions nor to demand adherence to particular theses" (paragraph 78).<sup>17</sup> How can this remark square with the previously cited recommendation (paragraph 97) of the *actus essendi* doctrine? Two points in reply. First, again, the *actus essendi* doctrine is being recommended only. There is no demand to adhere to it. Second, note that this third remark is in the past tense. It describes what the Magisterium has done. But in the next paragraph, 79, the Pope makes clear that he intends to go beyond past recommendations of Aquinas as a model for harmonizing faith and reason. With paragraph 97 later following, the Pope remarks: "Developing further what the Magisterium before me has taught, I intend in this final section to point out certain requirements which theology . . . makes today of philosophical thinking and contemporary philosophies."<sup>18</sup>

But if the Pope recommends Aquinas' metaphysics of *actus essendi* for speculative theology, he also seems to recommend it for moral theology. In the following section (paragraph 98), *Fides et Ratio* mentions moral theology's need for a philosophical ethics based upon a philosophical anthropology and a metaphysics of the good: "In order to fulfill its mission, moral theology must turn to a philosophical ethics which looks to the truth of the good, to an ethics which is neither subjectivist nor utilitarian. Such an ethics implies and presupposes a philosophical anthropology and a metaphysics of the good."<sup>19</sup> Is this

<sup>17</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, in Miller, ed., *Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 896.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 908.

metaphysics of the good the same as the mentioned metaphysics of being based upon the act of being? For a Thomist the answer could not be otherwise. For Aquinas, the good, the *ratio boni*, is just another way of talking about being, the *ratio entis*. And it would be a great surprise if, in an encyclical trumpeting the metaphysics of Aquinas, the Pope was referring to someone else's metaphysics of the good.

What is uncanny to me is the encyclical's clear echoes of the writings of Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson. For example, in *The Peasant of the Garonne*, Maritain writes:

And it is because that faithful servant, human wisdom, instrumentally used—the metaphysics of St. Thomas (not that of Aristotle)—had the intuition of being and saw in *esse* her chief object, that the higher wisdom—the theology of St. Thomas—was able to contemplate in the trans-luminous obscurity of the mysteries of Faith the Uncreated Cause of being as *Being itself subsisting by itself, ipsum Esse per se subsistens*, to which the handmaid had already lifted her eye as toward her ultimate end.<sup>20</sup>

And likewise Gilson, whom Maritain goes on to quote:

To conceive God as the Act of being pure and subsisting by itself, cause and end of all other beings, is by the same token to give oneself a theology that can do justice to whatever is true in other theologies, just as the metaphysics of *esse* has what is needed to do justice to whatever is true in other philosophies. Because it includes all of them, this theology of the uncreated Act of being, or of the God whose proper name is *I Am*, is as true as all of them together and truer than any one of them taken separately. Here is, if I am not mistaken, the secret reason for the choice the Church has made of St. Thomas Aquinas as her Common Doctor.<sup>21</sup>

It is as if the Pope had these passages before him when he constructed paragraph 97 of *Fides et Ratio*, and I invite the reader to review this paragraph in light of these remarks of Maritain and Gilson. But in his specific recommendation of the *actus essendi* doctrine, was John Paul finally revealing what Gilson calls “the secret reason”

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<sup>20</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne: An Old Layman Questions Himself about the Present Time*, trans. Michael Cuddihy and Elizabeth Hughes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 134.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

for the Church's choice of Aquinas? It does no good to complain that previous popes could not have kept this secret since the doctrine was brought to light only by later Thomistic efforts. The doctrine could have been a secret even to the past popes who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, taught better than they ever realized. Hence, in its specific recommendation of the *actus essendi* doctrine, the Pope would be attempting to elucidate for the first time the basis for the long love affair between the Church and Aquinas. For that reason alone, *Fides et Ratio* is an astonishing document in the long tradition of ecclesiastical recommendations of Aquinas.

Finally, I make no excuses about introducing Papal encyclicals and issues of Catholic theology. I think that I know a good philosophical argument when I see one, and that I am cognizant and respectful of the norms of philosophical discourse; nevertheless, I do not wish to do my thinking in a hermetically sealed chamber. Just as a mathematics student is assisted, encouraged, and guided by studying a math book that provides answers at the back, so too my Catholic faith assists, encourages, and guides my work in philosophy. Unbelievers will object that this extrinsic guidance of reason by faith is simply a bias and a prejudice. My response is that the value of the practice of Christian philosophy is best judged by its fruits. Gilson's studies of Augustine, Bonaventure, Aquinas, Scotus, and his many other works on the medieval period, for example his classic *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, have forever set the record straight.<sup>22</sup> What secular philosophy regarded as a philosophical wasteland, Gilson showed to be an era awash with novel and deep insights that were the patrimony of modern philosophy. True, the aid philosophy derives from religious faith can be an excuse to practice philosophy in a slipshod fashion. Anything good can be abused. But judgment should be conducted on the basis of integral examples. Gilson provides these examples. It is crass *ad hominem* reasoning to dismiss as philosophically irrelevant whatever a religious personage says. The Bible contains mathematical truths. Does that mean mathematics is only religion?

As a concluding caveat I want to say that though I am inspired by all the major Neo-Thomist voices, the synthesis that I present re-

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<sup>22</sup> For a Gilson bibliography, see Margaret McGrath, *Etienne Gilson: A Bibliography* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982).

mains my own. No other Neo-Thomist would agree with every point for which I argue. For example, though I regard *esse* as the intelligible heart of the *ratio entis*, the *ratio* still contains the note of essence. Hence, I welcome the reflections of Aristotelian Neo-Thomists on material essence and their work in the philosophy of science. Yet, convinced of Gilson and Maritain's observations that the *esse rei* is grasped in judgment, the intellect's *secunda operatio*, I cannot agree, as stated in Chapter 2, that natural philosophy is the gateway to Aquinas' understanding of metaphysics.

Also, though my Chapter 5 is profoundly indebted to Maritain's work on the analogy of being as a first intentional notion (*pace* Ralph McInerny), I cannot agree that as based upon a judgment of the *esse* of sensible things, the intuition of being immediately releases an understanding of being able to be apart from matter. That transphysical sense of the *ratio entis* emerges in subsequent stages of metaphysics. Further, though I echo Gilson and Maritain's espousal of sense realism for the origin of our concepts, I cannot follow Maritain down his path of "critical realism." As I explain in Chapter 4, Maritain's critical realism logically employs the failed Transcendental Thomist methodology of retorsion, or performative self-contradiction. This methodology would never convince thinkers who follow Kant's "Copernican Revolution" in philosophy, nor is it used by Aquinas in defense of the noncontradiction principle in *In Meta.* IV.

In Chapter 7 and *contra* Gilson, I am more sanguine that the *De Ente* reasoning for God, understood as *esse subsistens*, can be given an intrinsically philosophical presentation. The key to this possibility, without which the development of Aquinas' metaphysics would become unintelligible, is a philosophical elaboration of judgment as a grasp of a thing's existence as a distinct *actus*. This elaboration occurs in Chapter 6 and is indebted to Joseph Owens. Since the real thing also genuinely exists cognitively, the real thing of itself cannot be real. Rather, it is real by a distinct *actus*. This move is missed by other Thomists who place in sense cognition, not real things themselves, but "ideas" of these things. Yet I do not know what Owens would think of my elaboration of a Thomistic absolute consideration not of the essence of an individual thing, but of the individual thing itself. Nor do I know what he would think of Chapter 7's approach to the quiddity of *esse subsistens* from our concept of the *ratio essendi* separated by negative judgment from the *ratio entis*.

Finally, my Chapter 8 presentation of a metaphysical basis for Aquinas' natural law ethics takes advantage of moves that I find no other Neo-Thomist making. I extend to the human person the analogical brilliance of the *ratio entis* now understood as the *ratio boni*. As both what I will call an intellector and willer of the *ratio boni*, the human person is a heightened presentation of this analogon, and so the human person calls for respect and solicitude. The good that ought to be done is the *ratio boni* precisely as in the human intellector and willer of it. If properly configured, the transcendental good calls forth obligation.

But my purpose is not to distinguish myself at the expense of these Thomistic heroes. My purpose is only to provide, to the best of my abilities, a clear and honest witness to the fecundity of these and other Neo-Thomistic theses. Where I have failed, may others succeed. My hope is that, somewhat as Gilson's labors did for appreciations of the Middle Ages, my present efforts will contribute a momentum to rehabilitating the popular attitude about the value of the distinctly twentieth-century philosophical phenomenon of Neo-Thomism.

**BEING**  
and Some Twentieth-Century Thomists



# Whither the Neo-Thomist Revival?

I WILL ANSWER this question from two perspectives. The first is the perspective of the history of philosophy and is also that of this chapter. In this perspective my concern is simply to understand what happened and why. The second perspective is that of philosophy itself and is the perspective of the chapters that follow. In this second perspective my concern is to determine if what happened had to happen. This distinction of perspectives presupposes a distinction between the existence of ideas and the logic of ideas. In other words, history is not destiny such that the newer is the truer. Given the fact that biases and prejudices can affect thinkers themselves, perfectly good ways of thinking can be discarded for pernicious ways of thinking. I am not the only philosopher to say this. For example, *contra* Hegel (for whom the newer is the truer), consider Heidegger's complaint of a forgetfulness of being and his insistence that the entire Western philosophical tradition must be deconstructed and that philosophers must return to a more primordial thinking that is found in the Pre-Socratics. Hence, every event in philosophy's history also calls for a philosophical estimate. The same will be true for the event of Neo-Thomism.

## I. "THOMIST" AND "THOMIST REVIVAL"

Before providing an answer in either sense, I need to elucidate the question itself by describing the meanings of its terms. By *a Thomist* I mean a philosopher or theologian who believes that his seminal, or core, ideas agree with those of the thirteenth-century Dominican theologian St. Thomas Aquinas, as that philosopher or theologian reads the Thomistic texts. This understanding of *Thomist* suffices to establish the Thomistic fraternity just as love of wisdom, as distinct

from its actual possession, suffices to establish the philosophical fraternity. Obviously, the above understanding of *Thomist* does not baptize or anoint any particular brand of Thomism. Rather, it establishes a definite enough context to distinguish a Thomist from a Kantian, Hegelian, or Heideggerian, yet possesses the logical space to permit the various Thomists to argue and settle the issue of which Thomism is authentic or inauthentic, philosophically correct or incorrect, and so on. By the above definition and for all one's mistakes or failings, one can still be a Thomist, just as one can still be a philosopher despite the same.

By the *Thomist revival* I mean the tidal wave of Thomistic philosophical activities that rolled forth from Pope Leo XIII's 1879 encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*. A budding revival did precede the encyclical. In their 1838 General Chapter, the Dominicans reestablished the old *ratio studiorum* consisting of three years of philosophy and five years of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*. Yet further back was the teaching of Aquinas by Canon Vincenzo Buzzetti at the Vincentian "Alberoni" College in Piacenza, Italy. Two of his disciples, specifically Serafino and Dominico Sordi, passed on Buzzetti's enthusiasm for Aquinas to two other brothers, Joseph and Joachim Pecci. The latter was to become Leo XIII.<sup>1</sup>

In a way difficult to understand in terms of today's indifferent reactions to encyclicals, *Aeterni Patris* bestowed a decisive impetus upon the budding Thomistic revival. Without mentioning specific Thomistic doctrines, Leo in florid prose enjoined of the Church's intellectuals a way of philosophizing in which "in the density of ignorance and in the flood-tide of error, holy faith, like a friendly star, shines down upon [the wise man's] path and points out to him the fair gate of truth beyond all danger of wandering."<sup>2</sup> What Leo had in mind might be quickly and not inappropriately compared to mathematics textbooks that contain the answers at the back. Evidently, mathematical pedagogues consider students having the answers to be helpful for learning mathematics. Leo considers the same to be true for the believer learning philosophy. As mentioned in my Introduction, Gil-

<sup>1</sup> For further background, see Leonard E. Boyle, O.P., "A Remembrance of Pope Leo XIII: The Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*," ed. Victor B. Brezik, C.S.B., *One Hundred Years of Thomism: Aeterni Patris and Afterwards, A Symposium* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1981), 7–22.

<sup>2</sup> From the encyclical as cited in Boyle, *One Hundred Years*, 182.

son's studies of the Middle Ages set the record straight on the value of this approach.

In the encyclical, Leo trumpets Aquinas as someone who realizes in the exemplary way the faith-as-a-friendly-star fashion of doing philosophy. Leo's Thomistic reference included no specific doctrines. Yet, as mentioned, Leo's remark ignited a sixty-year worldwide Thomistic renaissance. In almost quixotic manner, literally thousands of Catholic authors worldwide, in monographs, periodicals, and in all the standard teaching venues, offered Thomistic cures for modern ills. Today and sadly even among Catholics, the typical reaction to this revival is that it was a Thomistic ghetto. But merely a scanning of the bibliographies of major twentieth-century Thomists and the contents of the manifold Thomist periodicals reveals a constant dialogue with secular philosophies of all kinds. The Thomist revival considered the opposition far more than the opposition considered it, and yet the Thomists are called narrow!<sup>3</sup>

A sampling of names from Europe includes: Emerich Coreth, Peter Coffey, Frederick Copleston, Leo Elders, Aimé Forest, Cornelio Fabro, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Joseph Geiger, Etienne Gilson, Joseph Gredt, André Hayen, Peter Hoenen, Charles Journet, Albert Krapiec, Joseph Maréchal, Pierre Mandonnet, Eric Mascall, Jacques Maritain, Desiré Mercier, Léon Noël, Pierre Rousselot, Antonin Sertillanges, Joseph de Tonquédec, and Fernand Van Steenberghe. In the U.S. and Canada, names include: James Anderson, Benedict Ashley, Celestine Bittle, William Norris Clarke, Joseph Donceel, Maurice Holloway, George Klubertanz, Charles de Koninck, Bernard J. F. Lonergan, Ralph McInerny, Joseph Owens, Anton Pegis, Gerald Phelan, Louis-Marie Régis, Henri Renard, James Reichmann, Yves R. Simon, Gerard Smith, Vincent Smith, Robert Schmidt, Henry Veatch, Frederick Wilhelmsen, William Wallace, James Weisheipl, and John Wippel.

The Thomistic tidal wave that rolled forth from *Aeterni patris* crested in the 1950s and then ebbed with Vatican II. Even though a Thomist like Jacques Maritain in *The Peasant of the Garonne* saw the Council as a triumph of Thomistic ideas, this interpretation was not

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<sup>3</sup> For a quick verification of my claim, consult Vernon J. Bourke, *Thomistic Bibliography, 1920–1940* (St. Louis: The Modern Schoolman, 1945); Vernon Bourke and Terry Miethe, *Thomistic Bibliography, 1940–1978* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1988).

widely held.<sup>4</sup> Since the Council the Thomist revival has carried on institutionally at Jesuit universities in the form of Transcendental Thomism, about which I will speak presently.

## 2. A POSTERIORI THOMISM

By the *neo* in *Neo-Thomistic revival*, I mean the main current in the pre-Vatican II phase of the revival. In this main current swirled two schools of interpretation: Aristotelian Thomism and Existential Thomism. But before describing each, I want to describe Neo-Thomism generally in terms of what I take to be its core thesis. All Neo-Thomists distinguish themselves by their understanding of the human knower. Human knowing basically proceeds *a posteriori*.<sup>5</sup> Human

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<sup>4</sup> “When he sees to what degree this Pastoral Constitution [*Gaudium et Spes*] is impregnated with the spirit and the basic views of the Angelic Doctor, an old Thomist like myself is cheered.” Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne*, 50.

<sup>5</sup> Speaking of classical realism, Gilson asks, “Is it so difficult, then, to understand that the concept of being is presented to knowledge as an intuitive perception since the being conceived is that of a sensible intuitively perceived? The existential acts which affect and impregnate the intellect through the senses are raised to the level of consciousness, and realist knowledge flows forth from this immediate contact between object and knowing subject.” Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. Mark A. Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 206 and *passim*. Bernard J. F. Lonergan accurately, though critically, describes Gilson’s aposteriorism in “Metaphysics as Horizon,” in F. E. Crowe, ed., *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan, S.J.* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 208–18. Maritain remarks, “[I]n the final reckoning, the primary basis for the veracity of our knowledge” is the “resolving of the sense’s knowledge into the thing itself and actual existence.” Jacques Maritain, *Distinguish to Unite, or, The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald Phelan (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1959), 118, n. 1; also Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne*, 100; and Maritain’s many remarks on his *l’intuition de l’être*. Yet it is true that in a move similar to the use of performative self-contradiction, or retorsion, in Transcendental Thomism, Maritain’s “critical realism” endeavors to dispense with an abstractive derivation of knowledge and to base critique simply on the “intellectual perception itself”; *vd.* Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 92, n. 1, and the citation of Garrigou-Lagrange in Maritain’s *Degrees of Knowledge*, 134. For a discussion of Maritain’s “critical realism,” see *infra*, Chap. 4, sect. 4. For the Aristotelian Neo-Thomists (specifically, the “River Forest” Dominicans—William Kane, Benedict Ashley, James Weisheipl, and William Wallace), the *a posteriori* origin of knowledge is reflected in the methodological primacy of natural philosophy (Aristotelian physics) over metaphysics. Natural philosophy has *ens mobile* as its subject, specifically, sensible things as changeable. For a description of this Neo-Thomist camp, see Benedict Ashley, “The River Forest School and the Philosophy of Nature Today,” in *Philosophy and the God of Abraham*, ed. R. James Long (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1991), 1–16.

knowing derives its content from a contact with reality. The normal locus of this contact is sensation, that is, what you are doing now as you look this way and listen. Neo-Thomists claim that you cannot honestly doubt that your object of awareness is presenting itself at least as something real. You might entertain doubt that the object is something living. Perhaps the object is an android. Also, if you are certain that the object is living, you still might doubt its identity. But a doubt that the object is real is not even on the radar screen. By saying the object presents itself as real, I mean to say that it presents itself as an existent ontologically independent of the sensor. Hence, if the sensing stopped because the sensor was rendered blind or deaf, the sensed item would be understood as still existing. This Neo-Thomist epistemological position on sense cognition has been called immediate realism.

Neo-Thomists further claimed that from these sensed real existents, the human intellect abstracts commonalities. Commonalities are the samenesses between things. For example, my awareness of this right angle triangle, this isosceles triangle, and this equilateral triangle is more than an awareness of three figures. More accurately speaking, my awareness is of three figures with something in common. We mean to express this commonality by the word *triangle*. The portion of our awareness that bears upon commonalities is called intellection or conceptualization. In the history of Western philosophy, Plato was the one to spotlight the fact of intellection, though he went on to conceive intellection in a non-abstractive fashion.

Commonalities are, however, of two kinds. On the one hand, we can intellect a commonality apart from the differences of the individual instances. *Triangle* is such a case. The proof lies in the reflection that the differences can all be found in non-triangular figures. The right angle that is the difference of the first figure can be found in a rectangle; the two equal sides of the second figure can be in a quadrilateral, and so on. In sum, if we intellected the commonality within the very differences, then the differences would carry the sameness wherever they appeared. But the differences do not. Commonalities of this type are called univocal commonalities.

On the other hand, we also intellect commonalities precisely within the very differences of the instances.<sup>6</sup> This alternative might

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<sup>6</sup> “Rather, [in analogy] the one concept that renders the things the same is the

sound unbelievable and be brushed aside as the product of a strained philosophical imagination. Later, in Chapter 5, I present the Thomistic case for analogical conceptualization. Here let it suffice to note that even ordinary experience presents us with this phenomenon. Consider the way both Sandy Koufax and Willie Mays are called great baseball players. Is not Mays called great because of his hitting and fielding? It seems so. How else than by describing the hitting and fielding would you begin to answer the question, Why is Mays a great baseball player like Koufax? Further, is not Koufax called great because of his pitching? But Mays' way of hitting and fielding is what just Mays possesses and not Koufax, and Koufax's pitching is simply what he possesses and not Mays. So to find what makes both the same, you have to go to the very things that differentiate both. The sameness lies in the differences. As odd as that sounds, there you have it in ordinary experience itself. A double check lies in the realization that wherever you find Mays' way of fielding and hitting, you will find great baseball playing. Because the difference drags along the sameness, the sameness must be understood as within, not apart from, the difference.

Commonalities that behave in this manner are called analogical concepts. Scholastics also called them analogons. The instances that by their differences conveyed the analogon the Scholastics called analogates.<sup>7</sup> Hence, for example, *great baseball player* is an analogon, while Mays and Koufax are analogates of it. Because analogous concepts, or analogons, are samenesses perceived within differences, they lack the clarity and distinctness of univocal concepts that, as mentioned, are apprehended apart from the differences of the instances. Yet what analogons give up in clarity and distinctness, they make up for in richness of content. The analogates of Mays and Kou-

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concept that renders them different." Joseph Owens, "Analogy as a Thomistic Approach to Being," *Mediaeval Studies* 24 (1962): 308–9. For other Neo-Thomist expressions of the analogical commonality, see Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 212; James Anderson, *The Bond of Being: An Essay on Analogy and Existence* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 256–57, on the analogical concept containing a multiplicity actually but implicitly. At *S.T.* I, 4, 3c, Aquinas describes analogical similarity as communication "in eadem forma, sed non secundum eandem rationem." At *De Ver.* 1, 1c, Aquinas says that *ens*, elsewhere called an analogical common nature (*In I Sent.* d. 19, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1m), is not added to from outside but by something "expressing" what is not expressed by *ens*. Vd. also Aquinas, *De Ver.* 21, 1c.

<sup>7</sup> On the terminology, see George P. Klubertanz, *St. Thomas on Analogy* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960), 6–7.

fax enable us to dimly perceive the analogon of *great baseball player* that contains these analogates plus who knows how many more. We know today that a fan in the 1930s would have been a fool to claim that he had seen all there was to see of great baseball playing. Even though the 1930s baseball fan would have witnessed Cobb, Ruth, Dean, and Gehrig, for example, fans of later decades would continue to witness a parade of further analogates. Today we are probably still in a position like that of the 1930s fan. And this explains the fascination so many can have with the game. Every new great player gives them a further glimpse of the analogon they love.

Finally, Scholastics distinguish types of analogy depending upon how the analogates realize the analogon.<sup>8</sup> If the analogon comes into the instances without establishing a reference of one analogate to the other, then we have an analogy of proportionality. My example of *great baseball player* is a case of analogy of proportionality. Mays is great not in and through any reference to Koufax, and vice versa. Each is an independent realization of the analogon. On the other hand, if the analogon comes into the analogates with a reference of one to another, then we have analogy of proportion. For instance, consider the multiple different ways in which the saints realize *great Christian*, all the while imitating Christ as their model. No saint is a cookie cutter version of Jesus, despite the fact that each saint is striving to realize the holiness they see in Jesus.

According to the Neo-Thomists, the human intellect, starting from the real beings given to it in sensation, can frame analogons that span the breadth of the real, from creature to creator. They call such analogons transcendentals.<sup>9</sup> And an example would be that of being, the *ratio entis*. If the analogon of *great baseball player* possesses an intelligible richness, imagine the intelligible richness of the transcendental analogon of being. Everything from accidents to the wide array of substances to the First Cause embodies being in a different way. As I will describe shortly, Neo-Thomists dispute among themselves about the precise definition of being. Some, the Aristotelian Neo-Thomists, say that a being basically is a possessor of formal act

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<sup>8</sup> See Owens, "Analogy as a Thomistic Approach to Being," 308–9, 316. For Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2, 11c.

<sup>9</sup> "[Being, *ens*] is what the Scholastics called a transcendental object of thought." Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 210. Aquinas appears to call being a transcendental at *S.T.* I, 30, 3c.

(*forma*),<sup>10</sup> while others, the Existential Neo-Thomists, say a being basically is a possessor of existential act (*esse*, or *actus essendi*).<sup>11</sup> And even those of the latter camp disagree among themselves about whether the analogon of *habens esse* stretches through reality *via* proportionality or by proportion.<sup>12</sup> But all Neo-Thomists agree on the mind's ability to work out in a *posteriori* fashion transcendental concepts, that is, analogons that apply to absolutely everything.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, Neo-Thomists are all of the opinion that in principle, if not in fact, a single fundamental science of the real exists. In other words, they concur that in all times and places, one true

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<sup>10</sup> As mentioned, Aristotelian Neo-Thomists begin Aquinas' speculative philosophy with Aristotelian physics in which act is form: "The form indeed is 'nature' rather than the matter; for a thing is more properly said to be what it is when it has attained to fulfillment than when it exists potentially." Aristotle, *Physics* II, 1, 193b 6–7 (Hardie and Gaye trans.). Some Aristotelian Thomists claim to broaden the notion of act to include *esse* thanks to physical proofs of immaterial beings. For a description and discussion, see my "Ad Mentem Thomae: Does Natural Philosophy Prove God?" *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 61 (1987): 214–16.

<sup>11</sup> For the existential act understanding of being: "Sicut autem motus est actus ipsius mobilis in quantum mobile est; ita esse est actus existentis, in quantum ens est" (Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 2, a. 2c); "esse dicitur actus entis in quantum est ens, id est quo denominatur aliquid ens actu in rerum natura" (Aquinas, *Quodl.* IX, q. 2, a. 3c); "Nam ens dicitur quasi esse habens" (Aquinas, *In XII Meta.*, lectio 1). Also *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1c; *De Ver.* 1, 1, ad 3m, second set; C.G. II, 54; S.T. I, 44, 2c.

<sup>12</sup> James Anderson, *The Bond of Being*, lucidly argues for analogy of proportionality as the analogy between God and creatures. In Thomistic texts that speak of an analogy of proportion between God and creatures (Aquinas, S.T. I, 13, 5c, and C.G. I, 35), Anderson argues that we do not have a distinct type of analogy but a mix of proportionality and proportion. In the mix, proportionality is basic (*The Bond of Being*, 248–49). Formally speaking there is proportionality; materially, there is proportion (232–33). Anderson's position leads to this strange expression: "Once more, however, it must be pointed out that the very being itself of the creature does not consist in its *relation to God*: the relation itself is ontologically posterior to the being of the creature" (119). This remark seems to say that the *ontologically prior* situation is an independence of God and creatures. For a discussion of Anderson's type of position, see George P. Klubertanz, *St. Thomas on Analogy*, 14–15; Owens, "Analogy as a Thomistic Approach to Being," 310–15.

<sup>13</sup> Literally speaking God is not a *habens* either of *forma* or *esse*. Nevertheless, Aquinas acquiesces in calling God an *ens* (e.g., *primum ens* at C.G. I, 16 and 22). The reason seems to be *a fortiori*, viz., God is *esse subsistens* and so does not "have" *esse* but "is" *esse*. Cf. to the way "God exists" is called self-evident, or *per se notum*, at Aquinas, S.T. I, 2, 1c. Usually a proposition is self-evident if the meaning of the predicate is contained by the meaning of the subject. For an *a fortiori* reason, an exception is made in the case of "God exists." It is in itself self-evident not because the predicate is contained by the subject, but because the predicate is the subject, for God is his *esse*.

metaphysics exists. No matter where or when one lives, the real beings before him in sensation are analogates sufficient for the human intellect to work out *a posteriori* the analogon of being and to correctly read its nature. Finally, if metaphysics is expressive of the crowning natural achievement of the human mind, then obviously theology must be done in terms of this one true metaphysics.<sup>14</sup> Otherwise, theology would have no connection to existing human knowers. Hence, *de jure* only one true theology exists. From the vantage point of Neo-Thomism, it is *not* possible to have great metaphysics and great theologies that are all true, just as it *is* possible to have great baseball players that are all genuine. If they are worthy of their name, various metaphysics bear on the transcendental of being, and they do this adequately or not.

### 3. ARISTOTELIAN THOMISM

But to know any commonality is not automatically to know its definition, or fundamental description. Hence, to intellect being, the *ratio entis*, is not automatically to know how it should be defined. As Gilson shows in *Being and Some Philosophers*, throughout the history of philosophy thinkers have disagreed on how fundamentally to understand being. The same is true of the Neo-Thomists. For great lengths of philosophizing, if not exclusively, the Aristotelian Thomists, like those of the River Forrest Dominicans: for example James Weisheipl, William Wallace, Vincent Smith, and Benedict Ashley, will insist on a definition in terms of formal act. On the other hand, Existential Thomists such as Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain, without denying formal act, will insist upon a definition in terms of non-formal existential act. True to their epistemology of transcendental concepts, neither of these Neo-Thomist camps believe that their differing definitions of being could both be right. Taken as fundamental de-

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<sup>14</sup> “Because ‘to be’ is the most foundational of all words expressive of the real, a metaphysics of being has to provide the basic grammar for a theology that would do justice to the truth of reality. A theology that thinks through the materials of divine revelation in this perspective must therefore enjoy a primacy among the various possible intellectual adventures that issue from the act of faith. Let us call it ‘the classical ontological theology,’ which, historically, is deeply indebted to if not exactly coterminous with Thomas and his school.” Aidan Nichols, O.P., “Thomism and the Nouvelle Théologie,” *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 18.

scriptions, one has to be correct and the other incorrect. Among their scattered and reduced disciples, the debate continues.

In this section and the next, I want to provide thumbnail portraits that nevertheless manifest some of the rational dynamism of these Neo-Thomisms. Since Aristotelian Thomism has the longer track record, it is the more hallowed and I begin with it. But first, I want to insist on a methodology common to both camps. Since both view being as an abstraction drawn from the real items presented by sensation, both insist that we more profoundly understand being by more profoundly understanding the things that are its analogates. In short, since being is an abstraction, it is a reflection of our understanding of beings. Hence, both camps concentrate on attaining the most fundamental understanding of things in order to validate their understanding of being.

Now the Aristotelian Thomists claim that the most fundamental understanding of the real things confronting us in sensation is Aristotle's hylomorphic understanding of radically changeable substance.<sup>15</sup> What does Aristotle mean by *substance*? Substance is the subject for the perceptible accidents.<sup>16</sup> As this subject, substance is what the accidents exist *in* and *of*. What are the accidents? They are, for example, the perceptible extension, figure, color, and motion. Accidents are really different from substance, but without becoming substances themselves. For instance, one should not conceive the difference between the substance that is me and the accident that is my tan in the fashion of the difference between a white brick and a brown brick. The two bricks are really different from one another, but the brown one is not an accident of the white one. An authentic accident qualifies its substance; it makes the substance exist in a new

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<sup>15</sup> The following reasoning for substance is indebted to Richard J. Connell, *Substance and Modern Science* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1988), chaps. 1–3.

<sup>16</sup> At *Meta.* XII, 1, Aristotle provides a threefold description of substance, the most obvious kind being plants and animals. Aristotle characterizes substance of any type as that which can exist apart, while the other categories cannot. Vd. also *Categories*, 5, 2b 1–6. Also, in this fifth chapter of the *Categories*, Aristotle refers to universal notions, e.g., the species man and the genus animal, as secondary substances. This secondary meaning of substance is, as far as I can tell, absent from Aquinas. It is unmentioned as another term for essence in Aquinas' *De Ente et Essentia*, chap. 1. For more on the meaning of substance in Aquinas, see Armand Maurer's trans. of *On Being and Essence* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 33, n. 15.

way. To do that the accident must be understood as existing in and of its substance; the accident “sinks roots” into the substance. But no matter how close the brown brick is placed to the white brick, the brown brick leaves the white one white. The brown brick never achieves an existence in and of the white brick, and so never qualifies the white brick. In sum, accidents are really different from substance, but in the manner of existing in and of the substance.

Next, the accidents are perceptually basic. They, and not the substance that is Fido the dog, Flicka the horse, or Flossy the cow, are what one immediately and directly perceives with the senses. With the eyes one is in direct relation to the black color of Flicka’s mane, but the eyes do not go further and give Flicka. If they or the other senses did directly present a substance, impersonation of one substance by another would be impossible. Finally, in contrast to the modern philosophers, Aristotle, at least in Aquinas’ interpretation, regards these accidents as real, as existing independent of the sensor.<sup>17</sup>

Among the perceptible accidents exists a hierarchy or a stratification.<sup>18</sup> The accidents are not in a jumble or just side by side. Some are more basic than the others. This basicness is revealed in one accident existing without the other. For instance, this extension is the same when in motion and when not. This extension can also be constant despite change in shape and color. In these ways, one understands extension as most basic among the perceptible accidents. Though the accidents are perceptually basic, they are not ontologically basic. Their further ontological dependency upon substance is shown by the fact that a perceived extension can vary, yet the accompanying accidents remain constant. For example, when someone diets, one observes the extension becoming less and less. Yet the accompanying accidents of vital signs, voice character, unique movement of the limbs, and so on, stay the same. The constancy of these accidents indicates that they are rooted in something deeper than the

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<sup>17</sup> *Infra*, Chap. 2, n. 6. For some contemporary expositors of Aristotle who do not interpret Aristotle as an immediate realist, see my “Aquinas on the Cognitive Soul: Metaphysics, Physics, or Both?” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1998): 516, n. 35.

<sup>18</sup> “But accidents befall substance in a definite order. Quantity comes to it first, then quality, after that passivities (*passiones*) and motion.” Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 3c; trans. Armand Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1963), 31.

perceived extension. This something deeper cannot continue to be more accidents without end. Each accident in the regress would be asking for an actual accident to be in and of that is never forthcoming in the series. Hence the regress logically must stop, and it stops at substance, the subject in and of which the accidents exist.

The same constant accidents that indicate the presence of substance can also indicate the disappearance of substance. My vital signs may cease, for example. The loss of these accidents indicates that the substance that is me is no longer present. This fact that a substance ceases to exist is for Aristotle a sign that the substance is composite, made up of parts. How so?<sup>19</sup> From a study of obvious changes like the change from cold water to hot water, or from a walker to a runner, Aristotle knows that a changeable situation involves a substrate and a determination.<sup>19</sup> The substrate is the enduring factor in the change and is understood as a neutral ground for the various opposing determinations. Technically, the substrate is called “potency” for the determinations. In the previous examples, the substrate is the water and the man. The determinations are the factors that come to exist successively in the substrate. They are called “actualities” for the substrate. The determinations here are the accidents of hot and cold, walking and running.

Because the substance itself can change by ceasing to exist, substance also must be a composite situation. In the radically changeable substance, the substrate condition is called matter and the determination condition is called form. The Scholastics said “first matter” (*materia prima*) and “substantial form” (*forma substantiale*). Matter was like a basic and fundamental substrate. Form was like a basic and fundamental accident. Crucial to understand is that matter and form existed only in their mutual composition. That is, they existed only as they constituted a substance. Neither was a substance. If matter and form had been substances, rather than principles of a substance, then our previously known changeable substance would have to be denied. For you cannot have a substance within a substance.

Some might think that hylomorphism is an unnecessary complication for understanding changeable substances, and so should be discarded. For instance, we know that a human is composed of organs, and that a separation of the organs suffices to explain the passing

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<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII, 1, 1069 b 3–8, and *Physics* I, 7, 189b 30–190a 20.

away of the human substance. In sum, the organic structure and its dissolution is enough to understand the human as a changeable substance. Hylomorphism is a redundancy. In reply, it is true that the organs are parts of the human substance. Their inability to exist apart from the human indicates that they are parts of a substance and not parts of an aggregate, like parts of a machine. Parts of a machine can exist inside the machine as well as outside. But despite being parts of the human substance, the organs are not *intrinsic* parts but *extrinsic* parts. Matter and form are the true intrinsic parts. One realizes that the organs are extrinsic parts because otherwise the organs would strictly define the human substance, and their least modification would change the human substance. But we know that this is not true. A man can survive the loss of a kidney or eye or lung. Even organs whose loss the man cannot sustain, such as the brain or heart, can be substantially impaired by strokes without the man ceasing to exist. These facts are incompatible with the organs being intrinsic parts that should strictly define their whole or totality.

The same remark can be made of the molecular and atomic structures that lie within the organic structure. The molecular and atomic structures are parts of the human substance, but extrinsic parts precisely. The intrinsic parts remain matter and form. From the basic determination of form that is an intrinsic part of the substance, the organic structure with all its substructures derives.

A crucial implication of hylomorphism is an awareness of an efficient cause necessary to account for the form in the matter. This implication unfolds as follows. Like an accident, the substantial form exists only as in and of its subject, the prime matter. Hence, like an accident, a substantial form is obviously a dependent item. But *completely* dependent upon what? Not the prime matter. Why not? To have the substantial form in it and of it as a subject, the prime matter must be understood as in potency to the form, as lacking the form. Hence, the prime matter precisely as subject for the form cannot completely account for the presence of the form within it. For a complete understanding of the form in matter, the mind is driven outside the matter-form composite to something else. This is the agent or efficient cause that instills the form in matter. For Aristotle the ultimate identity of this efficient cause is a substance that does not have its form in matter but is its form. In other words, it is a

subsisting form. Participated formal act calls for subsistent formal act.

The above reasoning for an efficient cause of substantial form utilizes a very powerful intellectual model that can be employed in many other contexts. Wherever one discerns something like a substrate-determination situation, one can commence thinking about the complete dependence of the determination and culminate in the need for something other than the substrate as substrate. In Chapter 7, we will see Existential Thomism apply the model to the substance and its non-formal act of *esse*, the substance's *actus essendi*.

Hylomorphism contains many invaluable insights and conclusions. These can be used to broaden our understanding of the natural world beyond the current scientific one. Hylomorphism can be modified to give the most profound understanding of how the human can sense, intellect, and will. But now I want to turn to the Existential Thomists, who claim that the hylomorphic understanding of existing changeable substances is not the most fundamental understanding of these substances. Though hylomorphism explains how a substance is changeable, it does not explain how a substance is existing. In the eyes of the Existential Thomist, the hylomorphic substance is only a possible, still waiting on a further act to be a being.

#### 4. EXISTENTIAL THOMISM

In Chapters 6 and 7, I present the textual and philosophical case for Existential Thomism. I now limit myself to another thumbnail portrait. By labeling this camp of Neo-Thomism existential, I intend no resemblance to the thinking found in Heidegger and Sartre.<sup>20</sup> The adjective means to draw attention to the camp's "act" or "attribute" understanding of what is meant by the "existence" of any individual thing.<sup>21</sup> I mentioned that the Existential Thomists do not regard the

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<sup>20</sup> For some discussion of the relation between Heidegger and Aquinas, see my "A Heideggerian Critique of Aquinas and a Gilsonian Reply," *The Thomist* 58 (1994): 415–39.

<sup>21</sup> On the designation, see Joseph Owens, *St. Thomas and the Future of Metaphysics* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1973), 36–37. Most famous of the Existential Thomists were Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain. For expressions of Gilson's "existentialism," see Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 63, 65, 70; his *Being and Some Philosophers*, 5, 202, 214;

hylomorphic understanding of existing substances as truly basic and fundamental. Something in real substances still escapes the philosopher's eye. For a quick understanding of what the Existential Thomists have in mind, try this experiment. Can you not bring your thought down to the level of an individual thing and realize that you are still thinking only of a possible? In other words, do we not realize that an individual substance is not *ipso facto* an existent, a being? To get the substance in the status of a being, you realize that something else must be added. This something else is the act of existing.

Existential Thomists point out that Aquinas says something is called a being in virtue of possessing its *esse* or *actus essendi*. Consequently, a being is a *quasi habens esse*. A being is "as if a haver, or possessor, of *esse*." I want to describe generally what Aquinas means by *esse* or *actus essendi*. Neo-Thomists render these phrases into English as "the existence of a thing." This translation is unfortunate, because one can start thinking about *esse* or *actus essendi* as if it were just the fact of a thing. For example, if one asks, "Does so-and-so exist?" all that one wants to know is whether so-and-so is a fact, is in the world. Immanuel Kant philosophically expressed the fact-view of existence in his famous critique of Descartes' ontological reasoning for God. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant observed that no real difference exists between a hundred possible thalers and a hundred actual thalers. The actual thalers are simply the possible thalers existing in themselves instead of existing in their cause. In sum, existence is not a real predicate that could be added to a thing. Real predicates, like red or blue, make a real difference to the thing.

Aquinas thinks differently. I have mentioned his notion of *ens* as *habens esse*. In still other passages, for example C.G. II, 54, Aquinas regards existence as a distinct principle composed with the individual substance to render the substance a being (*ens*), an existent. In fact, *esse* is sufficiently distinct to compare its composition with a substance with form's composition with matter within the substance. Aquinas also uses the infinitive *esse* as a noun, or substantive, in the

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and his *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 143. For Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 22–35. Analytic Thomist Brian Davies wants to demystify Aquinas' notion of *esse*: "Given what I have been saying, Aquinas' teaching on *esse* is decidedly matter of fact and even pedestrian." "Aquinas, God, and Being," *The Monist* 80 (1997): 514. For my discussion of Davies, *vd.*, *infra*, Chap. 6.

context of referring to the individual generable and corruptible thing as “*possibile esse et non esse*.” Moreover, he compares the meaning of *ens* and *esse* to those of *currens* and *currere*. Just as a runner is a man plus his act of running, so too a being is something plus its act of existing. But the act of running is something distinct from the man, hence a thing’s act of existing should also be distinct from it. The same thinking is revealed in a most famous remark on *esse*. Both in his *De Potentia Dei* and in his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas says that he understands by *esse* the act or actuality of all acts and the perfection of all perfections. But as an act or actuality, substantial and accidental forms are distinct items composed with another item that is in potency to the act. Hence, calling *esse* an act and an actuality should indicate on Aquinas’ part similar thinking. Aquinas will also be considering *esse* as a distinct item composed with another item that is in potency to the act.

In sum, it is not so much that Aquinas disagrees with the fact-sense of the thing’s existence, but rather that Aquinas insists that the fact-sense be deepened to include the act in virtue of which the thing is a fact. A thing is a fact in virtue of its *actus essendi*. The relation of this act to the substance with which it is composed also bears mention. In respect to the substance rendered a being by composition with *esse*, *esse* is prior (*prius*), first (*primus*), most profound (*profundius*), and most intimate (*magis intimum*). *Esse* is the core around which the thing revolves. It is like the hole of a donut. Just as the hole is distinct from the donut yet “inside” the donut, so too *esse* is an act distinct from the thing, but for all its distinctness *esse* is most intrinsic to the thing. We are so accustomed to conceiving acts of a thing as items subsequent and posterior to the thing that the notion of an act basic and fundamental to its thing is strange. But for a reason to be given, if one is to correctly appreciate *esse*, usual ways of thinking must be suspended. The priority of *actus essendi* to the thing that it actuates seems to explain Aquinas’ earlier-mentioned qualification in describing the *ratio entis* as *quasi habens esse*.

How does one philosophically attain the *esse* or *actus essendi* sense of “the existence of the thing”? Usually one makes a distinction between a substance and its accident by finding the substance without the accident. For example, one makes a distinction between the hand and the waving by later finding the hand without the waving. But does one ever find the substance apart from its existence as the hand

is found apart from the waving? Rather, without its existence, the substance is not found at all. To understand how Aquinas makes the distinction between a substance and its act of existing, one must return to his immediate realism. I mentioned that immediate realism is a presupposition for both Neo-Thomist camps. Immediate realism is their understanding of sense cognition—what you are doing right now as you look this way and listen. Their claim is that your object of sense cognition is something real, a real thing, not an image, picture, or representation of something real. In short, according to the immediate realist's understanding of sense cognition, a real thing is also cognitively existing. Now the Aristotelian Thomists acknowledge this fact, but they go on to other things. The Existential Thomists see metaphysical implications in this fact and are not quick to move on.

They ask, What does the fact of a real thing also cognitively existing imply? They point out that if a real thing also cognitively exists, then the real thing cannot be of itself real. The real thing cannot be intrinsically real. Somewhat similarly, if water were intrinsically cold, it could never be hot. Hence, the thing does not include its real existence but has it as a distinct accidental act. Somewhat similarly, the water has the cold temperature as an accident. It is from the facts of immediate realism that one comes to think an individual thing as not *ipso facto* a being. Intrinsically speaking, the thing is existence-neutral just as we come to regard the water as temperature-neutral. A thing is a being if and when it has its real existence as a distinct act.

The basicness of the thing's act of existing is also evident from the above. Since the thing is nothing in reality without its act of existing, one correctly regards the act of existing as basic and fundamental in its composition with the thing.

Finally, just as there were causal considerations implied in hylomorphism, the same is true here. Just as formal act cannot be completely explained by the matter that is its subject, so too the existential act cannot be completely explained by the substance whose act it is. As a potency for its existential act, substance cannot completely explain why it has that act. Something else is required for the explanation. Just as subsistent formal act was the first cause of substantial form, so too subsistent existential act is the first cause of the *actus essendi*. Aquinas calls this first cause *esse subsistens*, *esse purum*, *esse tantum*. He regards it as the God of his belief who told Moses that his name was *Ego sum qui sum*.

## 5. TRANSCENDENTAL THOMISM

Neo-Thomism flourished until Vatican II. What overtook it was a dark horse candidate in the larger Thomistic revival—Transcendental Thomism. I offer a sketch of it. Textual bases are listed and discussed in Chapters 2 and 4. Let me begin by recalling the common denominator in Aristotelian Thomism and Existential Thomism. It was their *a posteriori* epistemology. Fundamentally speaking, the mind draws its conceptual content from the self-manifestly real things given to it in sensation. The point is especially true of the *ratio entis*, the notion of being. In 1926 Joseph Maréchal, a Belgian Jesuit, published *Cahier V* of his monumental *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique* (The starting point of metaphysics). In a dazzling display of Thomistic exegeses and of rigorous philosophical analyses, Maréchal presented an understanding of the human knower strikingly at odds with the Neo-Thomist *a posteriori* understanding.<sup>22</sup> Maréchal claimed that at its most fundamental level, human knowing involves not reception from the real but a projection of the knower upon the real. The knower's projection is the knower's own intellectual dynamism to an unconceptualizable term of Infinite Being. Hence, for Maréchal the intellect's basic contact with reality is not through concepts abstracted from things as is the case in Neo-Thomism. Rather, the intellect's contact is through its own dynamism to Infinite Being. For Maréchal, prior to static concepts is intellectual dynamism.

This dynamism is innate, or inborn, to the intellect. Maréchal did not conceive the dynamism as stirred up, or engendered, by a contact with the sensible real. Even before sensation, this dynamic orientation exists in the intellect. In philosophical parlance, the dynamism is *a priori*. Furthermore, the dynamism is “constitutive” of human awareness. We do not passively sense things in one portion of our consciousness and aim dynamically for Infinite Being in another portion. Maréchal describes the dynamism as a “torrent” that swamps the data of sensation. Thanks to its immersion in the dynamism, the sense data can profile themselves in consciousness as finite and limited in perfection. A refrain among Transcendental Thomists is: “You

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<sup>22</sup> For a description of Maréchal with references, see my “Intellectual Dynamism in Transcendental Thomism: A Metaphysical Assessment,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69 (1995): 17–19.

can know the finite only if you know the infinite; you can know the limited only if you know the unlimited.”<sup>23</sup> Both the finite and the limited appear only in juxtaposition to the infinite and unlimited. The intellect’s dynamism to Infinite Being is what sets up that juxtaposition. As so held before consciousness, the data permits the abstraction of univocal and analogous concepts as described in the traditional Thomist account of knowledge and repeated by the Neo-Thomists. But for Maréchal that traditional account is by itself insufficient. It fails to explain the initial setting up of the sense data as the finite beings that they are.

It is helpful to understand Transcendental Thomist epistemology in terms of an extrapolation from visual experience. We see the outlines of things, things “objectify” themselves, only up and against something larger. For instance, we see the picture frame only against the wall, and we see the cathedral clock tower only against the sky. The wall and the sky are conditions for the perception of these objects. “Objectification” only happens in the light of something larger. Similarly, things are appreciated as finite beings, as realities not having all perfection, up and against something—Absolute Being, the term of intellectual dynamism. Intellectual dynamism places an “intellectual sky” against which things can profile themselves as beings of finite perfection. The *a posteriori* Thomists will dispute not the facts, but the Transcendental Thomist interpretation of them. The *a posteriori* Thomists will understand the objectification of things as finite beings in terms of an automatic and natural abstraction of the *ratio entis*. Against the richness of that *abstractum*, things will appear as finite beings. No need exists to understand the intellectual backdrop as an *a priori* projection of the human knower. But the Transcendental Thomist will be quick to reply that the immediate realism presumed by this abstractive account is just naive and dogmatic. Descartes’ dream and hallucination possibilities and the relativity in perception hammered on by the Empiricists both explain why since the modern period, no philosophers of note have espoused that the data of sensation are self-manifestly real.

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<sup>23</sup> “Whenever we think of a being, we can think of a greater being; in fact, we do so spontaneously, at least in this sense: that whenever we think of a being, we realize at once that this being is finite, limited. But—and this is a remark of utmost importance—in order to know a limit as limit, we must, in fact or in our striving be beyond that limit.” Joseph Donceel, *Natural Theology* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962), 20; see also 59 and 66.

A case can be made that Maréchal's fundamental epistemology of intellectual dynamism has precursors in Augustine and Bonaventure.<sup>24</sup> And so his position could be called Augustinian Thomism or Bonaventurian Thomism. But in fact, Maréchal elaborates it as a response to Immanuel Kant and defends it as a more in-depth development of the Kantian delineation of the human knower.<sup>25</sup> By using a mode of analysis called transcendental method, Kant worked out a Copernican revolution in philosophy's understanding of the human knower. Instead of the knower circling around reality trying to conform himself to it, Kant has reality circling around the knower con-

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<sup>24</sup> In his proof for God in his *De Libero Arbitrio*, Augustine speaks of an intelligible context in which we apprehend particular immutable truths such as those of ethics, mathematics, and logic. This context seems to function like a transcendental *a priori*: "Hence you would not deny that some unchanging truth exists which contains [*continentem*] all of these things that are unchangeably true and that it cannot be called exclusively mine or yours or any man's. It offers itself to all, who discern things immutably true, like a light which in some strange fashion is both public yet concealed. . . . What think you of this truth we've taken so long to describe and in which we see so many things [*et in qua tam multa conspicimus*]?" *De Libero Arbitrio*, Bk. II, ch. 12; trans. John Wippel and Alan Wolter, *Medieval Philosophy from St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 76–77. Likewise, Bonaventure in his first way of proving God in his *De Mystero Trinitatis* argues that our dissatisfaction with mutable and finite things bespeaks a love of the eternal and all-perfect. But since there cannot be love without knowledge, then we must also have a knowledge of the eternal and all-perfect: "Likewise, a desire for wisdom has been implanted in the minds of men, for the Philosopher says [*Metaphysics* I, ch. 1]: 'All men by nature desire to know.' But the most desirable wisdom is eternal. It is the desire for such, then, that is most deeply impressed upon the human mind. As we said before, however, there is no love for what is completely unknown. Consequently, some knowledge of this highest wisdom must be implanted in the human mind. But this means, first of all, knowing God or Wisdom itself exists." *Quaestiones Disputatae de Mystero Trinitatis*, q. 1, a. 1, trans. Wippel and Wolter, *Medieval Philosophy*, 301. This knowledge that Bonaventure teases out of our dissatisfaction with the temporal can also be construed as a transcendental *a priori* factor in the human subject.

<sup>25</sup> Augustine's "restless heart" remark at the opening of his *Confessions* could also be used by Transcendental Thomists. In general they shy away from Augustine, because of his apparent divine ideas view of the mind's *a priori*. This view is too static for them. For Transcendental Thomist comments on Augustine see the following: for Joseph Maréchal, see Joseph Donceel's *A Maréchal Reader* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 158; for Karl Rahner, see his "Aquinas: The Nature of Truth," *Continuum* 2 (1964): 65–66; for Lonergan, see his *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1965), 370. For an excellent *a posteriori* account of what is called the natural desire for God in Aquinas' philosophical view of human nature, see William R. O'Connor, *The Natural Desire for God* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1948). At S.T. II–II, 175, 1 ad 1m and citing Rom. 1.20, Aquinas takes an *a posteriori* approach to Augustine's text.

forming itself to the knower. What appears in consciousness is less a function of the real than a function of the knower. The knower possesses inbuilt structures called the synthetic *a priori* that determine how objects of consciousness appear. Somewhat similarly, we are familiar with biases and preconceptions “coloring” our perceptions of things. Kant insists that the knower possesses not learned biases and prejudices, but inbuilt or indigenous ones. In his presentation of Aquinas, Maréchal follows Kant along the path blazed by transcendental method. Maréchal believes that Thomistic remarks such as “What is received is received according to the mode of the receiver” (*S.T.* I, 75, 5c) and “[T]he intellect knows truth by a reflection upon itself” (*De Ver.* 1, 9c) illustrate that Aquinas was a transcendental philosopher like Kant. Maréchal’s exception to Kant is Maréchal’s thesis that what the knower fundamentally projects is not static forms and categories but a dynamism to an end describable only as Infinite Being. Thomists describe Maréchal’s philosophy as Transcendental Thomism.

The prominent Jesuit theologians Karl Rahner (in his *Spirit in the World*), Henri de Lubac (*The Mystery of the Supernatural*), and Bernard J. F. Lonergan (*Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*) have championed Maréchal’s core thesis of a constitutive *a priori* dynamism alive in human cognition.<sup>26</sup> But a philosopher has to wonder how Transcendental Thomists overcome Kant’s strictures on classical metaphysics. A claim to know the fundamental nature of reality itself characterizes classical metaphysics. The Neo-Thomist discussion of being was conducted in this vein. But since the human knower builds up his awareness from synthetic *a priori* mental forms, Kant insists that we are always faced with this question: How do we exclude the possibility that our mental forms are distorting the very reality of

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<sup>26</sup> For reference to Rahner and Lonergan, see my “Intellectual Dynamism,” 19–23. For de Lubac, “There is in the teaching of St. Thomas a more considerable element of natural and innate knowledge and desire of God than is generally recognized.” Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 150, n. 83. Any question about de Lubac’s close affiliation with Transcendental Thomism is dispelled by his *Discovery of God* (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1960). Chaps. 2 and 3 are laced with Transcendental Thomist themes. On pp. 89–91, de Lubac approvingly quotes from Maréchal’s *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique*. These quotes are unabashed expressions of Maréchal’s transcendental philosophy. Concerning these quotes, de Lubac says (p. 89) that they “sum up and provide the foundation” for chaps. 2 and 3.

which we believe that we are aware? In other words, if Kant's synthetic *a priori* functions like biases and prejudices, how does one exclude the possibility that like biases and prejudices they distort our perceptions of things?

Kant believed that he could not exclude the possibility of distortion. Hence, he asserted that we had to forfeit any claims to know reality, mind-independent existence. Obviously, this conclusion puts a halt to the project of classical metaphysics. How does Transcendental Thomism escape this Kantian metaphysical skepticism? At first it would seem that Transcendental Thomism is captive to the same anti-metaphysical result. Intellectual dynamism is constitutive.<sup>27</sup> It makes a difference in how objects of consciousness appear. In this

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<sup>27</sup> Maréchal, Rahner, and Lonergan all regard the dynamism of the intellect as a constitutive factor for our consciousness of beings. Maréchal remarks: "As soon as the intellect, meeting an external datum, passes to the second act under the formal motion of this datum and the permanent impulsion of the natural appetite, we have a particular, positive determination subsumed under the universal form of being, which previously was only the framework of and the call for all possible determinations. An 'object' profiles itself before consciousness." Donceel, *Maréchal Reader*, 170. Also, on judgment: "Considered as a moment in the intellect's ascent towards the final possession of the absolute 'truth,' which is the spirit's 'good,' [affirmation] implicitly (*exercite*) projects the particular data in the perspective of this ultimate End, and by so doing *objectivates* them before the subject," 152. "[T]he 'datum' represented in us was constituted as an 'object' in our mind through the judgment of *affirmation*," 161. "For the subject is really knowing as such only to the extent that he formally takes part in the edification of the object," 118. The same constitutive approach can be noted in Rahner. Speaking of the agent intellect, Rahner says: "Insofar as [the agent intellect] apprehends this material of sensibility within its anticipatory dynamism to *esse*, it 'illumines' this material." Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. William Dych (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 225; see also 221. Likewise, "Because it is apprehended in this dynamic tendency of the intellect . . . the particular sensible thing is known as finite, i.e., as incapable in its limitation of filling up the space of this dynamism. Because of this comparing of the particular thing to the absolute and ideal term of knowledge, the particular thing appears as existent (concrete being) in relation to being." Rahner, "Aquinas: The Nature of Truth," 67. Finally, Lonergan: "It is not true that it is from sense that our cognitional activities derive their immediate relationship to real objects; that relationship is immediate in the intention of being; it is mediate in the data of sense . . . inasmuch as the intention of being makes use of data in promoting cognitional process to knowledge of being." Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Cognitional Structure," in Crowe, ed., *Collection*, 235–36. Cf. *supra*, Maréchal quote from p. 152. Also, "we first reach the unconditioned, secondly we make a true judgment of existence, and only thirdly in and through the true judgment do we come to know actual and concrete existence." Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Insight: Preface to a Discussion," in Crowe, ed., *Collection*, 163. At p. xxii of *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Lonergan expresses his intention to incorporate what Maréchal calls the finality of the intellect.

mediating role, how does one exclude the possibility that the dynamism is posing objects in consciousness in ways other than how they actually are?

Transcendental Thomists are extremely sensitive to this concern to avoid Kantian skepticism. They insist that a critical ground exists to trust the intellect's dynamism to Infinite Being. We can know that it is a non-distorting mediating factor. We can know that it is not like a bias or prejudice that sets up things differently than how they actually are. The critical ground is the dynamism's ineluctability. The dynamism is like a context or a framework in which objects come to appear in different ways. Now generally speaking, doubt about the objectivity of a framework presupposes an ability to envisage something outside the framework. For example, because I can look at things with my naked eye, it makes sense to wonder if my camera lens, for instance, is distorting a subject. But if a framework is ineluctable, then the thought of something outside the framework is nugatory. Every attempt to doubt the framework will stay inside the framework. Hence, no way appears to doubt an ineluctable framework. Now, the intellect's dynamism to being is ineluctable. As mentioned, the dynamism suffuses the data of sensation. We do not sense in one part of our mind and aim for Absolute Being in another portion. Hence, the intellect's dynamism can handle attempts to doubt it. Transcendental Thomists name this defense of the objectivity of intellectual dynamism the retorsion or the performative self-contradiction defense.<sup>28</sup> Transcendental Thomists find a basis for it in Aquinas' commentary on Aristotle's defense of the non-contradiction principle at *Metaphysics* IV. Other Thomists are unimpressed by the reference.

Furthermore, the critically known objectivity of intellectual dynamism can then be used as a yardstick to judge the objectivity of other contents of consciousness. In other words, since the dynamism rules

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<sup>28</sup> For Maréchal's key exercise of retorsion, see Donceel, *Maréchal Reader*, 215–17, 227–28; for Rahner, "Aquinas: The Nature of Truth," 69; for Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 352, on being as unrestricted. In sum, "Yet the absolute validity of [metaphysics'] truths can be established, since it can be shown that the affirmation of these truths is a condition of the possibility of all human knowledge. . . . This explains the great importance of 'retorsion' in Transcendental Thomism. 'Retorsion' is a technical term which refers to the method of demonstrating an assertion by showing that he who denies this assertion affirms it in his very denial." Joseph Donceel, "Transcendental Thomism," *The Monist* 58 (1974): 81.

consciousness, then conscious data that raise no questions can be presumed to “fit” within the objectivity of the dynamism. Epistemology can be done from the top down. No need exists to claim that the data is self-manifestly real, as is done in the immediate realism of Neo-Thomism. Such a claim appears naive and dogmatic in the light of modern objections of the dream and hallucination possibilities and the facts of relativity in perception. The Transcendental Thomist will concede that the data is not self-manifestly real. The reality of the data is known thanks to its observed behavior within intellectual dynamism. Just as a savage does not know if something is edible simply by taking a look but only by ingesting it and seeing if it satisfies the growling of his stomach, so too sense data are not known as real by just taking a look. The data must be placed within our intellectual dynamism and be seen to quiet it.

## 6. DIFFICULTIES IN NEO-THOMISM

Subsequent to Vatican II, Transcendental Thomism became the reigning form of Thomism. The Neo-Thomists suffered an eclipse. In my opinion, it is accurate to observe that in Catholic intellectual circles, the way theology goes determines the way philosophy goes. Without intending to denigrate the philosophical genius of Maritain or Gilson, I think that a great amount of their popularity was tied to Catholic theological interest in the Thomism about which Maritain and Gilson were writing. So, to understand why Neo-Thomism was eclipsed by Transcendental Thomism, one must see what attracted the above Catholic theologians to Maréchal’s Transcendental Thomism.

Theologians turned to Transcendental Thomism as their preferred philosophical instrument because of five perceived weaknesses in Neo-Thomism that Transcendental Thomism appeared to avoid. The first two weaknesses are philosophical. First, as should be clear from the summaries of Aristotelian Thomism and Existential Thomism, the immediate realist understanding of sensation plays a crucial role in Neo-Thomism. According to immediate realism, the data of sensation, that is, what you are doing right now as you look this way and listen, are self-manifestly real. The data present themselves with an existence of their own such that if the sensing ceased, the items

sensed would not cease. As explained, the real data play a key role in working out hylomorphism and in working out the *actus essendi* conception of the thing's existence, both of which lead to the mentioned different ways of understanding the *ratio entis*. Now according to Transcendental Thomism, Neo-Thomism has never satisfactorily defended immediate realism from the attacks of modern philosophy. Hence, immediate realism appears as a naive and dogmatic element in Neo-Thomism.

The modern objections to immediate realism include Descartes' dream and hallucination possibilities. In sum, I have dreamed or hallucinated that I was in philosophy class listening to a lecture; how do I know that I am not dreaming or hallucinating right now? My inability to articulate a foolproof answer prevents any assertion of immediate realism. Second, also from Descartes but especially from the British Empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume), comes the critique of immediate realism from the relativity of perception. I see the field of poppies as red, a colorblind person sees the field as gray. Who sees the real color of the poppies? To stay perfectly impartial, these philosophers insist that we have to answer, Maybe nobody sees the real color. The colors that we see may just exist in our perception. Also, the people to the front see the shape of the paper that I hold as rectangular; the people to the sides see the shape as trapezoidal. Who sees the real shape? To be impartial, we have to say, according to the Empiricists, that maybe no one sees the real shape. In this second way also, the immediate realist understanding of sensation slips away. The undeniable perspectival character of perception was also used by Husserl in *Ideas I* to critique the "natural attitude."<sup>29</sup>

Transcendental Thomism believes that these problems cannot be solved just on their own terms. It concedes to modern philosophy that the data of sensation are not self-manifestly real. Rather, the

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<sup>29</sup> "The studies we have completed left us with the transcendence of the thing over against the perception of it, and as a further consequence, over against every consciousness generally which refers to the thing; not merely in the sense that the thing as a real constituent part of consciousness is as a matter of fact not to be found—the whole situation rather concerns eidetic insight: in absolutely unconditioned generality or necessity, a thing cannot be given as really immanent in any possible perception or, generally, in any possible consciousness. Thus a basic and essential difference arises between Being as Experience and Being as Thing." Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (New York: Collier Books, 1972), 120.

apparent reality is a mediated phenomenon. The data of sensation appear as real thanks to their immersion in the intellectual dynamism. Just as the precise length of an object appears when the object is brought in juxtaposition to a ruler, so too the fundamental realness of the data of sensation appears when the data are placed within intellectual dynamism. One is confident that this apparent fundamental reality of the data is not illusory, because by retorsion one is critically confident about the objectivity of intellectual dynamism. Transcendental Thomists claim that the use of retorsion here enables one to espouse a realist epistemology without the naivete and dogmatism of Neo-Thomism.

In the second philosophical problem, Transcendental Thomists say that even if Neo-Thomists could explain the realism of the senses, no mere *a posteriori* handling of the sensed data would enable the philosopher to rise to the all-perfect God of Christian belief, something Aquinas' metaphysics is supposed to do. The problem is this. Since the real sensible things are finite and determinate things through and through, then any reasoned cause for things needs to be only finite also. In a word, from a finite effect, you need conclude only to a finite cause. So, even granting the truth of immediate realism, Neo-Thomism still is woefully inadequate for the expressed purposes of Aquinas' metaphysics.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, intellectual dynamism is a better way of knowing that an Infinite Being exists. The idea of the all-perfect is derived not from an analysis of things, but from a Kantian-style transcendental analysis of human subjectivity. Again, *via* retorsion, we can be confident that this ideal is at least the idea of something authentically possible. At this point and in a manner reminiscent of the medieval John Duns Scotus, Maréchal goes on to argue that the all-perfect can be possible only through its own actuality. In other words, a *first* being can be possible not through the actuality of something else, but only through its own actuality.<sup>31</sup> Hence, Infinite Being, the object

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<sup>30</sup> Maréchal states the deficiency in *a posteriori* reasoning in Donceel, *Maréchal Reader*, 145.

<sup>31</sup> "When we affirm pure Act as the supreme rational condition, as the Ideal par excellence, we logically affirm the pure Act as absolute Reality, for an *ideal* pure Act, which would not be posited as *real* pure Act, would mean a potency of actuation declared to be the summit of act." Donceel, *Maréchal Reader*, 156. Following Maréchal, Donceel himself remarks, "God, on the other hand, is extrinsically possible if, and only if, he exists." Donceel, *Natural Theology*, 23. See also Joseph Donceel, *The*

of intellectual dynamism, exists. Based on *a priori* intellectual dynamism, reasoning strictly concludes to the Infinite.

The three remaining difficulties for Neo-Thomism are theological. First, the Neo-Thomist espousal of a single and definitive metaphysics as the crown of our natural powers suggests a view of human nature to which supernatural grace would be not only gratuitous but also superfluous. In other words, in Neo-Thomism human nature appears as so integral that grace looks almost irrelevant and simply extrinsic to human nature.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, if Maréchal is correct that human nature is at rock bottom a dynamism to Infinite Being, then human striving can only be quieted by God, not by some metaphysics. Moreover, if what Maréchal says is true, then the entire life of grace as the means to bring the dynamism to its term is profoundly relevant to human beings. Contemporary theologians realize that while the Maréchal turn would avoid the extrinsicism-of-grace-to-nature problem, the turn raises another problem. How could grace be gratuitous, a gift? If parents are obliged to meet the needs of their offspring, is not God likewise obliged to give the grace that meets this profound indigenous drive for the Absolute in us? De Lubac replies that grace is still correctly regarded as gratuitous because God did not have to create humans. Another intellectual creature without a dynamism to the infinite is possible.<sup>33</sup>

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*Searching Mind: An Introduction to a Philosophy of God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 70–71. For a summary of Scotus' argument, see Armand Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1965), 225–26.

<sup>32</sup> On the extrinsicism of grace problem in the Renaissance Scholasticism view of a purely natural terminative end for man, see de Lubac, *Mystery of the Supernatural*, chap. 4.

<sup>33</sup> De Lubac, *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 123–26; 272–73. Subsequent to the appearance of de Lubac's earlier *Surnaturel* (1946), the theological discussion focused on whether de Lubac allowed God the liberty of creating a rational creature without a call to beatitude. Vd. P. J. Donnelly, "Discussion of the Supernatural Order," *Theological Studies* 9 (1948), especially 241–49. Later, in *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 80, de Lubac seems to allow this possibility: "I do not say that [the hypothesis of pure nature] is false, but I do say that it is 'insufficient.'" He explains that the pure nature idea is insufficient because such a human would have a different finality than *existing* humans, and so would not explain how grace is gratuitous for *existing* humans. What de Lubac denies is the conceivability of *existing* rational beings minus their orientation to the supernatural; vd. de Lubac, *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 81. Whether this position denies *Humani generis*—"Others destroy the gratuitous character of the supernatural order by suggesting that it would be impossible for God to create rational beings without ordaining them for the beatific vision and calling them to it"—is a matter of debate. *Prima facie*, the "rational be-

Second, by its claim that there is a single metaphysics true for all time and for all places, Neo-Thomism is too ahistorical. The impression that Scholasticism is a monolith, a party line, was, ironically, shattered by historical studies such as those of the eminent Neo-Thomist Etienne Gilson. The thinking of the Scholastics is as individual as fingerprints, and studies in theology have revealed the same peculiarities of time and place. Contemporary theologians think that the Maréchal epistemology less scandalously accommodates this undeniable pluralism of human thinking.<sup>34</sup> As explained, since for Maréchal concepts form in the wake of intellectual dynamism, then no concept, even the *ratio entis* of Neo-Thomism, adequately catches the end of the dynamism. In other words, no analogon extends that far. The analogous commonalities of traditional metaphysics now sink to the level of analogates formed around the mind's supra-conceptual dynamism. Hence, each great metaphysics becomes like each pre-

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ings" mentioned by the encyclical seems to include existing rational beings like ourselves. Aquinas affirms the gratuity of grace to existing human persons: "[I]f [God] wills to make a man, He must give him an intellect. But if there is anything which is not necessary for that which God wills, then that thing comes from God, not as something due, but simply as a result of His generosity. Now, the perfection of grace and glory are goods of this kind, because nature can exist without them inasmuch as they surpass the limits of natural powers." Aquinas, *De Ver.* 6, 2c; trans. Robert W. Mulligan, *The Disputed Questions on Truth* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), vol. 1, 264–65. Also, in de Lubac's interpretation of existing human nature, the desire for God is so deeply set that it is constitutive of human nature (*Mystery of the Supernatural*, 70). Hence de Lubac is at a loss to give a positive construal of "uncalled" human nature. For an excellent discussion of Aquinas on the natural desire for God with comparisons to twentieth-century theologians, see O'Connor, *The Natural Desire*, especially 42–46.

<sup>34</sup> Gerald McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 257–59; *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), chap. 9, but esp. 214–19. The "pluralists" (viz., de Solages, Przywara, and Le Blond) described by McCool all seem to be working with a different understanding of analogous conceptualization than is found in the tradition (Vd. *supra*, n. 6). For the pluralists, analogous concepts are what the tradition called analogates; for the tradition, analogous concepts bear on what the pluralists say is the unconceptualizable term of intellectual dynamism. But the fact that the metaphysical analogons of the tradition do not express everything that they actually contain should not be taken to mean, as the pluralists say, that analogous concepts are "deficient," "limited," or "not encompassing," "historically conditioned," and "inadequate." These characterizations are more true of the analogates than the analogons. In other words, to not know every analogate of the *ratio entis* (for instance, zoology continually acquaints me with more of the wide array of living substances) is not to lack a definition of *ens as habens esse* from which all analogates are streaming intelligibly.

viously discussed great baseball player. Far from being in contradiction to each other, each great metaphysics is a finite conceptual attempt to express the intellectual dynamism, just as each great baseball player is another particular realization of the analogon of great baseball player. Convinced that no reason exists to know whether the thing's existence is just the fact of the thing or an act of the thing, Transcendental Thomists say that the Aristotelian Thomist understanding of being in terms of *forma* is one true but finite conceptualization of being; and the Existential Thomist understanding of being in terms of *esse* is another true but finite conceptualization of being. Insofar as both of these camps are being faithful to intellectual dynamism, then their two irreducible and distinct fundamental conceptions of being are in their respective finite ways both true. If philosophy is defined in terms of conceptual articulation, then philosophy is inherently and in principle pluralistic. No philosophy can claim to be *the* conceptual articulation of being.

Finally, because of its relentless *a posteriori* approach, Neo-Thomism appears as so cool and detached as to be singularly unappealing.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, Transcendental Thomism provides an engaging portrayal of our inner life as conscious beings. The description of human nature as radically oriented to God, as naturally desiring God, is enticing and flattering. It seems to ring true to our felt dissatisfaction with our existence, and it does seem to express the agreement that we all concede when reading in the opening lines of Augustine's *Confessions*: "My heart is restless until it rests in You."

## 7. THE REVIVAL'S END

So, in the light of the above problems with Neo-Thomism and the perceived success of Transcendental Thomism to solve them, Catholic systematic theologians (Rahner, De Lubac, Lonergan) jettisoned Neo-Thomism for Transcendental Thomism. In the light of these issues, the dean of the twentieth-century Thomist narrative, Gerald McCool, S.J., presents Vatican II's *Decree on Priestly Formation (Optatum Totius)* as the end of Neo-Thomism but not of the tradition of Thomism. He says:

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<sup>35</sup> See McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, 208–10, on "New Theology."

This does not mean, of course, that theologians in the tradition of St. Thomas do not continue to occupy a place of prominence in the theological community. Two of them, as we have already indicated, are Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, independent theologians whose personal thought has been molded through their personal contact with St. Thomas. Emerging from the tradition of Rousselot and Maréchal, on which Le Blond had drawn, both of them have continued his effort to show that a philosophical and theological method grounded on the finality of the human mind can maintain the invariance of revealed truth in a theology marked by history and pluralism. Both have endeavored in their own way to address the urgent question Le Blond left unanswered: *How* can a philosophy based on the human mind preserve the fundamental meaning of the Christian mysteries when they must be expressed through historically conditioned concepts in a plurality of diverse systems? How precisely and to what extent can this meaning be preserved, and if St. Thomas' Aristotelian scientific method is no longer valid, what method should be used to control the perennial meaning of theological statements, and how can the validity of that method be grounded? As theologians formed by the thought of the Angelic Doctor, Rahner and Lonergan continue the work of the "new theologians" in the context of post-Conciliar theology. Their work, however, does not belong to the history of the Neo-Thomistic movement which they have left behind them. The history of the modern Neo-Thomist movement, whose *magna charta* was *Aeterni Patris*, reached its end at the Second Vatican Council.<sup>36</sup>

So, within the context of the history of philosophy, the correct answer to my title appears to be the following: As a widespread way of thinking, Neo-Thomism flourished from the 1930s through the 1950s both in Europe and America, but reached its demise at Vatican II. The Thomistic revival of which Neo-Thomism was the greater part continues in the work of major Catholic systematic theologians as they employ a philosophical tool called Transcendental Thomism.

In subsequent chapters I garner Neo-Thomist ideas to dispute this

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<sup>36</sup> McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, 229–30. For a different understanding of *Optatum Totius*, cf.: "The words of the Council are clear: the Fathers saw that it is fundamental for the adequate formation of the clergy and of Christian youth that it preserve a close link with the cultural heritage of the past, and in particular with the thought of St. Thomas; and that this, in the long run, is a necessary condition for the longed-for renewal of the Church." John Paul II, "Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of Our Times," *Angelicum* 57 (1980): 139. Also John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, paras. 57–61, in Miller, ed., *Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 884–87.

historical judgment. Neo-Thomism, especially in its existential variety, can heal itself of its alleged weaknesses and debits. And this fact is all to the good because, as I will also try to show, the metamorphosis of the twentieth-century Thomistic revival from Neo-Thomism into Transcendental Thomism is a disaster for Thomism itself.

## Sensation as the Source of Science

IN THE LAST CHAPTER I noted that epistemologically, Neo-Thomism is worked out from the bottom up. It is an *a posteriori* position in philosophy. The real is originally encountered in the data of sensation.<sup>1</sup> Sensation is, for example, what you are doing right now as you

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<sup>1</sup>The parade of Neo-Thomist opinion on the sense basis of human cognition includes but is not limited to the following. Speaking of classical realism, Gilson asks, “Is it so difficult, then, to understand that the concept of being is presented to knowledge as an intuitive perception since the being conceived is that of a sensible intuitively perceived? The existential acts which affect and impregnate the intellect through the senses are raised to the level of consciousness, and realist knowledge flows forth from this immediate contact between object and knowing subject.” Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, 206. Also, “The apprehension of being by the intellect consists of directly seeing the concept of being in some sensible datum,” 197. Again, “When the concept of being is abstracted from a concrete existence perceived with the senses the judgment which predicates being of this existent attributes being to it . . . as ‘seen’ in the sensible datum from which [the concept of being] was abstracted,” 205.

For Maritain the “intuition of being” was always engendered *a posteriori* from the intellect’s contact with real things given in sensation: “I see [the metaphysician’s being] as an intelligible reality which issues from the least thing and in diverse respects belongs to all things.” Jacques Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), 63; “We must attain a certain level of intellectual spirituality, such that the impact of reality upon the intellect . . . gives the objects received through our senses,” 49. For remarks in Maritain’s *Degrees of Knowledge*, see 212, “as if in opening a blade of grass one started a bird greater than the world”; 213 on concept of being making “incomplete abstraction from its analogates”; 214 on transcendentals as “realized in the sensible in which we first grasp them” and being as “attained in sensible things by dianoetic intellection.” Finally, an example from Maritain’s *Peasant of the Garrone*, 136, “the procedure proper to philosophy, which has its starting point in experience and a prolonged intercourse with the world and with sensible reality.”

For Yves R. Simon, sensation is basic cognition: “As the actuality of physical existence existing intentionally, empirical knowledge supports in intentional existence everything that can exist intentionally.” Simon, *Metaphysics of Knowledge*, 87. And sensation directly presents the real: “If it is true that the senses are basically indefectible with respect to their proper objects, and if every object of sensation, as an object of experiential knowledge, envelops actual physical existence, then it follows

look this way and listen. The Neo-Thomist claim is that in all honesty, the object of this awareness is self-manifestly real. The human sensor's awareness immediately includes the real existence of the sensor as well as the real thing that is sensed, but not as directly. The brunt of the awareness is on the sensed real thing. Peripherally or indi-

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that the act of sensing has to be made such as to reach the actual existent without error. Any theory of sensation, therefore, that does not preserve before all else the notion of a knowledge made to reach external reality as it is will be at fault," 89–90. Also, "But actual existence would not admit of indirect ascertainment: it could not be inferred or believed in, if it had not first been grasped directly. At the basis of all our cognition of things existent, possible or fictitious, there is an act which implies in essential manner the physical presence of its object." Yves R. Simon, "An Essay on Sensation," in Roland Houde and Joseph P. Mullally, eds., *Philosophy of Knowledge* (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1960), 65.

For Joseph Owens, "Upon examination the basic contents of human cognition, from which all else in it is derived, appear without exception as sensible things and human activities specified by sensible things," *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 215. "Knowledge of all other objects, such as universals, logical relations, mathematical constructs, spiritual creatures, God, was traced to its ultimate ground in perceived sensible things." Joseph Owens, "Aquinas on Cognition as Existence," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 48 (1974): 79. "An examination of this content of your cognition reveals no other origin for it than the things you have come to grasp cognitively through seeing, hearing, feeling and other kinds of awareness that may be called external sensation." Owens, *Cognition*, 90.

Henle, *Method in Metaphysics*, 44–45: "If all this is true, the initial ontological insights are all dependent upon sense, in the first instance, and derivative from it, not by argumentation or inference but by immediate insight. It follows that the fundamental concepts are neither given *a priori* in the intellect, nor formed from sense experience by a quasi-automatic 'natural abstraction' which guarantees their exhaustive and perfect character and eliminates contemplation and effort." Speaking of metaphysics, Henle says, "the experiential moment of metaphysics is therefore the moment of vital contact with reality in direct existential judgments. The primary necessities and insights of metaphysics are not deduced from concepts nor added by *a priori* forms in the mind but are already contained in the existential judgments we constantly make," 52; and "The principle [of contradiction] is, in fact, merely a recognition of the necessity of being in a given act of existence. 'When Socrates sits, he sits with necessity.' Reflection upon this intelligibility merely releases it in its purity, so that the scientific statement of the principle is an intelligible transcription of the necessities of concrete *esse*," 56.

Also Sweeney in *Authentic Metaphysics in an Age of Unreality*, ix–x: "Because [authentic metaphysics] results precisely and entirely from taking things as they actually are. Its methodology aims at cutting through deception. It realizes that actual existents, of whatever sort, are the content-determining causes of our knowledge," see also 14.

Finally, Krapiec, *Metaphysics: An Outline of the History of Being*, 85: "There are acts of spontaneous cognition in which the subject-object dichotomy does not yet exist. These are the 'existential judgments' in which we immediately affirm the exis-

rectly, but no less immediately, the awareness also provides the real existence of the sensor.<sup>2</sup> Within the direct data the intellect goes on to grasp commonalities that, when properly defined, will function as middle terms in syllogisms whose conclusions may extend far beyond the original data. The fact remains that it is the real things immediately and directly presented by sensation that are the soil in which our intellectual life takes root and grows. Hence, according to Neo-Thomism, our exalted intellectual edifices are built from humble foundations.

As also noted, this Neo-Thomist opinion about the *a posteriori* origin of knowledge according to Aquinas is not shared by all twentieth-century Thomists. The Transcendental Thomists consider Aquinas' basic epistemology to be *a priori*. To this end they cite various texts, and these will have to be considered. Nevertheless, the Neo-Thomist opinion has a strong basis in Aquinas.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter I endeavor to present that textual case for the Neo-Thomist opinion that the basic notions of the speculative sciences are abstracted or drawn from sensible things. I begin with the abstraction common to all the speculative sciences—abstraction without precision.<sup>4</sup> In general this abstraction works from data to arrive at the common natures that specify the subjects of the various speculative sciences: natural philosophy, mathematics, metaphysics. Hence, the methodology that I must follow in this chapter is clear. A Neo-Thomist must illustrate for the subject of each science that the entire initial data derive from an *a posteriori* source. Around that point will swirl the various controversies. Chapter 3 will defend the self-manifestly real existent character of the sensible data. The thesis of this chapter can be ex-

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tence of some concrete object given to us in immediate sensory experience. Such existential judgments are our absolutely first cognitive acts.”

<sup>2</sup> For Aquinas, the human soul knows both its own existence and nature *per reflexionem quandam*. Aquinas, *C.G.* II, 75, *Licet*. Also, Aquinas, *De Ver.* 10, 8c and *S.T.* I, 87, 1c; and Owens, “Aquinas on Cognition as Existence,” 78–81.

<sup>3</sup> “Primum autem principia scientiarum speculativarum sunt per sensum accepta.” Aquinas, *S.T.* I–II, 3, 6c, ed. Ottawa Institute of Medieval Studies (Ottawa: Collège Dominicain d’Ottawa, 1941), 732b.

<sup>4</sup> Non-precise abstraction is important not only for setting the methodology of this chapter. Its nuancing is the *sine qua non* for understanding that the notion of being, the *ratio entis*, is a first intentional object of inexpressible richness (Chap. 5). This understanding is the well to which I will repeatedly return to present a systematic unfolding of Neo-Thomism (Chaps. 6–8) and to formulate replies to its purported failings (Chap. 9).

trapolated to delineate an *a posteriori* origin of Aquinas' natural law ethics. The reader will find that presentation postponed until Chapter 8.

## 1. SCIENCE AND ABSTRACTION

First, Aquinas appears to be a direct and immediate realist as far as sensation. Speaking in general about the nature of cognition, and so also of sense cognition, Aquinas says: “[K]nowledge is the existence of the known in the knower”; “the perfection of the knower is that the known is in some way in the knower”; “cognition is the existing perfection of one thing brought to be in another.”<sup>5</sup> But for Aquinas, actual sensation attains individual things existing externally. For example, sight attains the color in the body.<sup>6</sup> From these two points, does it not follow that for Aquinas, the known that comes to exist in the knower is a real existent? Sensation is the real thing itself genuinely existing in a different way. Joseph Owens remarks that “Aquinas writes as though this notion of cognition is apparent to immediate

<sup>5</sup> Respectively: Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2, 5, ad 15m; *De Ver.* 2, 2c; *De Ver.* 2, 2c.

<sup>6</sup> “The sense-objects which actuate sensitive activities—the visible, the audible, etc.—exist outside the soul; the reason being that actual sensation attains to the individual things which exist externally.” Aquinas, *In II de An.*, *lectio* 12, no. 375, Foster and Humphries trans., *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1994), 249. “[F]or what is seen is color which exists in an exterior body.” *In III de An.*, *lectio* 8, n. 718, trans. Foster and Humphries, 419. Also see *infra*, n. 24. Cf. the modern tradition initiated by Descartes: “And certainly, considering the ideas of all these qualities, which presented themselves to my mind and which alone I perceived properly or immediately . . .” *Meditations on First Philosophy in The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), vol. 1, 187–88. For a discussion, vd. *infra*, Chap. 3. For Locke, “ideas” are at best “resemblances” of real things; they are not the real things themselves: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk. 2, chap. 8, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 134. For Berkeley's thesis that *esse est percipi*, see *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, pt. 1, 3–18, in M. R. Ayers, ed., *George Berkeley: Philosophical Works* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1975), 77–82. In *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sec. 12, pt. 1, in T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, eds., *David Hume: The Philosophical Works* (Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964), vol. 4, 126–27, Hume accepts Berkeley's position. In the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), B xvii, 22, Kant jettisons the classical correspondence theory of truth on the basis that intuitions only provide representations.

reflexive observation. He offers no demonstration of it, nor does he illustrate it by any comparison or analogy.”<sup>7</sup>

The point is scrupulously respected in Aquinas’ delineation of the mechanics of sensation as “reception of form without the matter.”<sup>8</sup> Since matter individuates, material reception of form would engender an individual only specifically like the agent. To have a reception of form that engenders the very individual, the reception of form must be without matter. By a nuancing of the hylomorphism doctrine, Aquinas explains at *S.T.* I, 14, 1c, that such reception is possible because of the “amplitude” (*amplitudo* and *extensio*) of the knower’s own form. Because the knower’s form is not completely sunk into its matter, the knower’s form retains the “space” to receive into itself the very form of the thing known. From such reception, the known itself becomes present in the knower. If the receiving amplitude of form retains a contact with matter, the resultant cognition is sensory; if the receiving amplitude of form has a separateness from matter, the cognition is intellectual. As noted, in the next chapter I will defend the self-manifestly real character of the sensible data.

Second, at *In de Trin.* V, 3c (1258–60), Aquinas ascribes to all the speculative sciences, that is, natural philosophy (or Aristotelian physics), mathematics, and metaphysics, a type of abstraction in which the universal is taken from the particular.<sup>9</sup> He illustrates this kind of abstraction with the nature or essence of man.

So man cannot be understood without these parts and they must be included in his definition; so they are parts of his species and form. But finger, foot, and hand, and other parts of this kind are outside the definition of man; and thus the essential nature of man does not depend on them and he can be understood without them. For whether or not he has feet, as long as he is constituted of a rational soul and a

<sup>7</sup> Owens, “Aquinas on Cognition as Existence,” 76.

<sup>8</sup> For the delineation, see Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2, 2c; *S.T.* I, 14, 1c; *In de An.* II, *lectio* 24. For the Aristotelian background, see Joseph Owens, “Aristotle: Cognition a Way of Being,” in John R. Catan, ed., *Aristotle: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 74–80.

<sup>9</sup> “And there is a third [distinction] through the same operation which is the abstraction of universal from a particular; and this belongs to physics and to all the sciences in general, because science disregards accidental features and treats of necessary matters.” Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 3c, trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 34.

body composed of the elements in the proper mixture required by this sort of form, he will be a man. These parts are called parts of matter; they are not included in the definition of the whole, but rather the converse is true. This is how all determinate (*signatae*) parts are related to man; for instance, *this* soul, *this* body, *this* nail, *this* bone, etc. These indeed are parts of the essence of Socrates and Plato, but not of man precisely as man; and therefore the intellect can abstract man from these parts. And this is the abstraction of the universal from the particular.<sup>10</sup>

In a summary remark, he names this kind of abstraction *abstractio totius*, the abstraction of a whole, and Aquinas characterizes it this way: “We consider a nature absolutely, according to its essential character, in independence of all parts that do not belong to the species but are accidental parts.”<sup>11</sup> The illustration and the general description are important, because they provide grounds for identifying *abstractio totius* of the *De Trinitate* commentary with what another early work, the *De Ente et Essentia* (before 1256), calls both “absolute consideration” and “abstraction without precision.” Before turning to the *De Ente*, however, I must face an interpretative issue.

Citing the work of L. Geiger on Aquinas’ redactions of *In de Trin.* V, 3c, some Thomists insist that in the case of metaphysics, Aquinas made an exception. The metaphysician attains his subject in a *separatio*, not an *abstractio*.<sup>12</sup> Does Aquinas’ emphasis on *separatio* for metaphysics conflict with my trumpeting of the abstractive approach to the sciences? For two reasons, I do not think so. First, in the *De Trinitate* commentary, Aquinas never says that the metaphysician attains his subject *in a separatio*. Rather, Aquinas loosely asserts: (1) that the consideration of substance apart from matter pertains (*pertinet*) to separation; and (2) that separation belongs (*competit*) to meta-

<sup>10</sup> Maurer, trans., *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 32.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>12</sup> L. B. Geiger, “Abstraction et séparation d’après S. Thomas,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 31 (1947): 3–40. Aquinas’ final edition showcases judgment. Geiger himself, however, claims that the Aristotelian natural philosophy proof of an immaterial being is necessary for the grasp of *ens commune*: “[L]e jugement négatif, qui fonde l’immatérialité de l’objet de la métaphysique, tire sa valeur objective de la démonstration de l’existence des êtres immatériels par où s’achève la philosophie de la nature: premier moteur immobile au huitième livre de la *Physique*, âme humaine avec l’intellect agent et l’intellect possible au *Traité de l’âme*,” 25.

physics. But pertains and belongs how? The lack of explication has been noted.<sup>13</sup> Without more explicit corroborating texts, then, the exclusive use of *separatio* to produce the subject of the science of metaphysics is speculatively Thomistic.

Second, in the commentary, the only explicit delineation of *separatio* is to craft “confused and vague” representations of God and separate substances. One fashions these by separating through negation the material aspects of our concepts. “Nevertheless we reach some knowledge of [God and separate substances] through the objects of the senses and the imagination . . . by way of negation (as when we separate from such beings whatever the sense or imagination apprehends).”<sup>14</sup> Important to note is that the above use of *separatio* indicates that the subject of metaphysics is not a direct product of *separatio*. Our confused representations of immaterial beings are that. Where does metaphysics come in? *Ens inquantum ens* should be the product of an abstraction from data that includes the above representations. Aquinas compares *ens* with animal. Just as animal abstracts from reason, so too the *ratio entis* is separate from matter.<sup>15</sup> He also speaks of *ens* as a common nature. But common natures are abstracted.<sup>16</sup> These texts construe *ens* to be the product of an

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<sup>13</sup> “As to identifying more precisely the role of *separatio*, our task would be considerably easier had Thomas devoted an article or question to its function as such.” John Wippel, “Metaphysics and *Separatio* according to Thomas Aquinas,” *Review of Metaphysics* 31 (1978): 441. Wippel is, however, of the opinion that the subject of metaphysics is a direct product of *separatio*: “[I]t follows that for [Aquinas] *separatio* is the intellectual process whereby one attains to that particular kind of subject matter,” 442.

<sup>14</sup> Aquinas, *In de Trin.* VI, 2c; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 70. In the next article, a *cognitio confusa* of the quiddity of separate substances is attained “by negations; for example by understanding that they are immaterial, incorporeal, without shapes, and so on.” Maurer, trans., *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 78.

<sup>15</sup> Vd. *infra*, n. 33. Also, at the end of the prologue to the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, Aquinas remarks: “Haec enim transphysica inveniuntur in via resolutionis, sicut magis communia post minus communia.” At *S.T.* I, 12, 4, ad 3m, Aquinas uses *resolvere* for abstraction: “Sed intellectus noster potest in abstractione considerare quod in concrectione cognoscit. Etsi enim cognoscat res habentes formam in materia, tamen resolvit compositum in utrumque, et considerat ipsam formam per se.”

<sup>16</sup> “[S]icut ens dicitur de substantia et accidente; et de talibus oportet quod natura communis.” Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 2c, *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis*, ed. Pierre Mandonnet (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929), vol. 1, 492. The common nature is the object of the intellect’s

abstraction. The abstraction should be an *abstractio totius*—something Aquinas says is common to all the sciences. So *separatio* is not identical with the *abstractio entis* but involved with it. *Separatio* fashions certain instances of the data from which the abstraction proceeds. The instances are those negatively crafted representations of separate substances.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. ABSTRACTION WITH AND WITHOUT PRECISION

In chapter 3 of *De Ente*, Aquinas says that absolute consideration attributes to essence only what belongs to the essence itself, or only what falls in the definition. Hence:

For example, to man as man belong *rational*, *animal*, and everything else included in his definition; but *white* or *black*, or any similar attribute not included in the notion of humanity, does not belong to man as man. If someone should ask, then, whether a nature understood in this way can be called one or many, we should reply that it is neither, because both are outside the concept of humanity, and it can happen to be both. If plurality belonged to its concept, it could never be one, though it is one when present in Socrates. So, too, if oneness belonged to its concept, the nature of Socrates and of Plato would be identical, and it could not be multiplied in many individuals.<sup>18</sup>

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absolute consideration; for the texts, see Joseph Owens, “Common Nature: A Point of Comparison between Thomistic and Scotistic Metaphysics,” *Mediaeval Studies* 19 (1957): 6–7. Yet absolute consideration is an abstraction without precision: “Patet ergo quod natura hominis absolute considerata abstrahit a quolibet esse, ita quod non fiat praecisio alicuius eorum.” Aquinas, *Opusculum De Ente et Essentia* (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1957), chap. 4, n. 1, p. 14. The *ratio entis* is unlike specific and generic concepts. When abstracting from the differences of its instances, *ens* continues to contain them implicitly but actually. Specific and generic concepts contain the differences implicitly but potentially. In short, *ens* is an analogous common nature. See *infra*, Chap. 5.

<sup>17</sup> For the specific steps in this negative crafting of representations of separate substances, see my *Preface to Thomistic Metaphysics: A Contribution to the Neo-Thomist Debate on the Start of Metaphysics* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1990), chap. 5. Elsewhere at *In de Sen.* 1, n. 1, and *In Meta.*, proem, Aquinas does use *separatio* to attain the subject of metaphysics. To be noted is that when Aquinas does speak this way *separatio* appears to mean abstraction, not negative judgment. For the texts, see Edward D. Simmons, “The Thomistic Doctrine of the Three Degrees of Formal Abstraction,” *The Thomist* 22 (1959): 44–45.

<sup>18</sup> Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, trans. Maurer, 46.

Worth noting is how the data control the absolute consideration of the essence. To man it belongs neither to be one nor many, for if the former, then Socrates and Plato would be identical; and if the latter, then Socrates would not be one. With a little imagination, one can entertain similar absurdities if one assumes that the meanings of *white* or *black* pertain to man absolutely considered. Likewise, back in *In de Trin.* V, 3, finger, foot, and hand and other parts of this kind are outside the definition of man, because whether or not one has these parts, one will still be a man.

But in a subsequent paragraph that will prove crucial for a later elaboration of his metaphysics, Aquinas places another wrinkle on absolute consideration. He mentions that a nature has a twofold *esse*, or existence; one is in individual things and the other is in the soul. Evidently, just as a nature like man can have various colors such as white or black, or various numbers such as one or many, so too it can have various existences. But for reasons similarly embarrassing for white or black, one or many, the absolute consideration of the essence includes none of these existences. Aquinas expresses the conclusion this way: “So it is clear that the nature of man, considered absolutely, abstracts from every being [*esse*], but in such a way that it prescind from no one of them.”<sup>19</sup> What is significant is the description of absolute consideration as an abstraction without precision. What does that mean?

Chapter 2 of the *De Ente* describes how a nature or essence is handled with or without precision.<sup>20</sup> Aquinas’ example throughout is the various meanings of *body*. On the one hand, *body* can designate a nature such that three dimensions can be counted in it without prescinding from other perfections that can be added, for example, a sensitive nature and an intellectual nature. In this sense the meaning of *body* contains “implicitly” (*implicite*) or “indeterminately” (*indeterminate*) the perfections that can be added to it. The notion is not understood to exclude what it does not include. Also, in this sense the notion is a genus for Tom, Dick, Harry, Fido, Flicka, Flossy, the Liberty Tree, and the Hope Diamond. Because the genus contains at least implicitly perfections found below in its members, it is basically identical with those members and is able to be predicated of them.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–40.

It designates the whole (*totum*) of each. For example, one can say, “Tom is a body.”

On the other hand, *body* can again designate a nature such that three dimensions can be counted in it, but this time prescinding from the further perfections. In this sense, *body* no longer means the genus in which Tom and Fido belong. Rather, the word now stands for a part (*pars*) that can be found in both and to which the other perfections are added as further parts. In sum, the two different meanings of *body* do not stand for two different natures so much as for two different ways of thinking about the same nature. The different ways depend upon different considerations of the nature *vis-à-vis* what can be added to it. If the added perfection just designates what is implicitly or indeterminately included in the nature, the nature is abstracted without precision. If the added perfection designates what is explicitly or determinately excluded from the nature, the nature is abstracted with precision.

Because it is more in line with the original data, abstraction without precision seems to be the more primitive and original abstraction. Bodies that are substances, not bodies that are parts of substances, constitute the original data. The beings are bodies. As a part, body is not found existing on its own. From that original data, it makes sense for the intellect to abstract the meaning of *body* non-precisively. The data would “prompt” the mind that way. Abstraction with precision would come in as a mental initiative. It would express a mental prerogative working upon a product of abstraction without precision. *Animal*, when standing for a part, is presented just that way: “If *animal* designated only a certain reality endowed with a perfection such that it could sense and be moved through an internal principle, prescinding from any other perfection, then any further perfection would be related to animal as a part and not as implicitly contained in the notion of animal, and then animal would not be a genus.”<sup>21</sup> The *animal* from which any other perfection is prescinded is obviously *animal* as it has been non-precisively abstracted from rational in man. Hence, precise abstraction appears as a mental backtracking on wider non-precise notions. The backtracking cauterizes the capaci-

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 39–40. “[A]nd the basic kind of abstraction is the type just mentioned. In this type the abstracted object maintains identity with the whole individual, allowing you to say that Socrates is a man, an animal, a living thing, and so on.” Owens, *Cognition*, 141.

ties to which the notion is otherwise open. In sum, precisely abstracted notions are derivative and presumptive.

I remarked that the data prompt the non-precise abstraction. What prompts precise abstraction? Why would one go on to precisely modify notions non-precisely abstracted? Does precise abstraction belie an *a priori* preoccupation in the life of the intellect? These questions are natural given Aquinas' terminology of *praecisio*. The terminology suggests that the intellect is active. But with the terminology aside and with the above text front and center, one realizes that the precision is indicative less of activity and more of inactivity. Non-precise abstraction involves understanding the nature both as not including particularities in the instances and as remaining open to them. Because we have to think two things of the nature at once, non-precise abstraction is a subtle, nuanced, and delicate affair.

Just as the circuiting of a number of balls requires concentrated attention from the juggler, so too the achievement of an abstraction without precision requires mental effort. It is easier to think the *abstractum* as simply without the particularities than as also still *with* an openness to them. Hence, precise abstraction appears as less active than non-precise abstraction. It settles for a simplified view of the commonality by not making the effort to appreciate all the aspects of the commonality. Again, the meaning of *animal* that had been non-precisely abstracted from an array of instances that included Tom as well as Fido, Flicka, and Flossy is reduced to a part of Tom by "prescinding" from the capacity for rational. Is not this prescinding just the failure to exercise the mental effort to keep the bigger picture in view? Precise abstraction is less indicative of some agenda of the mind than of the fact that the intellect often does not keep focused on everything that it knows.

### 3. NATURAL PHILOSOPHY AND MATHEMATICS

In sum, the subjects of the various speculative sciences are directly set up in and through *abstractio totius*, a.k.a. absolute consideration or abstraction without precision. But this mental process is controlled or directed by the data. Hence the crucial question is whether and how this data are owing to the real items provided by Aquinas' estimate of sensation.

At the very beginning of his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, Aquinas presents *ens mobile*, mobile or changeable being, as the subject of natural science or physics. *Ens mobile* clearly expresses a commonality, because Aquinas subdivides it into the following kinds of motion: generation and corruption, increase and decrease, alteration, and locomotion.<sup>22</sup> The last three are clearly provided by sensation. As noted,<sup>23</sup> for Aquinas the senses directly and immediately provide really existing items that are the accidents of bodily substances. And so we can sense the change from hot to cold, from pale to ruddy, from small to large, from one place to another. Generation and corruption designate a substance's coming and going out of existence. Sensation does not immediately grasp the substance as it does immediately grasp its accidents.<sup>24</sup> The grasp of substance by their accidents is in one of two ways. It can be instinctual through the judgment of the cogitative sense, as when the sheep judges the brown furry patch to be its natural enemy, the wolf.<sup>25</sup> Or it can be underwritten intellectually, as when we reason that real accidents cannot proceed to infinity. Real accidents necessarily imply something that exists not as in and of something else. This is substance.<sup>26</sup> Yet these same accidents used to judge the presence of substance can be used to judge its absence or corruption. If the real accidents indicate a substance, then their radical variation indicates the absence of the previous substance. For example, the fire-extinguishing accidents of water support the con-

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<sup>22</sup> "[Aristotle] says that there are four kinds of change: simple generation and destruction, which is change in substance; increase and decrease, which is change in quantity; alteration, which is change in affection (and constitutes the third species of quality); and local motion, or change of place, which pertains to the *where* of a thing." *In XII Meta.*, *lectio* 2, n. 2431, in John P. Rowan, trans., *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle* (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), 774.

<sup>23</sup> *Supra*, n. 6.

<sup>24</sup> "[S]enses and imagination know only the exterior accidents." Aquinas, *De Ver.* 1, 12c; trans. Mulligan, *Disputed Questions*, 50. "And because it is innate in us to judge of things by external appearances, since our knowledge takes its rise from sense, which principally and essentially (*primo et per se*) deals with external accidents . . ." Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 17, 1c, in Anton Pegis, ed., *The Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1945), vol. 1, 181. "[O]ur intellect, which knows the essence of a thing as its proper object, derives knowledge from sense, of which the proper objects are external accidents." Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 18, 2c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 189.

<sup>25</sup> Aquinas, *In II de An.*, *lectio* 13, nn. 396–98.

<sup>26</sup> For the argument see Connell, *Substance and Modern Science*, 11–15; and *supra*, Chap. 1, the description of Aristotelian Thomism.

clusion that we no longer have the combustion-supporting elements of hydrogen and oxygen.

In conclusion, the data that the natural philosopher uses to abstract his subject matter are provided immediately by sensation or derived from what is provided by sensation. The next speculative science is mathematics. Aquinas expresses its subject this way: "Obviously, the mathematician does not treat of the kind of body that is in the category of substance, whose parts are matter and form, but rather the body in the category of quantity constituted by three dimensions."<sup>27</sup> This quote patently relates to the meaning of *body* that the *De Ente* said was abstracted with precision. Hence, the *abstractio forma* of the mathematician is in fact what the *De Ente* calls an abstraction with precision. How does the mathematician apply the precise abstraction to generate objects of mathematics?

Aquinas says: "So the primary reason for the diversification of things of one species lies in quantity. . . . So even when the intellect has abstracted quantity from sensible matter, it is still possible to imagine numerically different things in the same species, for example, several equilateral triangles and several equal straight lines."<sup>28</sup> According to this text, when one excludes a quantified substance from every other sensible accident that it does not include, one confronts an object in the domain of mathematics. For instance, if one takes a three-sided drawing but excludes from it the various widths and colors it could have, one arrives at the geometrical triangle whose three sides cannot have width and color. If one takes the idea of a positioned substance but excludes from it the various extensions that it may have, one attains the notion of point that is the basis of geometry. Finally, if one goes on to exclude even the capacity for various positions, one attains the notion of the numeral one that is the basis of arithmetic and that cannot suffer an addition without the loss of itself.<sup>29</sup> In sum, working precisely from individual bodies non-precisely abstracted from their sensible accidents, the mathematician sets up in a basically *a posteriori* fashion his domain.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 3, ad 2m; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 34–35.

<sup>28</sup> Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 3, ad 3m; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 35.

<sup>29</sup> For the numeral one as the principle of number, see Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 11, 1, ad 1m; and *In V Meta.*, *lectio* 17, n. 1020.

<sup>30</sup> For a survey of Neo-Thomist opinion on the status of mathematical objects, see Armand A. Maurer, "Thomists and Thomas Aquinas on the Foundation of Mathe-

Since what has been engendered are individual mathematical objects, “numerically different things in the same species”—as remarked in the previous text, then from this data the intellect can abstract again to grasp *general* mathematical notions. By non-precisely abstracting from the mathematical data of *this* right-angle triangle, *that* isosceles triangle, and so on, the mathematician can conceptualize the general notion of triangle used in geometry. Precise abstraction would provide the concept of triangularity. The mathematician would proceed likewise for the arithmetical notions of two versus duality or one versus oneness.<sup>31</sup>

But more noteworthy, especially for later discussion of how Aquinas metaphysically would handle existential propositions with singulars as their subjects, is that Aquinas has abstraction bearing upon the individual. For to abstract individual mathematical objects, you need to abstract with precision the individual quantified substance from its sensible accidents. Moreover, if, as I have argued, precise abstraction presupposes non-precise abstraction, then the individual quantified substance precisely considered is the previously non-precisely considered individual substance. In popular presentations, authors present abstraction as bearing on universals. That is unfaithful to a close reading of Aquinas.

#### 4. METAPHYSICS AND JOSEPH MARÉCHAL (A)

Twentieth-century Thomists have lavished attention on the establishing of metaphysics. The discussion is long and complicated.<sup>32</sup> Yet if the reader recalls the methodology of this chapter, the reader can be exposed to the debate without loss of orientation. Non-precise

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matics,” *Review of Metaphysics* 47 (1993): 43–61. On the basis of a later *quaestio disputata* inserted by Aquinas into his earlier commentary on the *Sentences*, Maurer argues that like logical notions, mathematical objects are *entia rationis* with a remote foundation in the sensible world. Maurer says, “The mind must add to the real foundation of the mathematical notion and complete its formal character, as it does with the notions of species, universal, time, and truth,” 55. Unfortunately, Maurer never describes the nature of the mind’s completing of the mathematical object. My suggestion is that the completing is an abstraction with precision working upon a previous notion of quantity abstracted without precision.

<sup>31</sup> “This [mathematical] abstraction can be either non-precise or precise, for instance in the notions of two and duality, circle and circularity, sphere and sphericity.” Owens, *Cognition*, 156.

<sup>32</sup> I have tried to make sense of it in my *Preface to Thomistic Metaphysics*.

abstraction is the penultimate moment in the grasp of the science's subject. But Aquinas applies such abstraction to a data pool. Hence, the *a posteriori* or *a priori* status of the data determines the *a posteriori* or *a priori* status of the science. In short, the key question is whether the setting up of the data appeals or not to anything *a priori*.

Aquinas variously expresses the subject of metaphysics as *ens commune*, *ens qua ens*, and *ens inquantum ens*. He compares it to other *abstracta* such as animal and ass.<sup>33</sup> Finally, it is called a "common nature."<sup>34</sup> Hence the indications are that, directly speaking, the subject of metaphysics is reached by an *abstractio totius* understood as an abstraction without precision. But abstracted from what data? Aquinas' *ex professo* description of *ens* as subject of metaphysics is that it is separate from matter both in being and in notion.<sup>35</sup> In short, a being, an existent, need not be a body. Being can be realized in bodies as well as in non-bodies. Just as animal abstracts from rational, although some animals are rational, so too being abstracts from matter though some beings are material. So the intellect should abstract *ens* from instances that include both real materials and real non-materials. Somewhat similarly, animal is abstracted from instances

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<sup>33</sup> "We say that being [*ens*] and substance are separate from matter and motion not because it is of their nature to be without them, as it is of the nature of ass to be without reason, but because it is not of their nature to be in matter and motion, although sometimes they are in matter and motion as animal abstracts from reason, although some animals are rational." Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 4, ad 5m; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 48–49.

<sup>34</sup> "[J]ust as being [*ens*] is said concerning substance and accident; and concerning such things it is necessary that the common nature [*natura communis*] has some being [*esse*] in each of those things concerning which it is said . . ." Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1m.

<sup>35</sup> *Supra*, n. 33. Also, "However, even though the subject of this science [metaphysics] is being-in-general [*ens commune*], the whole science is said to concern what is separate from matter both in existence and in thought. For not only are those things called separate in existence and thought that can never exist in matter, like God and the intellectual substances, but also those that can be without matter, such as being-in-general." Aquinas, *In Meta.*, proem; in Maurer, trans., *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 89. "[F]or something can exist separate from matter and motion . . . second, because by its nature it does not exist in matter and motion; but it can exist without them, though we sometimes find it with them. In this way being [*ens*], substance, potency, and act are separate from matter and motion, because they do not depend on them for their existence, unlike the objects of mathematics, which can only exist in matter. Thus philosophical theology [also called metaphysics] investigates beings separate in [this] second sense as its subjects." Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 4c; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 45.

that are rational and non-rational. I have noted that for Aquinas, sensation is our access to bodily substances. What is the source for the remaining half of the data—real non-materials?

In Aquinas' philosophy there are three cases of real non-materials: God; separate substances or intelligences (angels, in theology); and the subsistent rational soul in humans. Which of these immaterials is in the data pool from which *ens qua ens* is abstracted? God does not seem to be. In the texts, Aquinas is quite explicit that God does not fall under the subject of metaphysics. Rather, God relates to the subject matter by being above it as its transcending cause. It is true that Aquinas refers to God as a being, an *ens*.<sup>36</sup> But one must take this ascription in nuanced fashion. As has been noted and as will be explained, an *ens* is a *habens esse*, a possessor of the act of existence. Literally speaking, God does not fulfill this definition. For Aquinas God is *esse subsistens, esse purum, esse tantum*. These denominations mean that God does not "have" *esse* but is *esse*. The divine simplicity would also rule out God being an *ens* in a literal way. But sometimes a thing can fulfill a definition not by matching it but by going beyond it.

For example, *Deus est* is for Aquinas a proposition self-evident in itself. A self-evident proposition is one in which the meaning of the predicate is contained in the meaning of the subject. Such is the case with "Man is rational" and "Angels are not in place." *Rational* and *not in place* are just part of what *man* and *angel* respectively mean. Is "God exists" self-evident in itself, according to this understanding of self-evident propositions? Not exactly. The subject *God* does not include the predicate *exists* but is the same as the predicate, for God is his existence.<sup>37</sup> Evidently something can fulfill a definition not only literally but super-eminently or *a fortiori*. The same phenomenon appears to be true with the denomination of God as an *ens*. Literally, God is not a *habens esse* and so literally God is not an *ens*. But even

<sup>36</sup> "Deus autem est primum ens et prima causa." Aquinas, C.G. I, 16, *Adhuc Quamvis*; also C.G. I, 22, *Amplius. Omnis*; S. T. I, 3, 1c, second arg.

<sup>37</sup> "Therefore I say that this proposition, God exists [*Deus est*], of itself is self-evident, for the predicate is the same [*idem*] as the subject, because God is His own existence [*suum esse*]." Aquinas, S.T. I, 2, 1c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 19. "Illud tamen verissime et primo dicitur ens cuius esse est ipsum quod est." Aquinas, *In II Sent.* d. 37, q. 1, a. 2c, Mandonnet ed., *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 2, 946.

though God fails to have *esse*, he does not fail to be it. So, *a fortiori*, God can be denominated an *ens*.

The Transcendental Thomists Joseph Maréchal and Karl Rahner argue that God is required for the abstraction of *ens qua ens*. God is not necessary as one datum alongside others in the data pool. God is necessary as an *a priori* condition to profile the material data as the finite data that they are. God assumes this status of an *a priori* condition by being the term of the mind's own dynamism. The mind brings this dynamism to the data of sensation and in that confluence of data and dynamism, the mind is aware that material being is a portion of something larger, that there is "room," "space" for more. In other words, the mind realizes that the real is not necessarily the material.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> In *Cahier V* of his monumental *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*, Maréchal remarks, "It seems that, in order to explain the origin and the differentiation of the transcendental concepts which we obtain through the third degree of abstraction, we can turn to no other subjective principle than an *a priori* diversity of the intellectual faculty itself." Trans. Joseph Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 147. The *a priori* intellectual faculty is understood dynamically. Speaking of the intellectual *a priori* operative in the third degree of abstraction, Maréchal remarks: "Only the adoption of a dynamic viewpoint . . . can provide a possibility of explaining the analogical value of the transcendental concepts," 165. The dynamism has as its term the Infinite, perfect Being, pure Act: "Hence, since the total objective capacity of our intelligence rejects every limit but non-being, it extends as far as being pure and simple. To such a formal capacity there can only correspond one absolutely last and saturating end: the infinite Being," 165. Hence, in sum: "We are positively aware that the movement of our intellections does not stop at the intelligible unity of the material objects, that the latter do not constitute the intelligible which is totally in act, the saturating act of our intellectual power, that, after having surveyed them, there remains in our intelligence a balance of unused power," 165.

In his "Aquinas: the Nature of Truth," 68, Karl Rahner says the same: "Aquinas however thinks another way: intellect's transcendence directed simply toward being, outstrips the domain of the sensibility, thus manifesting a knowledge of being as such, and grounding therefore the possibility of metaphysics in its human specificity. . . . this manifestation of the domain of a metaphysics that outstrips the sensibility and includes all being, even according to St. Thomas, is not realized by means of a certain direct intuition of metaphysical being. . . . For St. Thomas the affirmation of this ambit and that of the knowledge of being that with it, and only with it, is affirmed and manifested . . . belongs to the transcendental conditions for the possibility of objective and judicative knowledge of a spirit conscious of itself relative to the objects of sense intuition . . . Judicative knowledge of the world . . . does not offer an immediate vision of the metaphysical, but contains implicitly, as condition for its own possibility, the affirmation of transcendental being and of its ultimate structures." The connection with God is expressed this way: "[A] particular true judgment relative to a concrete being is possible only in an implicit, though formal, judgment of being as such, and by means of that judgment, i.e., in a comprehension of being as such; and therefore, in the ultimate analysis, it is an implicit affirmation of the

But the Transcendental Thomist approach contains insuperable textual and philosophical difficulties. First, in texts such as *In de Trin.* V, 4c, Aquinas clearly has the philosopher relating God to the subject of metaphysics simply and only as a real cause known therefrom. As a real cause, God is not construable as an *a priori* condition of our consciousness of things. Rather, God is the condition for the real existence of those things. In Heidegger's terminology, Aquinas considers God ontically, not ontologically.<sup>39</sup> And since, as remarked at *In de Trin.* V, 4c, this consideration is the only way (*nisi prout*) that the philosopher reaches God, the transcendental approach is not at all implicit or buried here.

Also, as described by Aquinas at *S.T.* I-II, 3, 8c, the intellect's natural desire for God is not something indigenous to the intellect and constitutive of our experience. It "kicks in" *a posteriori* after the existence of God has been demonstrated, for example, in the *quinque viae*. The intellect's desire for God is a specific application of the intellect's first operation whose proper object is the quiddity of a thing. Since sensible created effects tell us only that God exists and not what God is, the intellect is naturally left wondering about what God is.<sup>40</sup> At that point Aquinas locates a natural intellectual desire

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pure being of God himself. *Omnes cognoscentes implicite cognoscunt Deum in quolibet cognito*. Truth is only possible in the presence of being as such," 70. See my *Preface to Thomistic Metaphysics*, 48, for Rahner texts from his *Spirit in the World*.

<sup>39</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 11.

<sup>40</sup> The *a posteriori* nature of our desire for God is clear from Aquinas, *S.T.* I-II, 3, 8c: "Now the object of the intellect is *what a thing is*, i.e., the essence of a thing, according to *De Anima* iii. 6. Wherefore the intellect attains perfection, in so far as it knows the essence of a thing. If therefore an intellect knows the essence of some effect, whereby it is not possible to know the essence of the cause, i.e., to know of the cause what it is; that intellect cannot be said to reach that cause simply, although it may be able to gather from the effect the knowledge that the cause is. Consequently, when man knows an effect, and knows that it has a cause there naturally remains in man the desire to know about that cause, *what it is*. And this desire is one of wonder (*admiratio*), and causes inquiry (*inquisitionem*), as is stated in the beginning of the *Metaphysics* (i, 2). For instance, if a man, knowing the eclipse of the sun, considers that it must be due to some cause, and knows not what that cause is, he wonders about it, and from wondering proceeds to inquire. Nor does this inquiry cease until he arrive at a knowledge of the essence of the cause. If therefore the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect, knows no more of God than that He is: the perfection of that intellect does not yet reach simply the First Cause, but there remains in it the natural desire to seek the cause." English Dominican Province, trans. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), vol. 1, 601-2. See

for God. It is the desire to know what God is once it has been proved that God is. Before knowing God's existence from his sensible effects, there is no intellectual desire for God.

Augustine's opening remark of the *Confessions*—"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and restless is our heart until it rests in you [Fecisti nos, Domine, ad te; et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te]"—might strike a chord with the Transcendental Thomist approach. How does Aquinas handle Augustine's remark? At *S.T.* II-II, 175, 1, ad 1m, and after quoting Augustine in the objection, Aquinas says that what is natural to man is that he tends to the divine through the apprehension of sensible things. Aquinas then cites Rom. I, 20: "The invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." In I, 2, 2, *sed contra* and prefatory to the *quinque viae*, Aquinas provides this same line of Scripture in behalf of the thesis that God's existence can be proved by a demonstration *quia* that begins from the effect and goes to the cause. So, that God has made us for himself need not mean that we come to God by an *a priori* constitutive intellectual dynamism. In contrast, Aquinas understands our yearning for God to be engendered *a posteriori*.

It is no objection to claim that the yearning for something transcendent that many adults experience could never be initiated by the *prima facie* obtuse, if not exotic, reasonings of the *quinque viae*. In his *C.G.* III, 38, Aquinas acknowledges an ordinary knowledge of God possessed by all mature human beings. But this is not the knowledge of God found in the *a priori* intellectual dynamism of Transcendental Thomism. This ordinary knowledge is still *a posteriori*. Aquinas describes it this way: "For, when men see that things in nature run according to a definite order, and that ordering does not

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also Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 12, 1c. In *The Natural Desire for God*, 56, William O'Connor puts it succinctly: "It is important, too, to keep in mind that the natural desire for the vision of God that St. Thomas teaches does not begin to function except on the hypothesis that the existence of God is already known." The above Aristotelian wonder, or *admiratio*, for the nature of the cause and which follows at least the conceptualization of the effect, Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 9, gives a more prior categorization: "[T]hrough the pure question is prior to insights, concepts, and words, it presupposes experiences and images. Just as insight is into the concretely given or imagined, so the pure question is about the concretely given or imagined. It is the wonder which Aristotle claimed to be the beginning of all science and philosophy."

occur without an orderer, they perceive in most cases that there is some orderer of the things that we see.”<sup>41</sup> The passage recounts a primitive version of the teleological argument, and it has all the shortcomings thereof. For example, Aquinas notes that one does not yet grasp who or what is this orderer or if the orderer is one or many. On the strength of this argument, some identify the orderer with the heavenly bodies, the elements, or other human beings. Philosophy will remove these shortcomings. Nevertheless, the argument has the advantage of orientating human nature to a transcendent and superior being.

Despite these criticisms, Transcendental Thomists would insist that my cited texts and comments only express part of the full Thomistic picture. Their own interpretation is still assured, in their opinion, by other texts in which Aquinas acknowledges our “implicit knowledge of God” in whatever we know.<sup>42</sup> Here is Aquinas being ontological, not ontic, in his consideration of God. For what could this implicit knowledge be except an allusion to an *a priori* condition for our consciousness of things? Is this construal of Aquinas’ “implicit knowledge of God” thesis correct?

The strongest text is from the *De Ver.* 22, a. 2, ad 1m. The argument to which the text is replying claims that not all things tend to God. The first argument is: “Things are oriented to God as knowable and appetible. But not all things oriented to God as knowable know Him, for not all cognitive beings know God. Therefore, neither do all things oriented to Him as appetible tend to Him.”<sup>43</sup> In sum, all things do not tend to God because some that can know him do not and some that can desire him do not.

Aquinas’ reply is as follows: “All cognitive beings also know God implicitly in any object of knowledge. Just as nothing has the note of appetibility except by a likeness to the first goodness, so nothing is knowable except by a likeness to the first truth.” In sum, all cognitive beings tend to God because they implicitly know him. The nature of

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<sup>41</sup> Aquinas, *C.G.* III, 38, *Inquirendum*; trans. Vernon J. Bourke, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), vol. 3, pt. 1, 124.

<sup>42</sup> For Maréchal, see Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 152, 185. For Rahner, see “Aquinas: The Nature of Truth,” 70.

<sup>43</sup> The translation of the objection and reply are by Robert W. Schmidt, *The Disputed Questions on Truth* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), vol. 3, 40 and 42.

this implicit knowledge is explained by an analogy: just as nothing is desirable except by likeness to God, so too nothing is knowable except in the same way. If we can understand this analogy, we can understand Aquinas' doctrine of implicit knowledge of God.

Aid in understanding the first part of the analogy is furnished by consulting some of the parallel texts. For example, in *S.T.*, I, q. 6, a. 1, ad 2m, Aquinas says: "All things, by desiring their own perfection, desire God Himself, inasmuch as the perfections of all things are so many similitudes of the divine being as appears from what is said above."<sup>44</sup> In other words, because everything is made in God's likeness, then we can say that each thing in desiring its own perfection desires God. To desire the copy is *ipso facto* to desire the original. How does Aquinas know this? There is a backward reference to q. 4, a. 3, in which Aquinas argues a likeness, albeit non-univocal, of creatures to God. The basic premise is that an agent acts according to its form; hence some likeness between agent and effect exists. Now God is the first and universal principle of being; hence creatures are like God. The characterization of God as "the first and universal producing cause" seems to be a reference back to the *secunda via* of *prima pars*, q. 2, a. 3c. In sum, to desire God implicitly means to desire things made in God's likeness. And such a doctrine seems subsequent to a proof of God as the all-perfect being in whose likeness everything is made. My understanding of the implicit desire for God is reiterated at *S.T.*, q. 44, a. 4, ad 3m: "All things desire God as their end in desiring any particular good, whether this desire be intellectual or sensible or natural, i.e., without knowledge; for nothing is good and desirable except inasmuch as it participates in the likeness of God."<sup>45</sup>

With this understanding of the first part of the analogy mentioned in *De Ver.* 22, a. 2, ad 1m, we can go on to grasp the analogy's second part. Cognitive beings implicitly know God in any object of knowledge simply because every single thing has been made in the likeness of God. To know the thing is, then, to know God. We may not realize this at first. But once things have been understood as creatures, we can affirm it. The implicit knowledge of God doctrine in Aquinas indicates nothing *a priori*. Rather, it is a gloss on *a posteriori* knowledge once the status of things as creatures has been discovered through *a posteriori* reasoning.

<sup>44</sup> Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 51–52.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 432.

*Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1m, can be read in the same way: “To know that God exists in a general and confused way is implanted in us by nature, inasmuch as God is man’s beatitude. For man naturally desires happiness, and what is naturally desired by man is naturally known by him. This, however, is not to know absolutely that God exists; just as to know that someone is approaching is not the same as to know that Peter is approaching, even though it is Peter who is approaching.”<sup>46</sup>

The connection with the preceding analysis is plain from this parallel text: “For man naturally knows God in the same way as he naturally desires God. Now, man naturally desires God insofar as he naturally desires beatitude, which is a certain likeness of the divine goodness. On this basis, it is not necessary that God considered in Himself be naturally known to man, but only a likeness of God.”<sup>47</sup> Our natural knowledge of God is again glossed in terms of a desire natural to a creature, in this case a desire for human happiness, that in fact expresses a likeness to God. Hence, to know the happiness that we naturally desire is *ipso facto* to know God. Nothing in these texts resembles an *a priori* dynamism of the human intellect to Infinite Being.

Philosophically speaking, it is just as well that Maréchal’s approach fails to square with the texts. Despite his protestations to the contrary, Maréchal’s *a priori* approach has difficulty reaching anything real. As was briefly mentioned and as will be further discussed,<sup>48</sup> Maréchal’s telltale sign for achievement of objectivity in our thinking is ineluctability. If what is doubted is shown to be affirmed in the very doubt, the doubt destroys itself. So, for example, to deny truth affirms truth by affirming the truth of the denial. Truth appears as something that the mind cannot shake off. As temptingly streamlined as this approach is, the skeptic can always reply that ineluctability is just what you would expect if we are dealing simply with how the mind works. Hence, if Aquinas did maintain a constitutive *a priori* dynamism to Infinite Being, his philosophy would fall short of realism.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 19–20.

<sup>47</sup> Aquinas, C.G., I, 11, *Ad quartam*; trans. Anton C. Pegis, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 1 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 83. On “happiness” as a likeness to God see *infra*, Chap. 8, on happiness as the *ratio entis* understood as the *ratio boni*.

<sup>48</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 1, and *infra*, Chap. 4.

Not only real things but real possibilities would be beyond the reach of our knowledge.

Further, it seems untrue that the initial “objectifying” of *ens materiale* occurs by profiling it up and against Infinite Being. Juxtaposition against something larger is not the only way to objectify. As will be elaborated in the next chapter, one initially encounters *ens materiale* not as a finite participation of the infinite, but as a commonality in real things. In short, real things, the data directly and immediately presented by sensation, suffice to know, or to objectify, being. That is the whole point of intellection as abstractive: things themselves lead the mind to encounter the commonality. So *ens materiale* is an object of knowledge long before it is assessed as a participation of Infinite Being. If one feels an initial restlessness in the face of *ens materiale*, it consists of the urge to have a fuller grasp of *ens materiale*. I do not yet wish to go beyond it but further *into* it, exploring its every nook and cranny. One does appreciate *ens materiale* as a participation of the Infinite, but this happens only later. Thanks to its *esse* component, *ens materiale* permits reasoning to *esse subsistens* that as such is infinite. Juxtaposed to a negative representation of *esse subsistens*, *ens materiale* appears as the finite participation that it is.<sup>49</sup> But the procedure is *a posteriori* from start to finish.

## 5. METAPHYSICS AND JOSEPH MARÉCHAL (B)

In sum, God is absent from the data from which *ens commune* is reached. What about the other two immaterials—the intelligences and the subsistent soul? Aquinas considers both the intelligences, or angels, and the subsistent soul to be literal instances of *ens*. Both are genuinely *habentia esse*. Are both among the data for the initial abstraction of the subject of metaphysics? Apparently not. Aquinas presents the philosophical knowledge of each as something achieved by the metaphysician. At *In de Trin.* V, 4c, Aquinas philosophically presents both God and angels only insofar (*nisi prout*) as they are the causes of all things, that is, *ens qua ens*. In the same article, angels

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<sup>49</sup> For an explanation of how the human intellect forms a negative representation of *esse subsistens*, see my *supra*, Chap. 7, sects. 6 and 7.

are reached as one possible cause of the motions of the celestial spheres.<sup>50</sup> One should not take the mention of motion to be a reference to reasoning done in natural philosophy. That would have Aquinas contradicting himself in too short a space. Furthermore, Aquinas admits a metaphysical consideration of motion.<sup>51</sup> What that consideration involves and how it proceeds to the possibility of separate substances, I have written about elsewhere.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> "In the divine science taught by the philosophers, however, the angels, which they call Intelligences, are considered from the same point of view as the First Cause or God, insofar as they are also secondary principles of things, at least through the movement of the spheres." Maurer, trans., *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 46–47. I say that angels are only "one possible cause" because at *C.G.* III, 23, Aquinas concedes that the intellectual principle required for the movement of the heavens could immediately be God himself.

<sup>51</sup> "The metaphysician deals with individual beings . . . insofar as they share the common character of being [*communem rationem entis*]. And in this way matter and motion also fall under his consideration." Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 4, ad 6m; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 49.

<sup>52</sup> See my "Thomistic Existentialism and the Proofs *Ex Motu* at *Contra Gentiles* I, 13," *The Thomist* 59 (1995): 591–616. In "The Argument from Motion and the Argument for Angels: A Reply to John F. X. Knasas," *The Thomist* 62 (1998): 269–90, Theodore J. Kondoleon criticizes three areas of my article. First, for Kondoleon, Aquinas has natural philosophy proving the immaterial. At *In de Trin.*, V, 2, ad 3m, natural philosophy proves as its subject's end a First Mover free from all matter. Such a mover (a) cannot be regarded as a sphere free from all terrestrial matter, as I claimed, because a celestial sphere is a moved mover (272), and a celestial sphere is not the end of the subject of physics but a part thereof. Also, (b), *C.G.* III, 23, uses "a natural philosophy argument from motion" (275) to conclude that an intellectual substance moves the heavens. Finally, (c), no reason exists in principle to exclude from Aquinas' celestial physics a proof of an intellectual substance, since "in knowing himself and his own good as an efficient and a final cause, respectively, of his own knowledge, the physicist would surely know, if perhaps only inchoately, that the notion of cause extends beyond the order of material agents" (276).

In my opinion, none of these reasons hold. In reply to (a), at *In de Trin.* V, 2, ad 3m, there is no indication that the First Mover is absolutely unmoved; hence, a celestial sphere is not excluded. Also, I know of no texts affirming that the spheres *qua* ungenerable and incorruptible substances are parts of the subject of natural philosophy, *ens mobile*. For an elaboration of reasons against that placement of the spheres, see my "Materiality and Aquinas' Natural Philosophy: A Reply to Johnson," *The Modern Schoolman* 68 (1991): 250–51. To (b), given my metaphysical interpretation of the *secunda via* at *C.G.* I, 13, as warranted by Aquinas' earlier assignment (chaps. 3 and 4) of philosophical knowledge of God's existence to metaphysics, I think that I can continue to insist on a metaphysical interpretation at *C.G.* III, 23. To (c), the natural philosopher as such is blind to cognition. Cognition is not properly speaking a motion, and so is not an item falling within *ens mobile*. See my reference, *infra*, n. 53. Hence the Aristotelian physicist cannot overt to what he knows *qua*

Lastly, the human soul reached as subsistent because it is the source of intellective activity is also exclusively reserved to first philosophy.<sup>53</sup> In fact, the case can be made that even as the source of sensitive activity, the soul is off the radar screen of natural philosophy. Sensation involves a *sui generis* form of alteration that is motion only improperly speaking. In this alteration required for sensation, reception of form involves no destruction of previous form. This difference takes sensation outside the umbrella of *ens mobile*, the sub-

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human to elucidate what he knows *qua* physicist. Also, I would not admit (as does Kondoleon, 276, n. 21) that the teleological argument is an argument of natural philosophy.

Second, Kondoleon goes on to dispute my claim that Aquinas categorizes motion as an accident. Kondoleon says (d) that motion understood as the act of the potential insofar as it is potential cannot be branded an accident. My cited texts are unclear (279). Also, (e), a being is something complete, while motion, as something still potential, lacks requisite completeness (281). Again, in my opinion none of these reasons hold. In reply to (d), the *motus* that Aquinas calls an accident at *In XII Meta.*, lect. 1, n. 2419, seems to be the same *motus* that as eternal requires an eternal substance at n. 2492. But this caused motion is the motion defined as the act of the potential insofar as it is potential. Also, Aquinas compares *motus* and *esse*. Each is an *actus*. Vd. *supra*, Chap. 1, n. 11. But elsewhere *esse* is called an *accidens*. Vd. Chap. 6, n. 21. To (e) I would insist that for all its potency and incompleteness, *motus* is still also called an *actus*. In that respect motion is sufficiently complete to be a being, albeit accidentally. For the hand to begin waving certainly seems to be for the hand to jump up in the metaphysical scale of being.

Finally, third, Kondoleon insists (284) that no demonstration from celestial motion exists for angels, because Aquinas admits that God could move the heavens himself. In fact, I never claimed such a demonstration. I was responding to Kondoleon's original unqualified remark: "For Saint Thomas angelic beings are not 'metaphysically reached' by any *a posteriori* argument having to do with motion or change." "The Start of Metaphysics," *The Thomist* 58 (1994): 128. Since arguments can be probable as well as demonstrable, I criticized Kondoleon's claim with my interpretation of *In de Trin.*, V, 4, ad 3m, in which the angels are metaphysically reached as possible causes of the movement of the spheres. In his latest article (285), Kondoleon drops "any" from the just-previous quote.

<sup>53</sup> "Of these [grades of living things] intellect is the act of no part of the body, as is proved in *III De Anima*; whence it is not able to be considered through concretion or through application to the body or to some corporeal organ. . . . And so outside the *De Anima* Aristotle has not produced a book on the intellect and the intelligible (or, if he did, it would not pertain to natural science but more to metaphysics which considers separated substances). Aquinas, *In de Sen.*, proem. On whether the reference to the "book" *De Anima* should be taken as a reference to natural philosophy, see my "Aquinas on the Cognitive Soul: Metaphysics, Physics, or Both?" *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1998): 525–27. Other texts on the metaphysical consideration of the rational soul as separable are: Aquinas, *In II Phys.*, *lectio* 4, no. 175 and *In VI Meta.*, *lectio* 1, no. 1159.

ject of natural philosophy. Aquinas reserves this *sui generis* alteration to metaphysics.<sup>54</sup>

In sum, since the metaphysician knows these last two immaterials, it appears that the metaphysician is *already* practicing his craft. And does not that imply that the metaphysician already has a subject matter in hand? But then these two immaterials could never have been involved in the data from which the metaphysician abstracted his subject matter in order to initiate his science. *Prima facie*, Aquinas' position on the subject of metaphysics is confusing. Aquinas appears to have metaphysics beginning before it is in possession of its subject matter. In other words, to abstract *ens inquantum ens*, the metaphysician needs data that include immaterials such as the intelligences and the subsistent soul. But, oddly, only the metaphysician concludes to these immaterials.

Twentieth-century Thomism contains three strategies to dispel this confusion. On the one hand, despite Aquinas' claims that an *abstractio totius* sets up *a posteriori* the various subjects of the speculative sciences, Maréchal asserts an *a priori* origin for the subject of metaphysics. In this regard Maréchal cites *De Ver.* 10, 6, and *In IV Meta.*, *lectio* 6, on the "inborn nature" and "natural knowledge" of the first principles.<sup>55</sup> Among these is the non-contradiction principle, that is, a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect. As so rendered, the principle is expressing something about the nature of being. Since being is also the subject of metaphysics, then the "natural knowledge" of this principle is taken to mean that the subject of metaphysics is naturally known. Maréchal's *a priori* interpretation of what is meant by natural knowledge makes sense, given what has been said of him so far. As mentioned, what is fundamentally *a priori* for Maréchal is our intellectual dynamism to God, and Maréchal employs this to generate a sense of being wider than the material. Even though being is generated, it is not generated *a posteriori*. So being is *a priori* in the sense that it is generated from the *a priori* intellectual dynamism to God.

Unfortunately, Maréchal's linkage of being to the *a priori* dynamism to God enables a reader to reintroduce problems. As men-

<sup>54</sup> For the argument see Knasas, "Aquinas on the Cognitive Soul," 507–10.

<sup>55</sup> Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 142–43.

tioned,<sup>56</sup> Aquinas has the philosopher getting to God causally by way of being, not to being by way of God as an *a priori* transcendental condition. Also, the latter approach cannot establish itself as a realism. Any ineluctable factor of human consciousness may be just that and not expressive of reality.

Yet if Maréchal's rationale is wrong, the texts *prima facie* still look to be asserting the *a priori* nature of being. Does that impression withstand scrutiny? Maréchal has Aquinas saying at *De Ver.* 10, 6c, "In the light of the agent intellect, the universal science [*omnis scientis*] is somehow congenitally inborn [*originaliter indita*] in us." Already there is a problem for Maréchal. Maréchal renders *omnis scientia* as "universal science." But a few lines earlier, *scientia* was used obviously for "knowledge": "verum est quod scientiam a sensibilibus mens nostra accipit." One can rightly assume this sense in Maréchal's cited lines. Their translation would be: "In the light of the agent intellect, all knowledge is in a sense originally implanted in us." This correct translation dispels a transcendental interpretation. A transcendental interpretation would now become a Platonism, in which no knowledge is drawn from the senses. Aquinas cannot have that, and neither can Maréchal.

But the context of the lines also preempts a transcendental interpretation. The paragraph reads as follows:

Accordingly, it is true that our mind takes knowledge from sensible things. Nevertheless, the soul itself forms in itself likenesses of things insofar as, through the light of the agent intellect, forms abstracted from sensible are made intelligible in act and so are able to be received in the possible intellect. And so in the light of the agent intellect, all knowledge is in a certain way originally given—i.e., by the mediating universal conceptions that are immediately known by the agent intellect. These conceptions serve as universal principles through which we judge about other things and in which we foreknow these others.<sup>57</sup>

These universal conceptions through whose mediation all knowledge is in a way originally given would certainly include the notion of being, the *ratio entis*. In the first article of the *De Veritate*, Aquinas describes that *ratio* as the concept into which all others are resolved

<sup>56</sup> *Supra*, my text at n. 39.

<sup>57</sup> James V. McGlynn, trans., *The Disputed Questions on Truth* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), vol. 2, 28.

and to which addition from the outside is impossible. But at 10, 6, Aquinas insists that intellectual light produces these universal conceptions through abstraction from sensible things. Hence, I understand the text this way. In the light of the agent intellect, all knowledge is originally implanted in us because this knowledge follows upon certain universal conceptions *made known by the abstraction of the agent intellect*. The agent intellect has all knowledge not because it is a case of knowledge but because it is the condition necessary to abstract those conceptions from which all other knowledge will proceed. Nothing *a priori* here. In this vein one can handle another line. In the reply to the sixth objection, Aquinas writes: “The first principles of which we have innate cognition [*quorum cognitio est nobis innata*] are certain likenesses of uncreated truth.” Congruent with the *responsio*, this inborn cognition should be the inborn capacity of the agent intellect immediately to *abstract* these principles. Somewhat similarly we say today that so-and-so is a born baseball player. We do not mean that the individual is born with the ability to throw a curve ball. Rather, we mean that the individual is born with the capacities to learn how to throw a curve ball.

What about *In IV Meta., lectio 6*? As Maréchal translates it, the text reads: “[The first principle] comes from without to someone who, as if it were possesses it by nature, as if it were known naturally and not from any learning. For the first principles are known through the very light of the agent intellect.”<sup>58</sup> Maréchal’s comment is: “*Advenit quasi habenti ipsum*’: ‘It comes from without to someone who, as it were, possesses it by nature,’ this is the very formula of the virtual, dynamic *a priori*, as it becomes explicit, under the impact of the outside data in some object of knowledge.”<sup>59</sup> Does *possessing by nature* mean a transcendental *a priori*? For two reasons, it is doubtful. First, the text is not opposing itself to *a posteriori* knowledge but to discursive knowledge. For instance, “The third condition is that it is not acquired by demonstration or by any similar method,” and “they are not acquired by any process of reasoning.”<sup>60</sup> Second, the principle is acquired *a posteriori*. This is plain from the last lines of the paragraph. The notions that comprise the principle are drawn from expe-

<sup>58</sup> Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 142.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>60</sup> Rowan, trans., *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, 221.

rience that, in turn, is drawn from sensible things. Also, later in the *lectio*, the notion of being from which the first principle is derived is compared to other simple notions such as those of *whole* and *part*. These are *a posteriori*.<sup>61</sup>

What then is the meaning of *possessed by nature*? In light of the above, I would suggest that we possess this principle by nature, insofar as the light of the agent intellect is automatically able to abstract the notion of being from which the first principle follows. My interpretation is in line with this striking text: "Some have believed that the agent intellect is nothing but the habitual knowledge of the first indemonstrable principles in us. But that is impossible, since we know these indemonstrable principles through abstraction from the singular."<sup>62</sup> An unrelenting *a posteriori* approach could also accommodate Aristotle's opening remark of the *Metaphysics*: "All men by nature desire to know." A Transcendental Thomist might take this line to express our response to the mind's dynamism.<sup>63</sup> Each item

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<sup>61</sup> "Ex ipsa enim natura animae intellectualis, convenit homini quod statim, cognitio quid est totum et quid est pars, cognoscat quod omne totum est maius sua parte: et simile est in ceteris. Sed quid sit totum, et quid sit pars, cognoscere non potest nisi per species intelligibiles a phantasmatibus acceptas." Aquinas, *S.T.*, I-II, 51, 1c, ed. Ottawa, 978b. "It is agreed that in the Thomistic epistemology the agent intellect immediately conceives the principles by way of abstraction from sensible experience, and that is correct." Etienne Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993), 69. Also Denis J. M. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good: Reason and Human Happiness in Aquinas' Moral Science* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 299–301.

<sup>62</sup> Aquinas, *Quaestiones de Anima*, 5c.

<sup>63</sup> In *Understanding and Being: An Introduction and Companion to Insight* (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1980), 3, Bernard J. F. Lonergan cites Aristotle's opening line for the purpose of illustrating "a built-in ideal; it is based upon innate tendencies." In his commentary (paras. 2–4), Aquinas illustrates the natural desire to know in a threefold way: the inclination of matter to form, man's inclination to his proper operation of *intellegere*, and the return to his source through knowing separate substances. Each of these can be understood in terms of a natural inclination to know by abstraction, by receiving content from the real, or to know by reasoning from products of abstraction. No need exists to interpret "natural desire" in terms of a constitutive projection upon the real, as is done in Transcendental Thomism. The intellect's natural desire to know can be simply a natural desire to know *by abstraction*. The basic question is how is knowledge to be understood fundamentally. It is true that knowing powers have specific natures: but for all that, how the cognitive machinery works remains an open question, and so the interpretation of Aristotle's text is no sure thing. The natures of the powers may fundamentally incline them to know in a receptive manner or in a constitutive manner. In other words,

known would be profiled against the end of the dynamism, and so leave us yearning to know more. But if being is naturally abstracted, then all humans will have the *abstractum* of being lurking in their minds. The juxtaposition of any item of knowledge against the *abstractum* of being would still excite the desire for knowledge felt by so many. The inquiring mind need not be understood in terms of an *a priori* intellectual dynamism. In fact, the *abstractum* approach will heighten a sense of inquiry, for no qualms will exist that the background of being might be just a quirk of the mind and not expressive of reality.

## 6. METAPHYSICS AND JACQUES MARITAIN

Because the abstractive approach to the subject of a science appears to generate a circularity in the case of Aquinas' metaphysics, the Transcendental Thomist approach in which *ens qua ens* is itself *a priori* or is generated from *a priori* factors is understandable. But the approach ends up unsupported by the texts. For better or worse, Aquinas intends to be thoroughly aposteriorist. An interpreter must dispel the circularity without vacating the aposteriorism. This task is what two Neo-Thomist approaches try to meet. The first attempt is Jacques Maritain's *l'intuition de l'être*. In his career Maritain employed *l'être* in two senses. In the first, it means what Aquinas calls *ens* in speaking of the subject of metaphysics. Taken that way, the intuition of being refers to the intellectual perception of a trans-physical and analogous commonality. In the second sense, *l'être* means the *esse*, or *actus essendi*, of a thing. Different as these senses are, a connection between them exists. The second sense is the basis for the first. A heightened appreciation of *esse* produces the realization that to be a being is not necessarily to be a body. In his *Approches sans entraves*, published at the end of his life and understanding *intuition of being* in the second sense, Maritain explained the integration this way:

[I]n the unique case of which I speak, that of the intellectual intuition of being, the idea or concept of existence does not precede the judg-

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they may be like the eye that senses by "taking a look," or like the stomach that assimilates and transforms.

ment of existence. It comes after it and comes forth from it. In this case we have a judicative act (the second operation of the mind) which is of another type than all other judgments.

In effect, it does not apply an attribute to a subject. It is the subject itself which it affirms or poses in the mind in the manner in which the subject is outside the mind, in extra-mental reality. And to conduct this judicative act correctly is for the intelligence to know intuitively, or to see, in the bosom of the spiritual intimacy of its proper operation, the extramental being, the existing, the *esse*, of this subject. Here is the intuition of being. By it I plunge into the realm of the existing, while escaping from the realm of essences and their relations.

It is after this that a return of the first operation of the mind upon that which had been seen (but not by it) will produce for it an idea, a concept or mental word which will designate it and which will be handy for discourse. What we will then possess will be the idea (of a judicative origin and consecutive to the intuition of being) of the *esse* known as such or of the existing exercised in act outside of the mind (as when I say, for example, “the soul communicates to the body its proper existence or its proper *esse*”).

In other words, in the (unique) case of the intuition of being, the concept, this concept of the *esse*, formed after I have seen it, is second in respect to the judgment of existence where and in which, while pronouncing existence in itself, my intelligence has seen the *esse*. This concept is owing to a reflective return of simple apprehension upon the judicative act in question.<sup>64</sup>

The nature of this second concept of *esse* is described this way:

On the contrary, when it is a question of the second concept of existence, that which proceeds from the intuition of being, we are in the register of *Sein*, which goes with the third degree of intelligibility. The assertion of the existence is not then a copulative assertion, but a properly existential one, the assertion of the existing. The being is then known as such, in its proper light, which is the revelation of the extramental existing made to the mind in the mind. It is no longer taken in its relation to the sensible world; it is taken absolutely, in its limitless and intrinsically differentiated universality which embraces all that which *is* (and *is* in a manner irreducibly varied).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Maritain, *Approches sans entrave*, vol. 13, 787–88. Also published as “Réflexions sur la nature blessée et sur l’intuition de l’être,” in *Revue Thomiste* 68 (1968): 5–40.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 800.

Thanks to this second concept of existence, as it captures what is known in judgment, our conceptualization of *ens* itself attains the third degree of abstraction. For the concept of existence is the key note in the concept of *ens*. Maritain says:

It appears to me important to remark, moreover, that what I have said of existence, it is also necessary to say of the existent [*l'existant*] or being [*l'étant*]. Today it is fashionable to oppose being [*l'étant*] to existence [*l'être*]; this is a mistake. A being or an existent is quite evidently a subject that exists or possesses existence.

There are, then, two different senses of the word *ens* or being [*étant*]. In the first sense, the word refers to *Dasein* and to the plane of the first degree of abstraction. . . . In the second sense, the word *ens* or being refers to *Sein* and to the plane of the third degree of intelligibility.<sup>66</sup>

In sum, Maritain squarely rests the attainment of the subject of Thomistic metaphysics upon a heightened judgmental appreciation of the *esse* of sensible things. This appreciation enables the mind to frame an analogous concept of *esse* that outstrips the material and sensible order. Just what does judgment reveal about *esse*? In the first quote, Maritain said that judgment portrays the *esse* of a thing as “escaping the realm of essences and their relations.” Earlier in his *Existence and the Existent*, Maritain had described *esse* as known by the positive judgment as “overpass[ing] the line of material essences—the connatural object of simple apprehension.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, because *esse*, judgmentally grasped existence, is the act of a material essence without being such, then the mind is brought to realize that *esse* cannot be restricted to being the act of material essence only. The nature of such an act has power greater than actualizing material essence. Since the meaning of *ens* is that which has *esse*, then it too attains its immateriality thanks to the mentioned analogous concept of *esse*.

Maritain finds within the *esse* of sensible things themselves a signal

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 28, n. 14. Cf. “There is finally a concept of being which the mind forms in itself upon a judgment of existence sufficiently penetrating and sufficiently spiritual to read through the empirical conditionings of the existing given.” Olivier Lacombe, “Jacques Maritain, Metaphysician,” *The New Scholasticism* 46 (1972): 22.

that another order of being is possible.<sup>68</sup> That possibility plus the knowledge of actual sensible things is sufficient data to abstract the *ratio entis* such that it is cogently understood to span the material and immaterial orders. In short, the data suffice to attain being when Aquinas describes it as the subject of metaphysics. The negative judgment that separates being from materiality ultimately rests upon what the intellect confronts in the positive judgment.<sup>69</sup> Further, since the judgmental grasp of the *esse* of sensible things drives the entire position, the position is *a posteriori* without involving the circularity previously mentioned. The metaphysician already has a subject matter as the metaphysician proceeds to demonstrate the actuality of immaterial beings such as separate substances and the rational soul.

But no less a figure than Etienne Gilson criticized the Thomistic cogency of Maritain's intuition-of-being approach to metaphysics. In a *Studi Thomistici* response to Maritain's *Approches sans entrave* selection, Gilson goes to the heart of the matter:

Consequently, we apprehend existence only as the existence-of-such-an-existent, which is for us an object of sensible intuition; we never apprehend existence in itself and apart in its proper quality of existence. It is necessary to return to this text: "it is not properly said that *esse* exists but that through *esse* something exists" (*De div. Nom.* Pera, 751). One has the intuition of things that exist in virtue of their *esse*, one could not have an intuition of an act of existence which itself does not exist.

One is able to distinguish as many degrees of abstraction as one wishes; nothing will make our apprehension of existence not to be an abstraction of the intellect taken from the sensible. . . . We see the actual existence only in the effect in which it manifests itself, which is the existent sensibly perceived and intellectually known. If the existence were perceptible in itself, as it is in the case of God and only thus, it would indeed be an object of intellectual intuition. This is not a question of degrees of abstraction if it is not that. The very nature of the human intellect is the cause: the human intellect "does not think without an image," and since there is not some image of existence insofar as existence, which is a pure intelligible, the intellectual intu-

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<sup>68</sup> "It is extremely remarkable that being, the first object attained by our mind in things . . . bears within itself the sign that beings of another order than the sensible are thinkable and possible." Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 214.

<sup>69</sup> Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 28, n. 14.

ition is refused here below to minds that are most skilled in metaphysical meditation.<sup>70</sup>

Gilson emphasizes that the human intellect's judgmental grasp of *esse* is always of the *esse* as act of a sensible thing. In that data, there is as yet no acquaintance with *esse* as the act of more than that. If Maritain claims more, it must be on the basis of a direct grasp of the nature of *esse* apart from its instances in sensible things. But there is no such knowledge by the human intellect as conceived in Thomism. Gilson reiterates what I have mentioned: the data control the abstraction, and you cannot derive any commonality from any multiplicity. Hence, even though immediate judgment reveals *esse* as an act distinct from material essence, the judgment also reveals *esse* always to be the act of a material essence. One can observe that the *ratio essendi* has a certain independence in that it need not be the act of this body or of that body. But in the data so far, it is observed always to be the act of some body. And this second detail, insufficiently appreciated by Maritain, for the moment keeps our understanding of the *ratio entis* earthbound. So it appears that this first Neo-Thomist approach to beginning metaphysics collapses. We are back to the circularity problem of the metaphysician using the science's subject matter to prove immaterial beings from which the metaphysician abstracts a subject matter. Is there left a way out?

## 7. METAPHYSICS AND GILSONIAN JOSEPH OWENS

There is another Neo-Thomist who in the approach to Thomistic metaphysics makes a daring move. Indebted to Gilson's *Being and Some Philosophers*, Joseph Owens presents the approach in *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*. Owens takes seriously Aquinas' words that what is distinctive of *ens* is that it means *habens esse*.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Etienne Gilson, "Propos sur l'être et sa notion," in Antonio Piolanti, ed., *San Tommaso e il pensiero moderno* (Città Nuova: Pontificia Accademia Romana de S. Tommaso d'Aquino, 1974), 11.

<sup>71</sup> "Esse est actus existentis in quantum est ens." Aquinas, *In I Sent.* d. 19, q. 2, a. 2, Mandonnet ed., *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 1, 470. "Esse dicitur actus entis, in quantum est ens; idest quo denominatur aliquid ens actu in rerum natura." *Quaestiones de Quodlibet IX*, a. 3, ed. Raymundus Spiazzi, *Questiones Quodlibetales* (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1949), 181. For further texts on the composite nature of *ens*, see Gerald B. Phelan, "A Note on the Formal Object of Meta-

Ability to be realized apart from matter is not proper to *ens*. Substance, potency and act are also immaterial.<sup>72</sup> Further, the combination of thing and *esse* is laid bare by the application of the twofold operation of the intellect to the existents of ordinary experience. Owens deliberately eschews the three degrees of abstraction.<sup>73</sup> Though the *esse* grasped in the intellect's second act is still the *esse* of sensible things, it is a sufficiently distinct facet of those things for a unique scientific fix upon them. Owens remarks:

The being that places a thing under the subject of metaphysics is the being that is immediately known in sensible things through each ordinary, everyday judgment, and that is everywhere universalized by the ordinary man in a subsequent concept. . . . Rather, [being] is what is first grasped through judgment in the concretion of the sensible thing, as the thing is immediately known in sensible experience. It is not something esoteric or farfetched, but is familiar to everyone in every cognitive act.<sup>74</sup>

If I understand him, the above passage amounts to Owens claiming that the entire discussion of the establishment of the subject of metaphysics has proceeded on an incorrect assumption. The false assump-

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physics," in Arthur G. Kirn, ed., *G. B. Phelan Selected Papers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1967), 64–66; "The Existentialism of St. Thomas," in Kirn, *G. B. Phelan Selected Papers*, 74–75, 80–81. Also Joseph Owens, "The Accidental and Essential Character of Being in the Doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas," in John R. Catan, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 78–81. In *An Interpretation of Existence* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 127, Owens remarks, "Should reference to the ordinary workaday and tarnished existence as *ens vulgare* be allowed to blind one's intuition to its richness, or prompt one to seek a more exotic starting point for the science of metaphysics? Just as the assertion, 'It is green,' is able to unfold in all the superior predicates of the category of quality under the scrutiny of the trained intellect, so the mini-sentence, 'It is,' can spark a philosophical procedure that leads to the most sublime and relevant truths attainable by unaided human reason."

<sup>72</sup> "In this [second] way being [*ens*], substance, potency, and act are separate from matter and motion because they do not depend on them for their existence. . . . Thus philosophical theology [also called metaphysics] investigates beings separate in the second sense as its subject." Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 4c; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 45. And see Aquinas, *In Meta.*, proem.

<sup>73</sup> Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 370. Thomas C. O'Brien's review sees this as a fault of the book: "The author's horror of the very term abstraction leads him practically to disregard the valid function of the degrees of abstraction in the specification of the sciences." *The New Scholasticism* 38 (1964): 271.

<sup>74</sup> Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 370–71. Cf. Gilson, *supra*, n. 70.

tion is that Aquinas' *ex professo* description of the subject as separate from matter, both in being and in thought, is true of the science at its initiation. Owens' interpretation is that Aquinas' description is true of the subject at a later and mature stage of the unfolding of metaphysics. The metaphysician need not understand separateness from matter as true of the subject at the initiation of the science.

If any doubt remains that Owens is initiating metaphysics simply with a material sense of being, it is removed by this singular claim in the larger Thomist discussion: "As originally grasped by the human intellect, being, though a transcendent aspect, does not at once manifest itself as transcendent. When its primary sense is reached in subsistent being, its literal meaning is seen to extend beyond the sensible and beyond finite orders."<sup>75</sup> As far as I know, Owens is the only Thomist who has systematically worked out a metaphysics by initiating the science with a subject understood as material being taken in the concrete, that is, the composition of the sensible thing and its *esse*.

Philosophically speaking, the move is ingenious. Metaphysics can obviously be set up *a posteriori*. As will be noted in Chapter 6, the judgmental grasp of *esse* as a distinct *actus* in sensible things requires no appeal to immaterial beings or to concepts able to be realized apart from matter. Both of the latter can be left for discovery in the unfolding of the science as the science proceeds in the *a posteriori* manner that Owens himself describes in the above quote. Beginning from the sensible data, metaphysics itself generates the further data of immaterial beings from which concepts able to be apart from matter can be cogently abstracted. In Owens' conception, metaphysics develops in a straight line without any circularity.

What of Aquinas' already cited *ex professo* remarks on the immateriality of the subject of metaphysics? Did Aquinas, then, err by overly complicating the doing of metaphysics? If I understand Owens, these texts express a circumstantial requirement rather than a philosophical statement on the entry into metaphysics. The texts express a medieval theologian's need to take Aristotelian metaphysical terminology and to give it a non-divine reference. In this fashion the intellectual world is made safe for revealed theology. Owens remarks:

All this is involved in the use of the formula "separate in being and notion" to characterize the subject of metaphysics in the new under-

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 97, n. 21.

standing brought to it by Thomas Aquinas. Presumably the interest of the theologian in assuring for sacred theology its proper place among the sciences was his dominant concern. As subject of a science, separate substance had to be reserved to sacred theology. In contrast, the philosophical theology of Aristotle had to be dealing with a different subject. Yet in conformity with Aristotelian terminology, the latter subject had also to be separate, not only in notion like the mathematical, but in a stronger way. The formulation of this further type of separation was found in Avicenna and Albert—"separate in being and in notion."<sup>76</sup>

This medieval theological concern to launder the Greek terminology should not lead us astray on the entry point of Thomistic metaphysics. *Quoad se*, the *ratio entis* is able to be realized apart from matter. Accordingly, Aquinas emphasizes this point to give the Aristotelian metaphysical terminology a non-divine reference. But *quoad nos*, *ens* is first appreciated as *habens esse*, and this sense doctrinally suffices to initiate metaphysics.

It is no objection to Owens to note that at *In de Trin.* V, 1c, Aquinas philosophically argues for the immateriality of metaphysics. As he notes, any number of possibilities exist for a third speculative science whose object includes independence from matter. First, the science could deal with something that never exists in matter, for instance, God and the angels. Second, it could deal with objects able to be in matter and apart from it, such as substance, quality, being, potency, act, and so on. Third, the science could deal with both the previous. These manifold possibilities should cause one to hesitate to say just how metaphysics is separate from matter. For Owens, the proper thing to do is to begin with a *habens esse* understanding of the subject matter and to see in the unfolding of the science where immateriality emerges. Interestingly, at *In VI Meta.*, *lectio* 1, n. 1163, Aquinas calls metaphysics immaterial simply because it treats God and the angels.

Nor is it appropriate to charge Owens with violating the Aristotelian and Thomistic *dictum* that no science proves its own subject matter.<sup>77</sup> As I will explain in Chapter 6, just as *ens mobile*, the subject

<sup>76</sup> Joseph Owens, "Metaphysical Separation in Aquinas," *Mediaeval Studies* 34 (1972): 306. Also see Owens, "Aquinas as Aristotelian Commentator," in Catan, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 4–12.

<sup>77</sup> John F. Wippel in *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 58, n. 110, directs this charge at my presentation of Owens in the

of natural philosophy, expresses data presenting a substrate under various determinations, so too for Owens *ens qua ens*, the subject of metaphysics, expresses data presenting a thing with various existences, specifically, real and cognitional. Both the natural philosopher and the metaphysician go on to discern the intrinsic principles of their subject matters that have been discovered in actual things. For the natural philosopher, those principles are matter and form; for the metaphysician, essence and existence. Given that we have the precedent of both disciplines proving these principles of their respective subjects, why is it unacceptable to regard metaphysics as going on to prove something else of its subject, something such as the subject's extent to possible immaterial *habentia esse*?<sup>78</sup> In short, proving the extent of the science's subject matter should not be confused with proving the subject matter itself. *Ens commune* with a separability from matter is not a new intelligibility. It is the *ratio entis* understood as *habens esse*, now appreciated as running beyond the material order.

Finally, Owens claims that his interpretation retains the term *metaphysics*. The term now bears "upon existence that is beyond the natures of things as these are grasped through conceptualization, and that is apprehended only in judgment."<sup>78</sup> Natural philosophy will investigate sensible substance as a matter-form composite. Metaphysics will consider the same as composed with its further actuating principle of *esse*.<sup>79</sup>

In another monograph,<sup>80</sup> I have supplemented Owens' position with further Thomistic reasons in its behalf, and so it is my judgment that his position truly expresses the unfolding of metaphysics *ad men-*

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*Preface to Thomistic Metaphysics*. But the metaphysician discovers the subject of metaphysics in appropriate data: "In fact, one may claim that it is exactly this double existence of the same thing, say the Parthenon or a man or a horse, that enables metaphysics after Avicenna to get off the ground. The one thing is found to exist in two different ways. This shows that the thing itself is not the same as either existence, thereby setting up the basic problem of metaphysics, namely being *qua* being in contradistinction to the things that have being," Joseph Owens, "The Range of Existence," *Proceedings of the Seventh Inter-American Congress of Philosophy* (Québec: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 1967), 57.

<sup>78</sup> Owens, "Actuality in the 'Prima Via' of St. Thomas," in Catan, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 203.

<sup>79</sup> That the substantial composition of matter and form is distinct from the composition of the substance itself and its *esse*. See Aquinas, C.G. II, 54.

<sup>80</sup> Knasas, *Preface to Thomistic Metaphysics*.

*tem sancti Thomae*. Hence this chapter closes with a portrayal of Aquinas as an inveterate *a posteriori* thinker, at least in respect to speculative science. Later we will see if the aposteriorism is carried through for his natural law ethics. The foundational concepts of speculative science are discovered in the data of sensation. They are all *abstracta*; not one of them is a *projectum*. But as mentioned in Chapter 1, some of my fellow Thomists object that in presenting Aquinas this way, I have cast him as a naive and dogmatic realist. Impressed by modern skeptical arguments *contra* the data of the senses, Transcendental Thomists insist that by themselves, the data of sense are compatible with phenomenalism and idealism. One can look at the data “till the cows come home” and never achieve an intuition of existing singulars.<sup>81</sup> That attempt is an illegitimate extrapolation of the ocular version of objectivity to the intellect’s grasp of objectivity.<sup>82</sup> Are these claims accurate? Is the data of sensation correctly estimated as not self-manifestly real? Has Aquinas anything philosophically worthwhile to say on the matter?

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<sup>81</sup> “Is it a fact that our intellectual knowledge includes an apprehension, inspection, intuition, of concrete, actual existence? Or is it a fact that our intellectual knowledge does not include an apprehension, inspection, intuition of concrete, actual existence?” Lonergan, “Insight: Preface to a Discussion,” 162–63. Lonergan’s subsequent elaboration of the second alternative clearly shows that he favors it.

<sup>82</sup> On the naive realist’s illegitimate extrapolation of the ocular vision model of objectivity, see Lonergan, “Cognitional Structure,” in Crowe, ed., *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan, S.J.*, 232–33. Likewise Karl Rahner: “The little importance that St. Thomas’ *a priori* attributes to the attempt at a comparison between the object in itself and the apprehended object is indeed manifest from the fact that he writes in the *De Ver.* that truth exists in the intellect by means of the judgment about the thing in itself. However this truth, this proportion of the judicative act to the thing (*proportio ad rem*), is not known, in the ultimate analysis, by a reflection, by a look at the thing itself, as perhaps we would hope, but by a reflection of the intellect upon itself.” The *De Veritate* text is 1, 9c. For an *a posteriori* gloss see *infra*, Chap. 4, sect. 6.

# Sensation: The Invasion of the Real

## I. IMMEDIATE, OR DIRECT, REALISM

DESPITE ARISTOTLE and Aquinas' opinion that philosophy should be put off till late in life,<sup>1</sup> sometimes it breaks in early and removes the choice from us. I remember as a boy of ten sitting high in the grandstand, observing my cousin's Little League game. I removed my cap to scratch my head. As I began to put it back on, I was struck by the realization that within its circumference fit my head, in whose awareness was the entire field. *How* could the field be in my head? What could be the explanation of this marvelous coincidence? To answer that not the field itself but a "picture" of the field was in my awareness was no explanation. The remark was patently dishonest. I had "pictures" for what I imagined and for what I remembered, but for my present awareness I had only the actual field itself.

The incident was sufficiently profound to remember later, upon reading remarks like Aristotle's "the soul is in a way all things,"<sup>2</sup> Pascal's "By space the universe encompasses and swallows me up like an atom; by thought I comprehend the world,"<sup>3</sup> and Aquinas' "the nature of a non-knowing being is more contracted and limited; whereas the nature of knowing beings has a greater amplitude and extension."<sup>4</sup> Could it be that these thinkers were referring to the same experience I had? Certainly Aquinas was. As I mentioned at the start

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this opinion and of how Aquinas, who died at the age of forty-nine, evidently exempted himself, see Etienne Gilson, "Thomas Aquinas and Our Colleagues," in Anton C. Pegis, ed., *A Gilson Reader: Selected Writings of Etienne Gilson* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1957), 278–97.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul*, III, ch. 8, 431b 21; trans. J. A. Smith, ed. Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1970), 595.

<sup>3</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, VI, n. 348; trans. W. F. Trotter (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1940), 97.

<sup>4</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 14, 1c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 136.

of Chapter 2, for Aquinas knowledge is the existence of the known in the knower, and sense attains the real accidents of bodies. These points add up to the claim that in sensation, a real existent exists in the knower. This claim is what neo-Thomists have called Aquinas' direct or immediate realism. Especially since Descartes, most philosophers have disparaged direct realism. Since direct realism seems to be oblivious to many factors that go into sensation, thus rendering suspect the objectivity of what is sensed, most philosophers label direct realism naive. And since in the face of objections, direct realism just insists that sensation "sees" or "knows" something real, philosophers also label it dogmatic.

In this chapter I will defend Aquinas' direct realism. It is a key component in the basis of his *a posteriori* approach to the speculative sciences. If these are about reality, it will be because the concepts that define their subject matters have been attained in real data presented by sensation. For purposes of this defense, I want to take on that paradigm of critical philosophers, René Descartes. In the exercise of "methodic doubt," Descartes argues that we must remain skeptical of the realism of the senses. He offers a series of supposedly legitimate hypotheses for the character of sensation, all of which are designed to loosen any claimed cognitive grasp of things other than ourselves. I intend to cover the series beginning with the dream possibility.

## 2. DESCARTES' DREAM POSSIBILITY AND ITS CONTEXT

In the beginning of *Meditation I*, Descartes remarks:

I am in the habit of sleeping, and in my dreams representing to myself the same things or sometimes even less probable things, than do those who are insane in their waking moments. How often has it happened to me that in the night I dreamt that I found myself in this particular place, that I was dressed and seated near the fire, whilst in reality I was lying undressed in bed! At this moment it does indeed seem to me that it is with eyes awake that I am looking at this paper; that this head which I move is not asleep, that it is deliberately and of set purpose that I extend my hand and perceive it; what happens in sleep does not appear so clear nor so distinct as does all this. But in thinking over this

I remind myself that on many occasions I have in sleep been deceived by similar illusions, and in dwelling carefully on this reflection I see so manifestly that there are no certain indications by which we may clearly distinguish wakefulness from sleep that I am lost in astonishment. And my astonishment is such that it is almost capable of persuading me that I now dream.<sup>5</sup>

In sum, I have dreamed that I was composing a philosophy article; how do I know that I am not dreaming right now? A standard answer to the dream possibility is that I know that I am not dreaming right now because right now I am directly aware of something real. This direct awareness never happens in a dream. And to a reader of the above quote, it might seem that Descartes shares this answer, because Descartes insists that he only “almost” convinces himself that he is dreaming.<sup>6</sup>

But Descartes’ remark could be taken another way. That he “almost” convinces himself could mean that he is “on the fence” about knowing whether he is awake or dreaming. The *Meditation VI* reprise of the methodic doubt exercise shows the correctness of this interpretation. The reprise indicates that Descartes’ methodic doubt has an assumed context. In setting the stage for the reprise, Descartes describes what he believes the senses present. Besides his own body with its appendages, his senses present outside of himself other bodies with extension, shape, motion, tactile qualities, and qualities such as color, taste, and sound, all of which serve to distinguish the sky, the earth, and the sea. And then comes the revealing comment: “And certainly, considering the ideas of all these qualities, which presented themselves to my mind and which alone I perceived properly or immediately, it was not without reason that I believed myself to perceive objects quite different from my thought, to wit, bodies from which those ideas proceeded; for I found by experience that these

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<sup>5</sup> René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. by Haldane and Ross in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 1, 145–46.

<sup>6</sup> “[U]t obstupescam, et fere hic ipse stupor mihi opinionem somni confirmet,” in Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, *Oeuvres de Descartes* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1964), vol. 7, 19. “[M]on estonnement est tel, qu’il est presque capable de me persuader que je dors,” vol. 9–1, 15. Descartes begins the next paragraph by “supposing” that he is dreaming: “[A]lge ergo somniemus,” and “Supposons donc maintenant que nous sommes endormis.”

ideas presented themselves to me without my consent being requisite.”<sup>7</sup>

The word *ideas* here seems to refer to mental existents, for Descartes describes them as presented to his mind as objects of perception, and he distinguishes them from the bodies from which they proceed. So even before methodic doubt is initiated, Descartes is of the mind that sense awareness has for its proper and immediate objects only ideas. Since, obviously, dreaming also has only ideas as its objects, then the difference between sensation and dreaming can only be extrinsic. Hence, I know that I am sensing only because I somehow know that my ideas derive from other bodies; I know that I am dreaming only because I somehow know that my ideas derive from me. This ideative understanding of the object of sensation makes sensation an easy target for methodic doubt. Since I am immediately aware only of ideas, and, as Descartes remarked back in *Meditation I*, “no certain marks” exist to distinguish the waking from the sleeping state, then on the available intrinsic evidence one must doubt whether one is sensing or dreaming. Thus Descartes is a fence sitter.<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes this assumed context is taken to mean that we are always aware of subjective existents only, of items existing in our awareness only. This understanding of ideas as the proper objects of awareness is more the case in the empiricist tradition. The understanding fails to do justice to Descartes. For in *Meditation III*, in the

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<sup>7</sup> Trans. Haldane and Ross in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 1, 187–88. The second and third editions are respectively: “Nec sane absque ratione, ob ideas istarum omnium qualitatem quae cogitationi meae se offerebant, et quas solas proprie et immediate sentiebam . . .” Adam and Tannery, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, vol. 7, 75; “Et certes, considérant les idées de toutes ces qualitez qui se presentoient à ma pensée, et lesquelles seules il sentois proprement immédiatement . . .” Adam and Tannery, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, vol. 9 (part 1), 59.

<sup>8</sup> In reply to Objections V (Gassendi), Descartes insists that he is not feigning doubt as Gassendi presents him: “[F]or you pretend that I speak in jest when I am quite serious and take as serious, and as uttered and asserted as true, what I propounded only as a question and as arising out of common opinion for the purpose of enquiring further into it. My statement that *the entire testimony of the sense must be considered to be uncertain, nay, even false*, is quite serious and so necessary for the comprehension of my meditations, that he who will not or cannot admit that, is unfit to urge any objection to them that merits a reply.” In Haldane and Ross, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 2, 206. For a contemporary discussion, see Nicholas Wolterstorff, “What Is Cartesian Doubt?” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 67 (1993): 467–95.

course of giving his proof for God, Descartes distinguishes two facets to our ideas: their objective reality and their formal reality. The idea's formal reality expresses that the idea is a mode of consciousness, the idea is a subjective existent; the idea's objective reality expresses what the idea is of.<sup>9</sup> Descartes is quite serious that the idea effects a transportation to something else. At least we seem to go to something else. Thus the idea is more than a formal reality; it is less dead than that. The idea is also enlivened by an objective side. In virtue of their objective facet, even Cartesian ideas seem to get us out of ourselves and enable us to forget ourselves. Hence, Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* construal of Descartes' *cogito* as intentionally impoverished,

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<sup>9</sup> Haldane and Ross, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 1, 161–63. In his reply to Objections IV and in going along with Arnauld's use of terms, Descartes employs the phrase "formal aspect of ideas" for ideas as they represent something; see Haldane and Ross, vol. 2, 105. At the start of the first set of Objections to the *Meditations* (Haldane and Ross, vol. 2, 9–10), Caterus objects to what Descartes calls the objective reality of ideas by denying ideas simply. Asking what is meant by "an idea," Caterus answers his own question by repeating the thesis of his teachers. According to that thesis, an idea is "a direction of an act of mind." Hence, "being thought" or "being perceived" is only an extrinsic attribute for the thing thought or seen. Neither involves new or further actual existence. In his reply, Descartes insists that "being thought" involves more than an extrinsic attribution, and that the "idea of the sun," for example, does not signify the mind's operation (*operatio*) determined in the mode due to an object. Rather, the idea of the sun is an intra-mental existent described as the sun existing in the mind in the way in which objects are wont to exist in the mind. This characterization seems to make sense in terms of the objective reality existing in the formal reality of some intra-mental object of awareness. Yet in a *tour de force* article, "Objective Reality of Ideas in Descartes, Caterus, and Suarez," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28 (1990): 33–39, Norman Wells argues that the idea that is representative is no object of a mental activity but the mental activity itself. Wells quotes Descartes that the word *idea* is equivocal between the representing operation of the intellect and the thing represented. For Wells, Descartes acknowledges no representative object sense of idea. Wells also notes that Descartes says that some of my thoughts (*cogitationes*, as for operations of thinking, not *cogitata*, as for objects of thought) are images of things, and that to these the name idea properly belongs. In my opinion, the difficulties with Wells' thesis are: (1) in his reply to Caterus, Descartes explicitly sets aside thinking of the idea as an *operatio intellectus*; (2) it is odd to understand an activity as such to be an "image," "a picture," or "similar" to a body, for example, yet these are all terms Descartes uses to describe an idea; (3) as noted, *Meditations VI* seems to present ideas as immediate objects of perception and as perceived by the senses, and not as the activity of perceiving. What then does Descartes mean when he says that "idea" properly belongs to *cogitationes* and that these are images? I think he should be understood to mean the *cogitatio* as inclusive of the merely mental object that represents the thing. Ideas as representative objects would also be presupposed in Descartes' *Praefatio ad Lectorem* description of ideas as *pro operatione intellectus*.

as lacking a *cogitatum*, misses the objective facet of the ideas in the *cogito*.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, a problem remains. The transporting effected by the idea is no guarantee of the veracity of the transporting. And this fact is what methodic doubt fastens upon. We have no way of telling whether the formal reality has been formed in the correct way to enable a truthful transportation to occur. Somewhat similarly, police witnesses in the O. J. Simpson trial will swear that when they call up their memories, they recall placing the bloodstained glove in a protective bag. The memory transports them to that event. But for all the transporting of one's awareness by the memories, videotape showing handling of the glove without the bag dramatically illustrates the lack of veracity. Only by checking out the idea with reality could a Cartesian be confident about the truth of the idea's objective reality. But if ideas are always the immediate objects of our awareness, the checking out becomes impossible. On this interpretation, methodic doubt is a deadly serious game whose result is to impale us on the fence between knowledge that we are sensing and knowledge that we are dreaming.

### 3. YVES R. SIMON'S NEO-THOMIST REPLY

At this point, it is instructive to consider a standard Neo-Thomist reply. Thomists such as Yves R. Simon and Jacques Maritain concede Descartes' point that awareness is always in terms of two-sided ideas.<sup>11</sup> Simon definitely intends to be an *a posteriori* Thomist. Sensa-

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<sup>10</sup> "The transcendental heading, *ego cogito*, must therefore be broadened by adding one more member. Each *cogito*, each conscious process, we may also say, 'means' something or other and bears in itself, in this manner peculiar to the *meant*, its particular *cogitatum*." Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 33.

<sup>11</sup> For this point, see Simon, *Metaphysics of Knowledge*, 14–22. On Simon's view that Descartes is a proponent of two-sided ideas, though according primacy to the non-intentional facet, see Yves R. Simon, "To Be and To Know," *Chicago Review* 14 (1961): 97–98. For Simon's expressed liaison of his notion of "two-sided" ideas with Jacques Maritain, see Simon, *Metaphysics of Knowledge*, 22, n. 32. Even though I believe that in the last analysis, Simon correctly allies his position with Maritain's, in fairness to Maritain some precisions should be noted. The two-sided ideas that Simon says are present in all cognition and that he paradigmatically identifies with memories, Maritain calls formal signs. But Maritain does not want the impressed

tion is the source and basis for all of our concepts. Simon remarks: “As the actuality of physical existence existing intentionally, empirical knowledge supports in intentional existence everything that can exist intentionally.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the notion of being derives from an abstraction, though an intensive rather than extensive one.<sup>13</sup> Unlike a Transcendental Thomist, for whom the intellect is by its nature already a case of knowledge and not a *tabula rasa*, Simon understands the intellect as a pure condition for knowing. All of the intellect’s content, even its basic concept of being, derives by abstraction from sensation.

Furthermore, Simon intends to be a direct realist. He expresses this direct realism as the truth of sensation. He says: “If it is true that the senses are basically indefectible with respect to their proper objects, and if every object of sensation, as an object of experiential knowledge, envelops actual physical existence, then it follows that the act of sensing has to be made such as to reach the actual existent without error. Any theory of sensation, therefore, that does not preserve before all else the notion of a knowledge made to reach external reality as it is will be at fault.”<sup>14</sup>

That in sensation the knower is the really existing other is so true for Simon that sensation becomes a challenge to the principle of identity.<sup>15</sup> According to this principle, a thing is what it is. Hence, the principle would seem to exclude a direct realism in which the knower

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species, both on the sense and intellectual levels, called formal signs. He reserves *formal sign* for *species expressae*, or elaborated presentative forms, that are present at the *end* of the act of knowing, not at its *beginning*. Vd. Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 120–21, 120 n. 3. If we concede Maritain all of that, his temporal division between impressed species, i.e., received presentative forms, and expressed species, i.e., elaborated presentative forms, does not mean to exclude an essential similarity. Like the expressed species, the impressed species are still regarded as two-sided entities, for both are called “a pure means of knowing [*quo*]” in the sense of bringing our attention to something else first rather than to the species first. As I will explain, this two-sided view to all cognitive species is problematic for maintaining a direct realism.

<sup>12</sup> Simon, *Metaphysics of Knowledge*, 87.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 89. Also, “But actual existence would not admit of indirect ascertainment: it could not be inferred or believed in, if it had not first been grasped directly. At the basis of all our cognition of things existent, possible or fictitious, there is an act which implies in essential manner the physical presence of its object.” Simon, “An Essay on Sensation,” 65.

<sup>15</sup> Simon, *Metaphysics of Knowledge*, 6.

is not itself but something else. In a moment I will look at how Simon attempts to deal with the challenge. Suffice it to say here that his intended answer involves no retreat from direct realism.

In sum, in virtue of his abstractive interpretation of intellection and his position that sensation confronts the knower with the really existing other, Simon is an *a posteriori* Neo-Thomist of the direct realist stripe. I have only the profoundest sympathies with Simon's stance. But I do have a worry. In my opinion, the subsequent elucidations that Simon provides unintentionally compromise him. I have in mind his reply to the principle-of-identity challenge engendered by his direct realism of sensation. Simon begins by claiming that the principle applies only to physical existence and not to the intentional existence that characterizes the knower.<sup>16</sup> He explains intentional existence this way. In knowledge, the knower becomes the thing known thanks to the "idea,"<sup>17</sup> and the idea is described as follows: First, it is "a reality" distinct from the thing itself, yet nevertheless is a "likeness" of the thing. Second, accordingly, the idea has "two faces." Simon explains: "By its own natural being, it is distinguished from the thing that it represents, and it goes forth as such to rest in the soul as an accident in its subject, constituting a composite, like a form joined to matter. But it is by its intentional existence that the idea accomplishes its primary function, which is to become the object of knowledge. In fact, the idea is the object itself existing intentionally."<sup>18</sup> Third, to illustrate this twofold status of the idea, Simon quotes from Aristotle and Aquinas on the memory image.<sup>19</sup> Both compare this to a painting. A painting is not only something in itself and so can be contemplated. It is also a likeness of something else. Like the painting, the memory image can also be considered as just existing in the memory, or as the likeness of something else.

The comparison of memory images (and hence ideas) to pictures seems to be a clever move to explain the direct realism of sensation

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> "In the knowing subject, as was said before, either the thing known must be present in its own reality, or it must be re-presented there somehow. In the latter case, clearly, that by which the thing is known must be a reality distinct from the thing itself, and we call that reality a likeness or an idea." Simon, *Metaphysics of Knowledge* 14–15. In n. 22 Simon clarifies that he is using *idea* so generally that ideas will be in external sensation as well as in intellection.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, n. 24.

without violation of the identity principle. I find that some pictures, but not all, by the impressionist Claude Monet possess the ability to transport me to the actual scene itself. For example, gazing at his *L'Église sur la falaise* (Church on the cliff, 1882), I suddenly am "there." I "feel" the air and the light, "hear" the wind through the vegetation. This remarkable intentional capacity possessed by some artistic works is the common stock of our memory images. They all effect a transportation to the thing itself.

Unfortunately, Simon's comparison of all ideas with memory images is debilitating to and disastrous for his direct realism of sensation. For all the transportation to the thing itself, memories are not self-validating. They can and should be checked out with the record, as attorneys have done using videotapes in cross-examining witnesses in the O. J. Simpson trial. On a basis like this, we build up a trust in our memories and a confidence that the vividness of the thing to which memory images transport us is an objective transportation. For all of its pleasant vividness, the intentionality fails by itself to achieve objectivity. Likewise, Monet's painting would still perform its magic even if its subject had been simply made up. But part of my enjoyment of it is the knowledge that what it depicts was real.

So if memories are not self-validating and yet they are taken as illustrative of all ideas, even those basic ones of sensation, then the intentionality of sensation will never be validated.<sup>20</sup> The accurate in-

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<sup>20</sup> Simon's analogical use of memory images to understand what is going on in sensation is expressed in places other than *An Introduction to Metaphysics of Knowledge*. For example, "*Aristotelianism is the philosophy which places ideas not only in the intellect, the memory and the imagination, but also in the external senses. . . . the Aristotelian eidos is an idea and belongs to the distinct world of entities that images, and concepts exemplify more clearly. . . . Human knowledge purely and simply remains unexplained so long as there is no answer to the question, 'How did sense impressions get there?' The Aristotelian answer is that just as remembering is made possible by two-sided realities that are called memories, so sensation is made possible by another instance of these two-sided realities whose primary function is not to be but to represent, and which are, in one way, states of the psyche and in another way are the object that they stand for.*" Simon, "An Essay on Sensation," 75–76. Then from Simon's "To Be and To Know," 94: "What holds for 'memory' also holds for such terms as representations, images, concepts, ideas, notions, and those *immaterial* or *intentional* forms that Aristotle, as recalled, places in the external senses." "The text on the sense as 'that which is receptive of the sensible forms without the matter' means, among other things, that Aristotle places ideas not only in the understanding . . . and in the memory . . . and in the instinct . . . and in the imagination . . . but also in the external sense." Simon, "An Essay on Sensation," 96.

tentional functioning of these ideas of sensation will have to be accepted on faith. An implicit admission of the difficulty seems found in Simon's chiding remark that under pain of solipsism, construed as analogous to egotism, we "must treat ideas as nothing more than objective means that can lead us to [knowledge]." <sup>21</sup> If ideas are self-validating, why this need to scare by an appeal to solipsism? Likewise, "This ascetic requirement of our intelligence bound by its own law that alone can lead us to objective knowledge, is just like the denial of oneself that leads to God." <sup>22</sup> Again, I have difficulty avoiding the impression that at bottom, Simon is claiming for our ideas a speculative faith analogous to religious faith. Such an interpretation is understandable in light of my claim that as described by Simon, our ideas are not self-validating.

Defenders of Simon will insist that my difficulty stems from a common misunderstanding with the two-sidedness of ideas. What is unique about these twin facets is the epistemological primacy of the intentional facet. One first knows things, then one knows the idea, not vice versa. This correction solves any doubts about the realist nature of knowledge. In his own words, here is Simon:

[A] two-sided entity may still be a thing. What determines an entity's belonging to the genus of being called, in the words of Cajetan, "the intentions of things, their sensible or intelligible forms," is not its two-sidedness; it is a certain primacy of the existential order. In terms of existence, an idea is not first of all a distinct kind of being; it primarily is one with the thing that it represents; it has no being of its own save as needed for its representative function. A memory is both the event remembered and a psychological disposition. But this psychological disposition is not just a thing representative of another thing. *Primacy, here, belongs to the objective way of existing which is that of the event remembered.* No bridge has to be built, for the memory, as disposition of the psyche, is not known first: what is known first is the remembered event. The disposition of the psyche is a means rather than an object of knowledge, except in the secondary process of psychological reflection. <sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Simon, *Metaphysics of Knowledge*, 20.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>23</sup> Simon, "To Be and to Know," 99. Also, "In the whole theory of knowledge, there may not be any problem more significant, doctrinally and historically, than this: are ideas representative things, like photographs, paintings, and sculptures, or

With all due respect to Simon, the difficulty remains. I will not dispute the primacy of the objective in our ideas. My problem is that unlike Simon, for whom this primacy removes any bridge problem—even for the memory—I find this primacy congruent with the need for validation. Again, if the Simpson trial has taught us anything, it is that memory images, for all their intentionality and ability to transport us to something else, are not self-validating. If they were, one would never bother to check them against the historical record. With memory images, intentional primacy does not render validation otiose. Finally, if the play of intentionality in memory images is considered paradigmatic for even sensation, then the validation issue is quite legitimately extended to sensation. On this account there does appear to be a bridge problem.

Simon insists that the crucial issue is not the two-sidedness of ideas, but the correct epistemological ordering of the sides. Primacy must be accorded to the intentional or objective side. But because of my above-stated difficulty, I find that a two-sided notion of ideas is the problem. Once one realizes, even secondarily, that ideas have a side other than the objective or intentional side, it becomes fair to ask if the idea's objective side is accurate. A two-sided idea cannot be self-validating. Certainly, its two-sidedness *distinguishes* it from a one-sided real thing. To be self-validating, does not the idea have to be simply and totally something belonging to the real thing itself?

If my reading of Simon is correct, it leads to the realization that what Simon describes as the idea cannot, properly speaking, be basic. The cognitive species that are fundamental must be of a different nature than Simon's understanding of them. I grant that some ideas function like the memory images described by Aristotle and Aquinas. But for all its vividness, the intentionality involved here is insufficient to do justice to the demands of an immediate realist epistemology. Again, on the model of memory images, ideas are not self-validating. What kind of idea is needed for this epistemology I will explain shortly.

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are they a distinct kind of entities, defined by the primacy of representing, defined by the primacy of objectivity, defined by the primary function of bringing about objective rather than matter-form unions, defined in short, by the primacy of objective over natural existence." Simon, "To Be and to Know," 95. The point is reiterated in "An Essay on Sensation," 71–72.

## 4. ANOTHER NEO-THOMIST REPLY

In my opinion, these difficulties spotlight the need for realists to reassess Descartes' noted assumption that consciousness is always in terms of two-sided ideas. Does the assumption withstand scrutiny? Such ideas certainly are involved in memory and imagination. In both cases reflection uncovers a cognitional entity, a device, in and through which one remembers or imagines this or that. In one sense, the terms *a memory* and *an image* refer to this entity. As mentioned, by their ability to transport us to remember or imagine this or that, memories and images are fascinating items. In fact, Descartes' two-sided ideas make dreams and hallucinations perfectly understandable. Absent the reflection necessary to apprehend the formal reality of the idea, the dreamer or hallucinator is lost in the idea's objective reality. It is no wonder that both think that the object of awareness is real. Neither can escape the dream or the hallucination, because neither can remove himself from the idea. And neither individual can get out of the idea, because neither can reflect and objectify the idea in its formal reality. Such is how we get out of a dream. Awareness transits back through the intentionality of the idea's objective reality and then beyond the idea itself, so that we are now aware of the idea in and through which we were dreaming. Upon waking we can still vividly be aware of these ideas, so that we can plunge back into them and begin dreaming again.

The same is true with imagination. We can use the images of imagination to frighten ourselves. For example, imagine tarantulas crawling up your back. You are frightened, because for a second you are lost in the intentionality of the images. You regain your composure, you "come out of it," by your awareness obtaining some distance on the image. You realize that you were just imagining it. But consider someone who would be locked into the intentionality here because of an inability to reflect. That person's fright would become a torture. Such happens with victims of *delirium tremens* and schizophrenia.

Despite the legitimate doubts about their objectivity, the intentional power of two-sided ideas is an intriguing hint of the realism of human consciousness. Can these ideas do what they do, specifically, so vividly transport us to something else, and belie on the part of consciousness the possibility of becoming the really other in order to be aware of it? Whether that becoming of the really other ever actu-

ally takes place is, of course, the crucial question. But what Descartes called the “objective reality” of ideas is a sign of a strong surge of intentionality that must always be troubling to the idealist. In other words, as Descartes practices methodic doubt in terms of two-sided ideas, not only is realism neutralized but so too is idealism. If a realist has to wonder about the objectivity of ideas, so too the idealist has to wonder about their subjectivity. We may have strongly intentional ideas because consciousness at another point involves a direct and immediate awareness of something real.

I claim that one finds a level of awareness whose intentionality fails to involve two-sided ideas. At this level, reflection confirms that the object of awareness is simply something real. Reflection here simply makes me aware of my awareness of something real. The reflection does not succeed in objectifying a two-sided Cartesian idea in and through which I am aware of something. The level of awareness of which I am speaking is my present one, in which I am at least looking this way and listening. In the Aristotelian tradition, it was called sensation. In Aquinas’ taking up of the point, the absence of any two-sided ideas was strictly and scrupulously respected. Sensation did not proceed in and through the generation of any such entities. It came about by the sensor taking on the form of the thing sensed “without the matter.” The excluded matter encompassed not only the matter of the external thing but also the matter of the sensor. At its penultimate stage, sensation involved reception of form by form. Formal reception of form assures that the received form remains numerically identical with the form of the real thing.<sup>24</sup> Thomistic formal reception engenders no Cartesian “formal” reality for which the received form would be the “objective facet.” Any way you turn it, the Thomistic received form remains the form of the thing. The received form manifests none of the two-sidedness characteristic of Cartesian ideas. So

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<sup>24</sup> “The form into which the percipient or knower is brought by the efficient causality is the same individual form that actuates the child in real life. It is not just specifically the same, as is human form in child and parents. It is individually the same form, actuating both child and percipient in two different ways of existing. It makes the percipient be the individual that exists in reality.” Owens, *Cognition*, 41–42. Also, “From this viewpoint there is reception of form into form instead of form into matter. The result is that the one and the same form makes the sensible particular thing exist both in the real world and in the percipient.” Owens, *Cognition*, 42–43.

impressed, the sensor was in sufficient actuation to cause an operation of sensation with a real thing as object.

Of Aquinas' works, the *De Veritate* contains the greatest concentration of texts on cognitional species. But introductory to the entire discussion is an early text detailing the nature of cognition. In *De Ver.* 2, 2c, both sensory and intellectual knowing are characterized as ways in which the finitude of individual creatures is overcome. For characteristic of the knower is that the known is in some way in the knower: "quia secundum hoc a cognoscente aliquid cognoscitur quod ipsum cognitum aliquo modo est apud cognoscentem." Within the parameters of a presumed hylomorphic understanding of bodies, the text goes on to describe the manner of this containment. "And because the forms and perfections of things are determined through matter, something is knowable insofar as it is separated from matter. Whence it is also necessary that that in which the perfection of such a thing is received be immaterial. For if it were material, the perfection would be received in it according to some determinate being. Hence, it would not be in it as it is knowable, namely as the existing perfection of one thing is in another [existens perfectio unius, est nata esse in altero]."

To understand how the known exists in the knower, one must understand how the form of the known is received by the knower. Crucial for this reception is immateriality. Since matter individuates, material reception of form engenders an individual only specifically like the agent. To have a reception of form that engenders the very individual, the reception of form must be without matter. What this means positively speaking Aquinas explains elsewhere. Immaterial reception of form is possible because of the "amplitude" of the knower's own form.<sup>25</sup> Because the knower's form is not completely sunk into its matter, it retains the "space" to receive into itself the very form of the thing known.

Aquinas' talk of the knower's form having amplitude and extendedness over matter may sound metaphorical and arbitrary. But its warrant lies in the thought that in a hylomorphic body, one has only matter and form. If in hylomorphic composites that are knowers the matter is unable to take on the determination of the known, then by

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<sup>25</sup> "Natura autem rerum cognoscentium habet maiorem amplitudinem et extensionem." Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 14, 1c, ed. Ottawa, 91b.

process of elimination the knower's form must have the capacity. This capacity is what the word *amplitude* is trying, perhaps too spatially, to express. In other words, the key to understanding knowledge is *formal* reception of form. Such reception, unlike material reception, allows the received form to remain numerically identical with the form of the known. Through such reception, the known itself becomes present in the knower.

The above is Aquinas' initial description of cognitional species. If it is correct, it obviously brings out a problem in the standard translation of *species* as "likenesses." That translation could lead one to think of cognitional species along the lines of the memory image model, with the noted problem for realism. The standard translation of *species* by "likeness" needs to be taken up in light of the thought that form as formally received is not set up as something numerically distinct from the form of the real thing.

In sum, in cognition we know the really existing thing. As Aquinas remarks at *De Ver.* 2, 2c, to be knowable means "existens perfectio unius, est nata esse in altero." Such knowledge is possible because we become the real existent through information by its form.<sup>26</sup> Aquinas' position is perfectly compatible with my ignorance of being known by someone else. Even though it is the real existent me that exists in that person's cognition, no continuity of matter exists. In fact, the lack of continuity was the very condition for my existence in someone else's cognition. Hence, I am not in someone's cognition as my hand

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<sup>26</sup> In accord with Aquinas' metaphysics in which something is "a being" in virtue of its act of existence (*esse*), the previous discussion of cognition can be supplemented to include not only a reception by the percipient of the thing's form but also a reception of the thing's *esse*. In the context of creation, Aquinas describes *esse* as both formal and received: "Cum enim dico esse hominis, vel equi, vel cuiuscumque alterius, ipsum esse consideratur ut formale et receptum." Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 4, 1, ad 3m; ed. Ottawa, 24a. With a proviso, I see no reason to prevent an extension of these metaphysical thoughts on *esse* as formal and as received into an explanation of cognition. Hence, "In that object [of sensation] there are the quidditative and existential factors. As impressed passively on the sentient power both those aspects enter into the actuation of the faculty." Joseph Owens, "Judgment and Truth in Aquinas," in Catan, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God*, 42. The proviso is that the thing's form be what is directly received by the knower, while the *esse* is received with the form in "piggyback" fashion. For an explanation of this proviso, see *infra*, Chap. 6. The distinct grasp of the *esse* would still be reserved for the intellectual act of judgment. In other words, on the sense level one would know "an existing thing"; on the intellectual level one would know "a thing *with* existence." For further discussion, vd. *infra*, Chap. 6, sects. 4 and 6.

is in a heated oven. The continuity of matter in the second case assures that the oven's action upon my hand is felt by me. The lack of material continuity in cognitive becoming obviates such self-knowledge, even while it assures my very presence in the knower.

Neither does Aquinas' requirement of immateriality for both sensation and intellection confuse these activities. The amplitude of form over matter can be accompanied either by continued contact with the knower's matter or by a separateness from the knower's matter. The former scenario reductively assures that the received form continues to be singularized and so is productive of sensation. The latter case allows the received form to escape the bonds of singularization and account for intellection.

Thanks to these doctrines of Aristotle and Aquinas, one can construct in the vein of direct realism an understanding of the sensor. There is nothing about material things, hylomorphically understood, that makes immediate realism impossible. But guiding the entire construction is the fact that our reflection outstrips the two-sided ideas of memory and imagination and confronts us with a mode of awareness whose intentionality is of real things in a direct and immediate way. Because of a physical or chemical lesion between the organs of imagination and sense, it may be true that someone cannot perform this reflection and so is unable to come out of a hallucination. A persistent and even incurable hallucination is a possibility. But this admission fails to entail that presently I might be hallucinating. I confidently exclude that scenario in and through the reflection that I perform right now. While this reflection notices ideas for memory and imagination, it sees none for sensation. Hence, in *S.T.* I, 84, 8, ad 2m, Aquinas remarks that if one ingests a sleep-inducing volume of food or drink and if the vapors' movements are slight, "not only does the imagination retain its freedom, but even the common sense is partly freed; so that sometimes while asleep a man may judge that what he sees is a dream, discerning, as it were, between things and their images [*similitudines discernat a rebus*]." Notice that as the more external senses are freed, one's attention is taken away from the similitudes to the things. Is this not Aquinas acknowledging my described reflection to sensation and its realistic findings? The presence of this reflection and its results are distinguishing marks of

human sensation versus dreaming or hallucinating.<sup>27</sup> This articulation of the direct and immediate presence of the real shows that realism need not be dogmatic.

Yet a persistent critic could insist that it is perfectly plausible that I am dreaming that I am reflecting to sense. The reflection that fails to find two-sided ideas, for what I am doing right now is all occurring in a dream. Could I be dreaming that I am reflecting to sense? Yes, I could. But it should be noted that when I do it, I do it as an outside observer of myself. I am “looking at” myself reflecting to sense. The same outside perspective is assumed when I imagine myself doing this or that. In these cases I could quite well be thought of doing something that I am not really doing. But that extrinsic perspective is what is missing, in my current reflection, from my object of awareness to myself. The current reflection replaces an awareness of the subject as object with an awareness of the subject as subject. From that stance the possibility that I am right now dreaming about myself is a red herring. My reality is indisputable, as is the reality of my awareness and the reflection upon it. Neither dreaming nor imagining have anything comparable to this cognitive self-immediacy.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Using Wells’ thesis (see *supra*, n. 9), a Cartesian might try to regroup and to insist that sensation includes a two-sided item. The double item is the composite of object sensed *and* sensing activity. And just as the activities of dreaming or imagining immediately bring non-existent objects before us, who is to say that sensing does not do the same? But are activities such as dreaming, imagining, and sensing on a par phenomenologically? When I reflect on a present act of sensing and become aware of the act itself, the object continues to be more distinctly present than is the case when I reflect upon my imagining or dreaming. In the latter cases, I can almost consider the activities just in themselves with the attention to objects significantly dumbed down. The reflective grasp of my act of sensing shows the sensing to be much more “transparent” than the acts of imagining and dreaming. Perhaps as activities, imagining and dreaming are more “opaque” because there is more going on within them than just their objects. In any case, this difference of opacity versus transparency makes any extrapolations from imagining and dreaming to sensing illegitimate. Even on Wells’ thesis, a discernible difference exists.

<sup>28</sup> Aquinas uses the same reflection to come to an awareness of the existence of the intellector. See Aquinas, *C.G.* II, 75, *Licet; De Ver.* 10, 8c; and *S.T.* I, 87, 1c. David Hume’s denial of an impression for the idea of oneself is so contrived that it almost defies rebuttal. Each time Hume consults himself he finds only a bundle of perceptions strictly dependent upon its parts, so that their least change is the change of the bundle. Because of resemblances between bundles, the imagination produces the appearance of a self. “And here ’tis evident, the same method of reasoning must be continu’d, which has so successfully explain’d the identity of plants, and animals,

## 5. RELATIVITIES IN PERCEPTION

Yet other experiences could constrain one to reintroduce a formal reality into our objects of sensation. In the *Meditation VI* reprise of methodic doubt, Descartes mentions observing square towers that at a distance look round, and colossal figures perched on these towers that from below appear small. He also reports of amputees still experiencing feelings in removed arms or legs.<sup>29</sup> The point of these cases is to confirm that the obvious reality of the object of sensation is not obvious. If the tower is square but we are seeing something round, then we are not seeing the tower; if the statue is colossal but we are seeing something small, we are not seeing the statue; if the amputee is feeling something “in his leg,” then he is not doing so.

The cases of the tower and the statue and others like them, for example, the blackboard looking rectangular to those in front and trapezoidal to those on the sides, were the stock in trade for Empiricist philosophers in the eighteenth century and for sense data theorists and phenomenologists in the twentieth.<sup>30</sup> In the last respect Edmund Husserl, in his *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, employs the perspectival character of our perception of physical objects to conclude that the physical object is not immanent to the act of perception, it is not a real “constituent part of consciousness” but necessarily “transcendent to perception.”<sup>31</sup> This necessary

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and ships, and houses, and of all the compounded and changeable productions either of art or nature. The identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one, and of a like kind with that which we ascribe to vegetables and animal bodies. It cannot, therefore, have a different origin, but must proceed from a like operation of the imagination upon like objects.” David Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, bk. I, pt. IV, sec. 6, in T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, eds., *David Hume: The Philosophical Works* (Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964), vol. 1, 540. As I note *infra*, Chap. 7, n. 20, Hume presupposes an atomistic psychology in which perceptions are given like hats on a rack or beads on a string. Hume regards no perception as a “modification” or “accident” of another despite entailed absurdities like a perceived shape never really moving. For Aquinas the psychic situation is read in substrate-determination terms. One introspectively experiences not a bundle of perceptions, but a multitude of acts of one subject. Since the subject lasts despite the varying acts in and of the subject, there is no need to enlist the imagination to connect discrete “bundles.”

<sup>29</sup> Haldane and Ross, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 1, 189.

<sup>30</sup> For a summation of arguments for sense data, see R. J. Hirst, *The Problems of Perception* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978), chap. 2.

<sup>31</sup> “The studies we have completed left us with the transcendence of the thing over against the perception of it, and as a further consequence, over against every

transcendence of the thing over against the perception of it is Husserl's basis for bracketing our judgments of real existence that we make in the "natural attitude."

Is the direct realist understanding of sensation confounded by these cases? Their common assumption is that immediacy means exactitude. Hence, where the perceptual object is inexact to the real thing, the real thing cannot be understood as immediately present. In my opinion, the assumption holds only for physical immediacy or presence. Physical presence demands exactitude. For example, to be physically presented a one-armed man cannot be two-armed. Physical presence brooks no exception to exactitude. Yet for Aquinas, cognitive presence is different. As long as the thing's causality is formally received, then the thing presents itself in cognition. Yet real things are formally received, and so are cognitively present only at the ends of long chains of physical causality. Before landing in the formal amplitude of the sense power, the thing's physical causality can be understood as running a gauntlet of other physical causes. These other causes can impact the thing's causality such that the thing becomes present in cognition inexactly.

In fairness, one should acknowledge that the physical causality could also achieve exactitude. Our experience with TV cameras shows that sometimes physical causality gets it right. The pink shade of the dress of the woman in the studio is captured by the image on the screen. However, I will concede that perception does present reality inexactly. Hence, one may never know the exact configuration of the real shape that one sees, or the exact shade or hue of the real color. But this concession is a small price to pay for the realistic component in the basis of Thomistic metaphysics. For the fundamental point remains that perception presents something real—a real color, a real shape, and so on, even granting inexactitude in the perception.

What of the amputee? That the amputee must confirm or disconfirm the feeling by looking down at the absent leg indicates that the

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consciousness generally which refers to the thing; not merely in the sense that the thing as a real constituent part of consciousness is as a matter of fact not to be found—the whole situation rather concerns eidetic insight: in *absolutely unconditioned* generality or necessity, a thing cannot be given as really immanent in any possible perception or, generally, in any possible consciousness. Thus a basic and essential difference arises between *Being as Experience* and *Being as Thing*." Husserl, *Ideas*, 120.

feeling alone and reflection upon it cannot detect the illusion. Does this phenomenon indicate that sensation itself could present us with something not real? No. No more difficulty exists here than in the case of seeing a long-ago extinguished star. Provided that the star's causality continues and eventually impinges upon the formal amplitude of the power of sight, the causality makes the real star present. There is no need to assume that if sense presents reality, then sense presents reality as it is right now. That judgment or its opposite can be left to those who study the physical causality involved in vision and the presence of any time lag.

So what the amputee may be feeling is analogous to what the astronomer may be seeing. Just as the astronomer may be seeing the real star in its lingering causality on the sense power, so too the amputee is feeling the leg as formally presented through the lingering neural activity excited by the leg before amputation. Both sense something real, but falsely assume that it is right now. Evidently the right-now-ness of reality is not an original factor in sensation. Again, for my purposes, this acknowledgment is a small concession in the wake of the admission that sense directly presents reality. In sum, the Thomist realist, at least, shows a sophisticated knowledge of the mechanics of sensation and so is not naive.

## 6. *SPIRITUS MALIGNUS*

At the end of *Meditation I*, Descartes mentions a final scenario. He says: "I shall then suppose, not that God who is supremely good and the fountain of truth, but some evil genius not less powerful than deceitful, has employed his whole energies in deceiving me; I shall consider that the heavens, the earth, colours, figures, sound, and all other external things are nought but the illusions and dreams of which this genius has availed himself in order to lay traps for my credulity."<sup>32</sup>

The same assumed context of two-sided ideas that gave cogency to the dream possibility does likewise here. As Cartesian reflection traces the idea's objective reality back into its formal reality, we become aware of an object for which a *spiritus malignus* could quite possibly be a source. But where Thomistic reflection succeeds in out-

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<sup>32</sup> Trans. Haldane and Ross in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 1, 148.

stripping two-sided ideas and lands on a level of consciousness in which the object is through and through something real, this hallucination scenario appears impossible. In other words, just as I know that I am not dreaming now because now I am aware of something real, so too I know that I am not hallucinating now because I now am aware of something real. Direct awareness of something real occurs neither in a dream nor in a hallucination. The object of my present awareness resists reflective reduction into the objective reality of an idea. Rather, my object steadfastly remains the direct and immediate presence of something real.

I would be remiss to fail to note that within the context of his own already formulated epistemology, Aquinas largely concedes the *spiritus malignus* possibility. Aquinas can be found discussing how demons can act on the exterior senses.<sup>33</sup> One way is from without, by forming things that will in turn affect the senses. This activity obviously poses no problem to the realism of the senses. But another way of demonic activity is from within. This also is able to be twofold. Demons can stir up an indisposition in the organ so that a false perception results. Somewhat in the same manner, a choleric tongue will cause everything to taste bitter. This demonic activity somewhat compromises the realism of the senses, but not fundamentally. Just as those to my side still see the penny's real shape, though inexactly, so too those with a choleric tongue still taste the orange's real flavor, though very inexactly.

But Aquinas describes a second manner in which demons can affect the exterior senses from within. In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, he says that "species that are conserved in the imagination flow into the organs of sense by the operation of demons, just as happens in sleep. And so when these species reach the organs of the exterior sense, they are united as if they were things present outside and sensed in act."<sup>34</sup>

Aquinas admits as a possibility a demonic back loading of the exterior senses from species conserved in the imagination. Does this possibility

<sup>33</sup> Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 111, 4c.

<sup>34</sup> "Species quae sunt in imaginatione servatae operatione daemonum ad organa sensuum fluant, sicut contingit in somno; et ideo, quando illae species contingunt organa sensus exterioris, uniuntur ac si essent res presentes extra et actu sentirentur." Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, d. 8, a. 5, ad 4m, Mandonnet, ed., *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 2, 215–16.

eliminate the direct realism of our presently exercised act of sensation? I do not think so. You could not have this back loading without coincident stimulation of the imagination, for the back loading proceeds by the demon bringing about motions in the organ of the imagination that impact on the organ of the exterior sense. But by reflection, I know that what I am imagining now is not what I am perceiving now. Likewise, I can know that now I am not imagining at all, but nevertheless am perceiving. So reflection that I can exercise right now confirms the current absence of back loading from the imagination.<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, the type of reflection that Descartes employs to uncover two-sided ideas as direct and immediate objects of consciousness need not stop with that accomplishment. Given full reign, that same reflection can validate real things themselves as the direct and immediate objects of our current act of perceptual awareness. The content of consciousness is far richer than Descartes imagined. Our consciousness includes not only ideas but the direct presence of the real. At a fundamental level, human consciousness is “the existence of the known in the knower”; it is “the existing perfection of one thing brought to be in another.” If, in its limited Cartesian use, reflection produces certitude at least of the *cogito*, I ask why, in a more far-ranging use, this same reflection cannot produce the certitude of perceptual realism.

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<sup>35</sup> In his *The Mystery of the Mind: A Critical Study of Consciousness and the Human Brain* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 21–27, noted neurophysiologist Wilder Penfield describes cases of electrical stimulation of the cortex that are very similar to Aquinas on the possible back loading of the exterior senses by imagination. In these experiments, patients described “hearing” and “seeing” and “watching” sounds and sights. The patients knew, however, that the experiences were of past events, or “flashbacks.” If the Wilder experiments were cases of back loading of the senses from imagination, it is noteworthy that the patients could tell that the voices were of the past only by checking them with their memory. The patient could not see what was going on in his imagination. Hence, one should concede that in the middle of the hallucination, one cannot reflect to imagination. Nevertheless, the realist should go on to insist that right now the realist can reflect to imagination, and that reflection shows that the realist is not in a hallucination.

In his book *Cognition*, 251–52, Owens admits that the claim of some neurophysiologists that electrical stimulation of the cochlea, retina, or cortex suffices for impressed sensible species of color and sound contradicts immediate realism. But in the present state of research, this claim is far from verified. I might add that the claim cannot draw on any analogy with VCR technology, in which magnetic impulses on a tape produce colors and sounds on the TV screen. The problem with the analogy is that the produced colors and sounds are still really existing items. As one watches the TV, one is seeing real colors and hearing real sounds. One does not have sheer electricity producing a color that is only cognitively existing.

## The Objectivity of the Notion of Being

IN THE WAKE OF Aquinas' aposteriorism for the sciences, a fair conclusion is that for Aquinas, no concept, or notion, is self-validating. No concept on the strength of its content is understood to apply to mind-independent things. Such is the case, for example, in the rationalist tradition's championing of the ontological argument for God. In contrast, what validates concepts in Aquinas is our apprehension of them as non-precise abstractions from the self-manifestly real things given in sensation. We validate the objectivity of the meanings of *man* and *triangle* by seeing the meanings in light of real sensible data. Each concept gives a general expression to this, that, and the other real item. The same should be true of the concept of being, the *ratio entis*. Being should also be an abstraction without precision from real sense data. As noted, Gilson and Maritain and many other Neo-Thomists present being as an *abstractum*.<sup>1</sup>

As of yet, *being* is a vague abstraction for which we lack a precise definition. At present its meaning is that of "something real," "something present in itself versus just present in my awareness." This initial grasp of the commonality of being does not mean that we know its definition. Grasping a commonality is one thing; grasping its definitional parts is something else.<sup>2</sup> For example, confrontation with an

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<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 2, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> "It should be noticed, however, that we cannot know *that* a thing is without knowing in some way *what* it is, either perfectly or at least confusedly, as the Philosopher says we know things defined before we know the parts of their definition. For if a person knows that man exists and wants to find out what man is by definition, he must know the meaning of the term *man*. And this is possible only if he somehow forms a concept of what he knows to exist, even though he does not know its definition. That is to say, he forms a concept of man by knowing a proximate or remote genus and accidental characteristics which reveal him externally. For our knowledge of definitions, like that of demonstrations, must begin with some previous knowledge." Aquinas, *In de Trin.* VI, 3c; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 76–77.

equilateral triangle and with an isosceles triangle suffices to acquaint one with the commonality of *triangle*. But its definition as a three-sided figure will require further juxtaposition with rectangles and circles. That juxtaposition will distinctly acquaint us with the commonality of *figure*, while a cognitive return to the triangles will distinctly acquaint one with the *differentia* of “three-sided.” At that later point, one possesses the explicit definition of triangle as a three-sided figure. At *S.T. I*, 44, 2c, Aquinas presents history of the understanding of being, *ens*, in three stages. The consideration of the first was *ens inquantum est hoc ens* (being insofar as it is this being), and marks a consideration of substances in light of the accidents. The consideration of the second stage is *ens inquantum est tale ens* (being insofar as it is such being), and marks a consideration of substances in light of their forms. Even though the considerations of these two stages have obviously been about *ens*, only in the consideration of the third stage, *ens inquantum est ens* (being insofar as it is a being), do philosophers finally succeed in viewing substances in light of their *esse* and so plumb the depths of the notion. Evidently one can intellect notions long before one understands their content.

Hence, Aquinas’ novel definition of the *ratio entis* as *habens esse* is not yet on the radar screen of my exposition. In Chapter 6 I will elaborate his approach to this definition of the *ratio*. At the moment, the important thing is simply to appreciate the *ratio*. Also, if the *habens esse* definition of the *ratio* is still beyond us, the real immateriality of the notion is likewise. There is as yet no understanding of being as wider than bodies. Ability to be actualized in reality apart from bodies is another feature of the *ratio* that can be left to subsequent reflection upon the *ratio* and any implications therefrom. Again, at *S.T. I*, 44, 2c, the considerations of *ens* that mark the three stages appear to be considerations of *ens* as found in bodies. Only the second stage mentions the immaterials in the guise of the Platonic forms. But, like Aristotle, Aquinas considers these to be absurd.<sup>3</sup>

Yet there exists a significant group of Thomists who insist that our fundamental conceptual life cannot be ruled by abstraction. To validate our concepts, one can, and even must, turn away from abstrac-

<sup>3</sup> Later at *S.T. I*, 79, 3c, while arguing for the agent intellect, Aquinas mentions Plato’s doctrine of the ideas and agrees with Aristotle’s criticisms of the doctrine in *Meta. II*, 4, and *VII*, 3.

tion. In the place of abstraction, they substitute a more autonomous and enclosed activity to validate our fundamental concepts. They call this activity retorsion, or performative self-contradiction.<sup>4</sup> One recognizes that the mind is trapped in certain ways of thinking. The mind cannot doubt without affirming within the very doubt certain ways of thinking. This fact validates the objectivity of these ways of thinking, since one cannot doubt what cannot be consistently doubted. In their non-abstractive approach to validation, these Thomists admit that they are inspired by Aristotle's and Aquinas' indirect defense of the non-contradiction principle in *Meta.* IV. The majority of these Thomists belong to the Transcendental Thomist camp. But, surprisingly, among them is the Neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain, with his position of critical realism. In this chapter I want to portray their thinking and probe it philosophically and textually. My purpose is to determine if their thinking neutralizes the previously argued predominant place for abstraction in Aquinas' understanding of how one validates the objectivity of concepts. My contention is that no substitute exists for an abstractive validation. One is confident that concepts express the real because one sees that they have been drawn from the real directly given in sensation. Among the Transcendental Thomists, I will concentrate on Maréchal, Rahner, and Lonergan.

### 1. JOSEPH MARÉCHAL AND INTELLECTUAL DYNAMISM

Maréchal does admit an abstractive notion of being. In *Cahier V* (1926) of his monumental *Le Point de départ de la métaphysique*, he refers to it as “predicamental abstract being,” “being as the principle of number,” and “the intelligible unity of the material objects.”<sup>5</sup> But in Maréchal's eyes this abstractive notion of being should be placed aside, because for two reasons it is metaphysically sterile. First, by itself it does not clear the material order and attain that separateness from matter that Aquinas assigns to the subject of metaphysics. Since the data controls the abstraction and since the data at this point is simply material, then any *abstractum* cannot but have material trap-

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent description of retorsion and its place in Transcendental Thomism, see Donceel, “Transcendental Thomism,” 81–83.

<sup>5</sup> Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 164–65. Subsequent references to Maréchal are also from Joseph Donceel's substantive translation.

pings.<sup>6</sup> Second, conjoined with reasoning, the concept fails to break into that radical contingency for things that would necessarily relate them to an absolutely infinite source.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the data is not only material, it is also finite. Hence, any reasoned cause need only be finite to account for the effects.<sup>8</sup>

Maréchal approaches the metaphysically fecund notion of being, *ens inquantum ens*, in another way. The metaphysical notion of being is one of the transcendental concepts located on the third degree of abstraction. To attain this level we do not turn to any “physical contact of the outside object,” but rather to a “subjective principle . . . an a priori *diversity of the intellectual faculty itself*.”<sup>9</sup> By this enigmatic formula, Maréchal refers to the intellect’s own dynamism to Infinite Being. Hence, we possess a sense of being wider than bodies because:

We are positively aware that the movement of our intellections does not stop at the intelligible unity of the material objects, that the latter do not constitute *the intelligible which is totally in act*, the saturating act of our intellectual power, that, after having surveyed them, there remains in our intelligence a balance of unused power. Hence the ade-

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<sup>6</sup> “But what sounds utterly unintelligible is that you also claim to abstract from the material quiddity the transcendental concepts which, by definition, extend beyond it and which no longer have any common measure with it . . . if the transcendent is to be within the reach of the human mind, this will not be the result of an analytical process of abstraction, but of some process of progressive and conquering dialectic.” Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 146. The portion of this quote before the ellipsis is especially relevant for assessing Maritain’s approach to Thomistic metaphysics discussed in *supra*, Chap. 2. Maréchal’s remark, however, antecedes Maritain’s publication of the “intuition of being” thesis. Also, though Maréchal speaks about “the three degrees of abstraction,” I will explain that abstraction is characteristic more of the product than the activity.

<sup>7</sup> “In the Thomistic doctrine all our concepts are originally concepts of material quiddities: the contingency of the created being—inasmuch as it reveals to us the divine transcendence—is given to us neither in the representation contained by these concepts, not in their abstractive and universal form.” Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 144–45.

<sup>8</sup> Echoing Hume, Maréchal’s disciple Joseph Donceel expresses the problem with *a posteriori* reasoning this way: “I have above noted the serious objections which may be raised against any attempt at arriving at God while starting from creatures. How can we ever hope to pass from the finite to the infinite, from the relative to the absolute, from the contingent to the necessary? How can the conclusion be stronger than the premises? How can we ever hope to bridge the infinite gap between God and the things of our experience?” Donceel, *The Searching Mind*, 89.

<sup>9</sup> Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 147.

quate form of our intellectual activity would not be correctly expressed as “abstract being, numerical unity” or as “predicamental abstract being.” It is wider and extends to a domain of being which exceeds our experience. Let us continue to make hypotheses in this metaempirical domain and we shall discover that the only insurmountable limitation which stops our thought is not this or that objective limit of being, this or that degree of finite essences, but the “absolute limit,” non-being as such. But if we understand this well, to conceive non-being as the sole possible limit amounts to conceiving *the absence of a limit*. Hence, since the total objective capacity of our intelligence rejects every limit but non-being, it extends as far as being pure and simple. To such a formal capacity there can only correspond one absolutely last and saturating end: the *infinite* Being.<sup>10</sup>

What makes us realize that being is wider than the material is not any clues in the data, but a restlessness in us as we confront the data. We feel there is more because we are already beyond the data when we know it. We break the connection between matter and our understanding of being by appeal to our intellectual dynamism. The metaphysical sense of being forms in the wake of that *a priori* current.

Obviously, confidence in the objectivity of this resulting metaphysical sense of being rests upon an earlier confidence in the objectivity of intellectual dynamism. How do we distinguish it from a wild-goose chase? How do we know that it goes off in the direction of the real, even the real as possible? A transcendental philosopher would remark that perhaps intellectual dynamism is simply a quirk of the mind and not at all characteristic of the real. Maréchal is well aware that the objectivity of the entire process is an unresolved issue.<sup>11</sup> Further on in *Cahier V*, he squarely faces the issue in a manner to which it is worth paying close attention. Maréchal’s philosophical and textual moves are later mimicked by Rahner and Lonergan. Speaking of “methodic doubt” and its overcoming,<sup>12</sup> Maréchal says:

Strictly speaking, the subject who undertakes the critique of his own thought might still, without *logical* contradiction, escape a subjective secondary and partial exigency of this thought, provided the very act

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>11</sup> “Rightly or wrongly, it does not matter. We are not discussing the ‘objective value’ of the intellectual appetite. But the inner fact is undeniable.” Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 164.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 212, 209.

of refusal or abstention should not depend on conditions which impose this limited necessity. Such would be the case with a subjective necessity which refers only to the affirmation of a category of objects. But when the subjective necessity is absolutely *primitive and universal*, when it extends to *all* objective thought, it becomes impossible for the intellectual faculty to deny this necessity or to call it into doubt without nevertheless affirming it in that which is logically implicit in the very act of doubting or of denying. Hence if the basic condition of *any* attitude *whatsoever* of the intellect (in an undetermined subject) really resides in the absolute objective reference, according to some formal coincidence, this general objective reference will constitute a condition of the possibility of the doubting or denying attitude (always reducible to an affirmation) as well as of the directly affirmative attitude. To deny the object or to call it into doubt would entail in the subject an obvious incoherence, a rejection of the first principle.<sup>13</sup>

In sum, when one is dealing with a “primitive and universal” subjective necessity—in other words, with a necessity that is ineluctable—one knows that the necessity is more than subjective. Since the necessity is ineluctable, the very doubt of it will employ it. In other words, the doubt self-destructs. Hence, because we cannot doubt the intellectual dynamism understood in this “primitive and universal” fashion, then we validate its objectivity and that of the transcendental concepts that form in its wake.

Later Maréchal reiterates this thinking. He prefaces the reiteration with this description of the doubt overcome by the thinking:

Every hypercritical effort is self-destructive. It would suppose that the “statements” which the spirit cannot not *affirm* under pain of falling at once into logical contradiction, might still, absolutely speaking, be *false*, because their necessity derives from the natural constitution of our understanding, a constitution which is subjective and perhaps fallacious. Our most rigorously defined evidences would not undoubtedly be immune from illusion. Although their necessity *in the knowing subject* is admittedly based upon the first analytical principle, this might not be the case for their absolute necessity *in the object*.<sup>14</sup>

The reiteration goes as follows:

In the final analysis this subtle objection is an echo of the sophists and brings up a pseudo-problem. We can formulate it exactly to the extent

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 209–10.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 227. The two following extracts continue from 227.

that we may indifferently put any kind of “words” near each other, but logically it denies itself. No subject can, without contradiction, conceive as logically possible a hypothesis which would contain the negation of the very act by which he conceives it—or even more precisely: which would be *the negation of the very law according to which it is objectively conceived*.

Concluding the passage, Maréchal surmises why the hypercritical doubter would remain unsatisfied:

At the root of this objection . . . lies a false conception of the nature and the possibilities of our human knowledge. Why is the objector not satisfied with objective evidence, defined as above? Because he wishes to reach, instead of the undeniable, objective but indirect evidence of the *affirmation*, the objective direct evidence of the *ontological intuition*. He would like to see clearly not only that the two terms of a judgment must be united in the identity of the same *suppositum*, but *why and how* this identity is necessary in itself. He believes that he can know things rationally only by *directly penetrating into their essence*. He transforms the *natural desire* of a saturating intuition into a *logical exigency* which he wishes to impose upon every objective certitude. If this chimerical wish of knowing in a purely intuitive way were fulfilled, there would be no more need for a critique of knowledge. Thus, strangely enough, a hypercritique leading into absolute relativism turns into the worst metaphysical dogmatism. It posits arbitrarily as an unsatisfied methodological exigency what ontologism, in an equally arbitrary way, posited as a necessary mode of our understanding. Ultimately, absolute relativism is nothing but disappointed inverse rationalism.

To stake his position textually, Maréchal cites two passages in Aquinas. At *In IV Meta.*, lect. 7, Aquinas speaks of an “indirect demonstration” of the first principles by “arguing disputatively against those who deny them.”<sup>15</sup> Maréchal interprets this text to be an *ad hominem* argument that rises to the value of a demonstration because “the *homo* in question is nothing less than every discursive intelligence.” Secondly, at *De Ver.* 1, 9c, Aquinas affirms that the intellect knows truth by reflecting upon itself. Maréchal comments: “Therefore, according to St. Thomas the objective value of knowledge would be formally revealed to the subject through the analyses of *its own* a

<sup>15</sup> Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 212–13. *Cahier V* refers to Book IV of the *Metaphysics* as Book III.

priori exigencies, acting upon a present datum, that is, ultimately, through the objective exigencies of the necessary *affirmation*.<sup>16</sup> Maréchal is sanguine that despite differences in horizon and material content, an “identity” exists between this ancient defense of realism and the modern procedure of transcendental deduction. Hence the use of transcendental deduction, especially in metaphysics, is “faithful” to the “purest realistic tradition.”<sup>17</sup>

In sum, despite acknowledging an abstractive notion of being, when it comes to apprehending and validating a philosophically useful notion of being, Maréchal shifts to a non-abstractive procedure. The transcendental notion of being forms in the wake of the intellect’s *a priori* dynamism to the Absolute. Because that dynamism is ineluctable even for the doubt of its objectivity, the dynamism is known to bear upon reality. This fact is used to guarantee the objectivity of the transcendental notion of being. Notice how an abstractive methodology for objectivity is nowhere to be seen.

## 2. KARL RAHNER AND THE HORIZON OF INFINITE BEING

Karl Rahner also disputes an *a posteriori* validation of metaphysical being by abstraction from the data of sense. Like Maréchal, Rahner thinks that abstraction cannot free the notion of being from the empirical conditions of the data. “St. Thomas is totally convinced that

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<sup>16</sup> Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 208.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 216. In his “Transcendental Thomism: A Critical Assessment,” in Brezik, ed., *One Hundred Years of Thomism*, 93, Robert Henle remarks, “In other words, Maréchal saw two methodologies by which the same metaphysics might be established. He did not propose to modify the traditional methodology of Thomism at all or to substitute another methodology for it. But he was convinced that the Kantian Transcendental Method could be corrected and used in such a way as to overcome Kantianism and establish Thomism, thereby beating Kant at his own game.” The remark gives the inaccurate impression that for Maréchal, Aquinas’ epistemology is not a transcendental philosophy. On the contrary, the epistemology of Ancients, which Aquinas inherited, “includes the transcendental subject” (Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 85). Also, between the ontological critique of the Ancients and the transcendental critique of the moderns, there in truth exists only a difference of “viewpoint,” not of content. Maréchal is not contrasting an *a posteriori* epistemology with an *a priori* one. Rather, the epistemologies of the Ancients and of Kant are both *a priori*. The difference is that the Ancients considered the mind’s *a priori* as more than a norm for thought. It is expressive of the way reality is. Kant held this ontological affirmation in abeyance.

the singular as such can express only something of itself and that many singulars experienced as such, can ground only a universality of empirical, indicative, and merely assertive propositions, but never the metaphysical universality of concepts that would be required in order to ground an apodictic universality and validity of the metaphysical propositions of the first principles."<sup>18</sup> Rahner eschews any validation of metaphysical principles by "taking a look" at the given of sense. Despite the Thomistic adage that truth is *adequatio rei et intellectus*, it is not by a look at the thing outside that we validate, but by a look inside ourselves. And here Rahner, like Maréchal, cites *De Ver.* 1, 9c.<sup>19</sup> What does the "look in" find?

The evidence of first principles is prior to the objective vision of what man affirms in all the judgments he formulates in his knowledge of the world; the metaphysical value of these principles and that of this affirmation is implicitly the *a priori* condition for the possibility of knowledge of the world. With the same necessity with which man judges, he also affirms the metaphysical value of the *a priori* structures of being as such, structures which he places and affirms jointly in his transcendental *a priori*. . . . Human evidence of metaphysical principles is not based ultimately then on an identity of concepts as such, conceived on the basis of evidence (such principles are also *a priori* synthetic in a Thomist metaphysics of knowledge, of course), but rather on the evidence of the formal logical contradiction between one's implicit affirmation and explicit negation of the value of those principles. For whoever might be in a condition of being able to realize a metaphysical and existential suspension (*epoché*) of the judgment as such (to doubt is also to judge), the metaphysical principles would cease to have value; but, at the same moment, such a person would cease to be what he affirms himself to be in every action: limited spirit, "existence" (in the modern sense of existential philosophy).<sup>20</sup>

The "look in" finds that the intellect's transcendence to being as such is an *a priori* condition for our mental life even when that life attempts to include doubt about the metaphysical value of the condition. Rahner concludes this analysis by mentioning that "therefore,

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<sup>18</sup> Rahner, "Aquinas: The Nature of Truth," 67. Rahner insists that it is legitimate to speak of "abstracting" these notions only insofar as they "present themselves to man in a perception of sensibly experienced singular things," 67.

<sup>19</sup> Rahner, "Aquinas: The Nature of Truth," 70.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

in the ultimate analysis, [our horizon of being as such] is an implicit affirmation of the pure being of God himself.”<sup>21</sup> The similarity with Maréchal is patent. Both Rahner and Maréchal validate the metaphysical concept of being by placing it within an intellectual dynamism to Infinite Being. The dynamism is validated, in turn, through a grasp of its ineluctability.

### 3. BERNARD J. F. LONERGAN AND THE PURE DESIRE TO KNOW

In comparison to Maréchal and Rahner, Bernard J. F. Lonergan is still a transcendental philosopher, but with somewhat lowered sights. Intellectual *a priori* dynamism does not have Absolute Being as its term, but rather the notion of being. The notion of being is defined as the object of the pure, disinterested desire to know. This modification leads Lonergan to emphasize a different problematic than is found in Maréchal and Rahner. Their problematic focused on securing the metaphysical and transcendental notion of being subsequent to deficiencies in the *a posteriori* treatment of the notion. Their solution was to generate the notion in the wake of the intellect’s dynamism to Absolute Being. Actually, this approach also validates the objectivity of the sensible data, since the data surface only in the wake of intellectual dynamism. I have quoted both men to this effect.<sup>22</sup> But with Lonergan’s modification of the finality of intellectual dynamism, this current now becomes the major one.

For Lonergan, the objectivity of the data of sense needs validation. Taken in itself, the data are congruent with phenomenism and idealism.<sup>23</sup> Lonergan also insists that no intuition of existing singulars

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 70. Also, “Rather, the judgment which ascribes certain quidditative determinations to something which exists in itself, to the exclusion of other possible determinations, is implicitly and precisely a judgment that *esse* does not belong in all its fullness to this thing which exists in itself.” Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 178. And “Thus, every judgment is precisely a critique of the object, an evaluation of the measure of *esse* which belongs to what is judged.” Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 179.

<sup>22</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 1, n. 27.

<sup>23</sup> “Still, you will ask, just where did existence come in? Was it some one of the data, or was it their totality? No, any and all the data are quite compatible with phenomenism, pragmatism, existentialism; but none of these philosophies include Aquinas’ *actus essendi*. Did then existence come in with the insight, or with the concept, or with the particularized concept? No, idealists and relativists know all about insights, concepts, and their particularization.” Lonergan, “Insight: Preface to

exists. That approach illegitimately extrapolates the ocular version of objectivity to the intellect's grasp of the objective.<sup>24</sup> How do we know that we have an objective knowledge of things? Lonergan labels objective knowledge as grasping the virtually unconditioned. He describes the grasping in terms of a reflective judgment that reveals the knower to be asking no more questions about the data: "But when there are no further questions, the insight is invulnerable. . . . Such an insight is correct, if there are no further, pertinent questions."<sup>25</sup> Important to note is that the crowning question expressive of the desire to know is "*An sit, Is it so?*" in the sense of "Is this thing anything more than an object of thought?"<sup>26</sup> A quieting of the intellect is the telltale sign of objectivity. The quieting indicates that somehow the data fits into being, the object of the intellect's pure disinterested desire to know. Lonergan is aware of the subjectivism here and insists that it is insufficient to say that objectivity is achieved when no further questions occur to one.<sup>27</sup> Yet his attempt to clarify himself by introducing the self-correcting process of learning does not return, as far as I can tell, to any trappings of the ocular vision model. Rather, the process is subjectively described as reaching its limit in "familiarity" with the concrete situation and in "easy" mastery of it.<sup>28</sup>

In sum, Lonergan's approach to our knowledge of the actual existence of particular things is fundamentally an indirect one. We do not know if something exists just by "taking a look." As noted, there is no intuition of existing singulars. Moreover, the sense data are so compatible with phenomenism and idealism that naive realism is dogmatic. Rather, attainment of this knowledge is more complicated. The decisive moment in it is a subjective one. We first take a look and then notice if that look quiets questioning. In the crucial moment

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a Discussion," 162. In "Cognitive Structure," 233–35, Lonergan insists that the naive realist has no way to stop the idealist from describing the data in terms of appearances only.

<sup>24</sup> See *supra*, Chap. 2, n. 82.

<sup>25</sup> Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 284. Likewise, Gerald McCool comments: "And when the knower saw in the act of reflective insight that no further relevant questions remained unanswered, he could safely give the answer, 'yes, it is.'" "History, Insight, and Judgment in Thomism," *Proceedings of the Jesuit Philosophical Association* (1985): 44.

<sup>26</sup> Lonergan, "Insight: Preface to a Discussion," 80.

<sup>27</sup> Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 284.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

of objective knowing, we are in a sense always “flying by instruments.” We are not noticing something about the thing, but something about our reaction to the thing. To vary the analogy, for Lonergan our knowledge of something real is like the savage’s knowledge of food. The savage knows that something is food not by looking at it, but by ingesting it and observing if it quiets the growling of his stomach.

Lonergan’s indirect approach to objective knowledge of things is easily missed, not only because it is so contrived but also because some of his examples of knowing appear to be thoroughly *a posteriori* at their decisive moment. In other words, the “look out” seems to settle the question. As a model example of a concrete judgment of fact, Lonergan mentions the man who returns to his home to find it burned. He makes the judgment “Something happened.” Lonergan elaborates:

The conditioned will be the judgment that something happened.

The fulfilling conditions will be two sets of data: the remembered data of his home as he left it in the morning; the present data of his home as he finds it in the evening. Observe that the fulfilling conditions are found on the level of presentations. They are not judgments, as is the minor premise of syllogisms. They involve no questions for intelligence nor insights nor concepts. They lie simply on the level of past and present experience, of the occurrence of acts of seeing and smelling.<sup>29</sup>

Lonergan’s talk of “presentations,” “past and present experience,” and “acts of seeing and smelling” as “fulfilling conditions” seems to give a decidedly *a posteriori* interpretation to the formulation of the judgment Something happened. But another condition exists, specifically, the insight that connects the two sets of data to the same thing.

The three elements have been assembled. On the level of presentations there are two sets of data. On the level of intelligence there is an insight referring both sets to the same things. When both levels are taken together, there is involved the notion of knowing change. Reflective understanding grasps all three as a virtually unconditioned to ground the judgment, Something happened.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 281–82.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 282–83.

Such an insight Lonergan calls a “pivot” in coming to the judgment. How does one know that that insight is correct? The next section of *Insight* answers by reviewing the described material on objectivity. So regardless of the amount of sheer “presentation” of the data involved in coming to the judgment Something happened, the key element in the process is the correctness of the insight that refers both sets of data to the same thing. And does one “see” this connection? Despite Lonergan’s use of the word *insight*, his answer is negative. One does “see” something, but the observed is not in the data but in us. We observe that our “insight” raises no more questions in us.

But the whole picture is even less *a posteriori*. The process of coming to the judgment Something happened obviously involves other judgments. For instance, it involves the judgment that the data are real, as in, “This ruinous state of affairs exists.” But Lonergan treats judgments of concrete actual existence in the same manner as Something happened. How does one know that the judgment “This exists” is true? In his “*Insight: Preface to a Discussion*,” Lonergan answers that a grasp of the unconditioned occurs. Does this mean that we see or observe that what the judgment claims is occurring? Not likely. Lonergan insists that the grasping of the fulfilled conditions is one of “reflective understanding.” Hence the reader is returned to *Insight*’s subjective interpretation of invulnerable insights. The invulnerable insights are those observed to quiet questions. Remember, for Lonergan no intuition of existing singulars exists, and the presented data in their own right are congruent with phenomenism and idealism.

For all of Lonergan’s talk about the need for presentations, data, observation, and insight to come to judgments, none of these function in the same way as in a straightforward aposteriorism. In that case, what is seen *in the data* is the decisive epistemological moment for assessing the correctness of the judgment.<sup>31</sup> For Lonergan, what

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<sup>31</sup> “What, then, is the cause or criterion for certainty: In the stylized example of the cat on the mat, your friend in the next room, who doubts that the cat could have got past him without being noticed, may after hearing your assertion ask: ‘Are you certain that the cat is on the mat?’ You look, the cat is there, you have no choice but to reply: ‘Yes, I am certain that the cat is on the mat.’ What forces you to answer that way? Is it not the existence of the cat on the mat, directly apprehended through your act of judgment as you gaze on the cat in that location? The cause is the existence that is synthesizing the feline substance with the location on the mat. As long as that existence is there before the apprehending gaze of your judgment (as act),

is seen *in us*, in our reaction to the data, is the decisive moment. A remark from Lonergan's "Cognitional Structure" provides a snapshot of his epistemology: "It is not true that it is from sense that our cognitional activities derive their immediate relationship to real objects; that relationship is immediate in the intention of being; it is mediate in the data of sense . . . inasmuch as the intention of being makes use of data in promoting cognitional process to knowledge of being."<sup>32</sup>

Note the insistence that our cognition is not immediately related to reality through sense. Note also that the data of sense are accorded reality in and through its relation to something subjective—the mind's intention of being. I understand this remark to mean that the data of sense are called real in virtue of our observing if they fit into our cognitional process to knowledge of being. This "indirect" knowledge of the reality of sense data explains why human cognition *involves* "taking a look" but does not *consist* in it. Like a pilot who cannot look out his window but must fly by instruments, so too our knowing at the crucial moment is confined to reading our interrogative reactions.

So crucial for Lonergan is some determination of the objectivity of our intention of being. Earlier in "Cognitional Structure," Lonergan insists that cognitional activity is intrinsically objective because knowing is related to being, and being and reality are the same. That last point is made in virtue of being's ineluctability: "That intention is unrestricted, for there is nothing that we cannot at least question. The same intention is comprehensive, for questioning probes every aspect of everything; its ultimate goal is the universe in its full concreteness. Being in that sense is identical with reality: as apart from being there is nothing, so apart from reality there is nothing; as being embraces the concrete totality of everything, so too does reality."<sup>33</sup>

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you see reflexively that the judgment (now as representation) is true and cannot be other than true as long as the existence continues to be there. The cause and criterion of the certainty is the existence that is apprehended." Owens, *Cognition*, 226. Also, "The real existence of the directly known object of perception or sensation turned out to be necessitating just on its own strength. It compelled a certainty judgment." Owens, *Cognition*, 254, also 227, 232, 235. Owens is saying that certitude can be attained by an apprehending gaze, by a seeing, a directly apprehending, of a concrete case of existence. For Lonergan knowledge is not taking a look, and there is no intellectual intuition or apprehension of concrete existence.

<sup>32</sup> Lonergan, "Cognitional Structure," 235–36.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

Also: "The objectivity of human knowing, then, rests upon an unrestricted intention and an unconditioned result. Because the intention is unrestricted, it is not restricted to the immanent content of knowing, to *Bewusstseinsinhalte*; at least, we can ask whether there is anything beyond that, and the mere fact that the question can be asked reveals that the intention, which the question manifests, is not limited by any principle of immanence."<sup>34</sup> It should be evident that Lonergan, like Maréchal and Rahner before him, is here using Aristotle's and Aquinas' "indirect demonstration" but interpreted in the Transcendental Thomist manner of retorsion, or performative self-contradiction. In sum, simply because one cannot consistently think a "beyond" to being, then nothing is beyond being. By this move, reality itself and the thought of being are identified.

In conclusion, Lonergan also is a Thomist who has jettisoned the fundamentally abstractive or *a posteriori* account of human knowledge. Radically speaking, truth is discovered in the grip of retorsion, by seeing that we cannot escape the mind's intention of being. In his *Verbum* articles, Lonergan, like Maréchal and Rahner, cites *De Ver.* 1, 9c: "I cannot take this passage as solely an affirmation of the reflective character found in every judgment. Not in every judgment do we reflect to the point of knowing our own essence and from that conclude our capacity to know truth. Rather, in this passage Aquinas subscribed, not obscurely, to the program of critical thought: to know truth we have to know ourselves and the nature of our knowledge, and the method to be employed is reflection."<sup>35</sup>

#### 4. JACQUES MARITAIN AND CRITICAL REALISM

Among students of Neo-Thomism, it is standard practice to draw an epistemological divide between Jacques Maritain, on the one hand, and the Transcendental Thomists on the other. And it is true that throughout his writings, Maritain maintained an *a posteriori* source in sensation for our concepts, and that his intuition-of-being thesis, so central for his metaphysics, is no exception to this.<sup>36</sup> Consequently,

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>35</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 75.

<sup>36</sup> For references see *supra*, Chap. 2, n. 1.

Maritain says, “in the final reckoning, the primary basis for the veracity of our knowledge” is the “resolving of the sense’s knowledge into the thing itself and actual existence.”<sup>37</sup> The incompatibility of Kantian-inspired transcendental method with Thomistic metaphysics had long been a matter of record with Etienne Gilson. In the fifth chapter of his *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, Gilson duly and incisively noted his disagreement with Maréchal’s *Cahier V*. The nub of Gilson’s disagreement is the purported ability of retorsion to transform a subjective necessity of thought into an objective necessity.<sup>38</sup> For instance, does the fact that I must think that there is something real mean that there is something real? Gilson was not impressed with performative self-contradiction as an indication of what could not be doubted. Hence, Gilson is at basic odds with Transcendental Thomism.

Until recently Maritain’s expressed disagreements with Maréchal were unknown to North American Thomists. In his excellent *Out of a Kantian Chrysalis? A Maritainian Critique of Fr. Maréchal*, Ronald McCamy brings to public attention letters between these men as well as *Revue Thomiste* articles from the early 1920s. Evidently Maritain followed very closely the publication of the volumes of *Le Point de départ*. The way McCamy tells the tale is that Maréchal’s previously described retorsion defense of realism ultimately satisfied Maritain, to wit, a purely phenomenal object is contradictory.<sup>39</sup> Yet Maritain continued to disagree on: the phantasm as “in some way the matter” of intellectual knowledge; how the phantasm as a modification of the

<sup>37</sup> Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 118, n. 1.

<sup>38</sup> “It would then be easy to show that nonintuitive thought like ours requires and posits, by the finality of its dynamism, ‘the independent reality of the ends it pursues.’ But, as Fr. Maréchal himself immediately adds, ‘from a strictly critical point of view a dynamic necessity, no matter how ineluctable, can of itself only be the basis for a subjective certitude.’ What resources does Kantian method place at our disposal in order to objectify that certitude? Absolutely none. To get around this difficulty Fr. Maréchal quickly adds that, if one could show that the reality of the ends of thought is not only a dynamic necessity but also a logical necessity, the task would be successfully completed. But this is not so, for, outside of relying unduly upon the data of the metaphysical critique, such a demonstration would lead only to an abstract necessity of thought which, no matter how absolute, does not guarantee the real existence of its object. In short, critical thought has imprisoned itself and can find no way to be reunited with reality.” Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, 141–42.

<sup>39</sup> Ronald McCamy, *Out of a Kantian Chrysalis? A Maritainian Critique of Fr. Maréchal* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998), 96–98.

subject can engender objective intentionality; the interpretation of the maxim “What is received is received to the mode of the receiver”; the extension of the divine mode of knowledge by interiority to the human intellect; the role of the agent intellect; and more. I believe McCamy’s account is accurate. But that judgment places Maritain in much greater agreement with the core Transcendental Thomist procedure of retorsion than one finds in Gilson.

In fact, one wonders if Maritain has sold the farm. For if retorsion alone can validate our concepts, what is wrong with further construing concepts as *a priori* constitutive projections? Maritain’s later disagreements pale in comparison with his earlier concession. Methodologically speaking, more agreement than less exists between Maritain and Maréchal. In fact, one could say that Maréchal’s most recalcitrant opponent is Gilson.

Here I want to underwrite this agreement by showing that in his *Degrees of Knowledge* elaboration of critical realism, Maritain effects an out-of-character liaison with the archetypal method of Transcendental Thomism—retorsion.

The thesis of Maritain’s critical realism (*le réalisme critique*) is that apart from the issue of the source of our concepts, there exists on the intellectual level a philosophically expressible nexus of thought with reality at least as possible. In other words, from our thought alone we do not know if anything is actual. Our thought does distance itself from reality as actual. Nevertheless, from our thought alone we do know how reality has to be if it is to be. In short, thought cannot divorce itself from reality as possible.<sup>40</sup> In particular, we do know simply on the level of thought that the principle of identity is more than a rule of thought. It expresses more than what something has to be to be thought. It expresses what something has to be even when it is not thought. For Maritain, a point exists at which thought is self-validating. It is not self-validating of reality as actual as the ontological argument for our thought of God purports to be. Rather, for Maritain thought is self-validating of the real at least as possible. This point confounds what Maritain understands to be the modern project of going from thought to reality. Thought for the moderns is one step further back than it is for Maritain. For the moderns, thought suc-

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<sup>40</sup> *Infra*, n. 42.

ceeds in divorcing itself even from the real as possible. Certainly from that point, any contact with the real seems impossible to achieve.<sup>41</sup>

Here is a listing of passages from *The Degrees* that express Maritain's critical realism position:

In fact, the intellect, *in virtue of its own proper activity*, perceives that *necessary* law of all *possible* being in an *actual* (and contingent) existent grasped by it *through* the sense. . . . But for critical reflection it is well to give distinct consideration to the primary datum (revealed by psychological and logical analysis) of the intellectual perception as such. And this is why we . . . say with R. Garrigou-Lagrange that awareness of the irrefutable certitude of the principle of identity as the law of all possible being is part of the first conscious (philosophical) grasp that constitutes the starting point of critique.<sup>42</sup>

Maritain acknowledges the sense origin of the principle of identity. But then notice the shift. It is not by an appeal to the principle's sense origin that critique validates the principle. Rather, for purposes of initiating a critique of knowledge, this abstractive origin can be placed aside. Now the "intellectual perception *as such*" of the principle validates it at least of the possible real. Later we will note just what is seen in the intellectual perception. Again:

[O]ur intellect, in simple apprehension, abstracts from existence in act and in its judgments it does not only judge of that which exists but also of a thing that can or cannot exist and of the *de jure* necessities contained in those essences. Thus, it is primarily with reference to the possible real that the value of intellectual knowledge "is justified," or better, confirmed or made explicit reflexively, and it is in reference to this that the critique of knowledge should primarily proceed.<sup>43</sup>

Maritain concedes that thought does succeed in abstracting its object from actual existence. Nevertheless, having gone that far, thought

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<sup>41</sup> "And as for the possibility of being in general, it is certified for us—even independently (*de jure*) of any perception of actual existence—by the very first judicative intuition of our intellect, for it affirms precisely that being is not non-being. But in a philosophy which starts only with thought, a philosophy according to which the mind attains at first only itself, how can we be sure that all our objects of thought are not beings of reason? That is where the Evil Genius plants his barb. That problem was crucial for Descartes (and for Leibniz, too). By the force of that violent splitting in two, that lived contradiction which is at the heart of idealism, must we not at last ask ourselves if being itself . . . is not a being of reason?" Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 134.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 92, n. 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

should acknowledge that its object cannot tear itself from possible real existence. Simply in the *abstracta* themselves are contained necessities bearing upon the requirements for the possibility or impossibility of actual existence. Critique primarily proceeds from these.

Especially strong expressions of the epistemologically autonomous validity of thought are found in these remarks: “And as for the possibility of being in general, it is certified, for us—even independently (*de jure*) of any perception of actual existence—by the very first judicative intuition of our intellect, for it affirms precisely that being is not non-being.”<sup>44</sup> At this point Maritain cites Garrigou-Lagrange: “We see at once that it is not only inconceivable, but really impossible, for a thing at once to be and not be. And we thus affirm already the objective and ontological value of the principle of contradiction before any judgment of existence, before reflecting that this primary affirmation presupposes ideas, and before verifying the fact that these ideas come to us by abstraction, from sensible things grasped by our senses.”<sup>45</sup> Maritain’s choice of this remark makes clear the relation between his critical realism project and the validation of ideas through sense. There is no relation. As mentioned, intellectual perception as such suffices to achieve validation.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>45</sup> It appears to be in this light that Maritain explains verification in metaphysics: “Metaphysics, however, does not verify its conclusions in sense data, nor like mathematics, in imagination. Nevertheless it too refers to the corruptible existence which can be attained by sensation. But it does so not to establish scientifically what are the realities it studies—those namely which constitute the subject matter of metaphysics, the being ‘common to the ten predicaments,’ created and material being taken as being—nor in order to know their essence.” Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics*, 22–23. Also, “Unlike the Philosophy of Nature, [metaphysics] has no need to find its terminus in the verifications of the sense in order to establish those truths which are superior to time.” Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 218. Garrigou-Lagrange appears to indulge in retorsion in these words: “Moreover, the intellect sees not only that idealism has not in fact found other evident principles which agree among themselves and with experience, but it sees also that idealism is not able to find others. Why? Because the principle of contradiction is immediately founded on our wholly first notion of being or of the real, presupposed by all other notions.” Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “Le Réalisme Thomiste et le mystère de la connaissance,” *Revue de philosophie* 38 (1931): 76. He makes the viability of idealism dependent upon getting outside the notion of being. Realism appears to be critically justified by ineluctability. If not the persons of Maritain and Garrigou-Lagrange, then their positions is what Gilson appears to have in mind when he says, “If you feel that abstraction should not presuppose its object, it would be far better to stop treating it as an abstraction, since there is no longer anything from which it could be

In a manner similar to the top-down epistemology of Transcendental Thomism, Maritain even employs intellectual critique to validate sense, not vice versa:

*Starting from that certainty*, [the intellect] reflexively confirms for itself (“justifies” to itself) the veracity of sense and its own certitude of the existence of the sensible world. Thus, it is nonsense [*non-sens*] to posit (as is constantly done) the problem of the import of intellectual knowledge by bringing into question, as real being other than the ego, not, first of all, possible extramental being, but only the existence or non-existence (in act) of the sensible world.<sup>46</sup>

Maritain leaves unelaborated the intellect’s reflexive confirmation of the veracity of sense. My best bet as to what he was thinking is this. The objectivity of the data of sense is no difficult matter, because we already know that our idea of being is true of all possible being. But we can grasp something true for all possible being only by taking it from some actual being. Now, being is taken from the object of sensation. Hence the object of sensation is an actual. In any case, noteworthy is how Maritain uses the unity of thing and object on the intellectual level to confirm unity of thing and object on the sense level.<sup>47</sup> Again, Maritain’s realism *qua* critical is done top-down.

Obviously, the heart of Maritain’s critical realism is the autonomous “intellectual perception as such.” Just what is it about such a perception that provides critique with the validation it seeks? Two texts give the answer. Following a paragraph that cites *Meta. IV*, the first text reads: “Through the performing of this task fundamental truths, especially the general validity of knowledge and first principles, are humbly confirmed—by reason of the impossibility of their contradictories.”<sup>48</sup> And why is it impossible to affirm the contradictories of the first principles? The second text reads:

All anyone has to do is to take counsel with himself and experience within himself the absolute impossibility in which the intellect finds itself: how can it think the principle of identity without positing the

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abstracted. Make it the idea of some Cartesian thought, but do not try to play two tables at one time.” Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, 193.

<sup>46</sup> Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 102, n. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Maritain’s procedure is top-down, but still different from the top-down approach of Transcendental Thomists. In Maritain’s approach, being remains related to sense as an *abstractum*; it never assumes the guise of a *projectum*, or *a priori*.

<sup>48</sup> Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 74.

extramental being (as at least possible) whose behavior this first-of-all-axioms expresses? A prime object, intelligible extramental being without which nothing is intelligible: that is the irrefutable factual datum that is thrust upon the intellect in the heart of its reflection wherein it becomes aware of its own movement towards its object.<sup>49</sup>

The mentioned “impossibility of the contradictory” is based on the intelligible primacy of being, such that being is implied in all other intellectual apprehensions. In other words, being is validated by its ineluctability. Because I cannot get beyond it in thought, there is nothing beyond it in thought. A being of reason is conceivable only in reference to something else. Because being cannot undergo a similar reference, it is known not to be a being of reason.

I find this foundation for Maritain’s critical realism strikingly similar to the retorsion foundation for Transcendental Thomism. Likewise does Gerald McCool. In his *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism*, McCool summarizes Maritain’s critical realism this way: “By validating the principle of identity through the technique of retortion and by rooting the objective judgment in extra-mental being at the outset of his philosophical reflection, Maritain provided a reflexive vindication of metaphysics as a necessary science of being.”<sup>50</sup> While concurring with McCool’s observation, I want to note that retorsion methodology is less characteristic of Maritain than of the Transcendental Thomist. For the latter, retorsion is the sole way to secure realism, because the *a posteriori* approach from sense is dogmatic and naive. But Maritain’s critical realism included an admission that being was abstracted from sense.

I noted Maritain’s acknowledgement of the admission, along with his insistence that for purposes of critique, critical realism can dispense with it. But even in the “Critical Realism” chapter, Maritain’s insistence is ambiguous. Despite emphasizing the “primacy” of the “intellectual perception as such” for critique and maintaining that “intellectual perception” is the “starting point” of critique, Maritain just as explicitly says, “in the final reckoning, the primary basis for the veracity of our knowledge” is the “resolving of the sense’s knowledge into the thing itself and actual existence.”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>50</sup> McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, 120–21.

<sup>51</sup> Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 118, n. 1.

The epistemological primacy of sensation is another current, though a minor one, in a chapter that appears to say the opposite, that is, in the final analysis, the primary basis for the veracity of our knowledge is the unbreakable unity on the intellectual level of thing as at least really possible and object. And some indication exists that in his later life, Maritain returned to this current. In *The Peasant of the Garrone* (1966), he avows that sensed actual existence is “the absolutely basic foundation of philosophical knowledge.”<sup>52</sup> Nowhere is there any talk *à la* critical realism about the “nonsense” of tying the import of intellectual knowledge with the existence of the sensible world. Rather, this “nonsense” appears to be in what the preceding remark indulges. Moreover, *contra* Husserl, Maritain’s continued expression of the inseparability of thought and thing thesis makes no mention of the “actual or possible” disjunction omnipresent in *The Degrees of Knowledge*.<sup>53</sup> Finally, *The Peasant* characterizes Aquinas’ philosophical realism as an “integral realism” (*un réalisme intégral*).<sup>54</sup> Though this language still differs from Gilson’s discussion of “methodic realism,” it also differs from Maritain’s own critical realism terminology that he so labored to defend in chapter 3 of *The Degrees of Knowledge*.

## 5. INADEQUACY OF RETORSION

Before arguing in defense of the thesis that both in itself and for Aquinas the validating of our basic concepts is fundamentally an abstractive affair, I will admit that I sympathize with the previously summarized Thomists. The *a posteriori*, or abstractive, approach to validate our concepts is a messy and laborious affair. The plethora of sense vagaries, for instance, the hallucination and dream possibilities, the relativity in perception, after-images, bright spots during migraines, the distorting effect of social and cultural biases, and so on, must be analyzed one after another. The amount of work does leave one pining for a silver bullet, and the ineluctability of intelligible being seems to be that missile. But just as Aquinas for truth’s sake

<sup>52</sup> Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garrone*, 100.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

forfeited the ease of Anselm's *Proslogion* argument for the tedious affair of Aristotle's proof from motion, I likewise must balk at the retorsion methodology to validate the objectivity of our knowledge and insist on the trek through the jungle of sense perception.

To understand the inadequacy of retorsion to secure objectivity, one must appreciate something that the previously described thinkers have in common. Whether one is talking about a dynamism to Infinite Being (Maréchal), to Absolute *Esse* (Rahner), the pure disinterested desire to know (Lonergan), or the intuition of being (Maritain), in each case one is referring to an inescapable context of thought. There is a way of thinking that we cannot shake off. We have a familiarity with other contexts of thought that make a difference in how objects appear, as when the object looks one way outside the context and another way within it. For example, biases and prejudices can determine how things come across. In the light of racial prejudice, white bigots are unable to appreciate something done by a black person in good faith. A smile, a courtesy, will be taken as a setup, unemployment as indicative of lazy character, employment as indicative of another white person's mercy rather than the black person's merit, and so on. The bigot constantly interprets what is given in the light of preconceptions. Yet given this awareness of how contexts can function, is it illegitimate to wonder whether the inescapable ways of thinking mentioned above are not like a matrix that presents the object in a way different than it is outside the framework?

Our thinkers are sensitive to this concern. To address it, they offer performative self-contradiction or retorsion: any attempt to doubt the framework employs the framework and so nullifies the doubt. For example, the thought of things possibly outside the framework, if looked at closely, remains the thought of those things within the framework. In other words, real doubt of the framework presupposes the ability to mentally stand apart from the framework; but this is impossible. Hence, one concludes that the framework is objective.

My reply is that retorsion misses the basis for the skeptic's doubt. The skeptic is not saying that the ultimate context might be revealing the data as other than it is because the skeptic can in some way transcend the context. The ultimate context can be admitted as ineluctable. Rather, if the skeptic's objection is closely studied, his case for possible distortion rests not on the eluctability of the context but upon a familiarity with less fundamental or less encompassing ones.

It is not by a look ahead that the skeptic's question arises, but by a look back. The look back to less encompassing contexts acquaints the skeptic with the notion of something standing outside a context and with the notion of the context placing the thing in a different light. Contexts can be limited and distortive. The skeptic, naturally and correctly in my opinion, wonders if such is the case with the *a priori* intellectual dynamism. Why may not it be actually limited too?<sup>55</sup>

Retorsion, then, is indecisive. The ineluctability of the context that retorsion indicates is a phenomenon that could very well follow simply from the fundamentality of the context. The ineluctability of the context is not an exclusive property following upon the objectivity of the context. Given what can be true of contexts, retorsion could very well be indicating merely how we have to think rather than the way reality is. The "screeching" of performative self-contradiction could quite well indicate a grinding of merely mental gears and not any manhandling of reality.

It is sometimes said that no doubt about the objectivity of the context should exist, because the Transcendental Thomist admits and insists that the knower initially apprehends really existing things.<sup>56</sup> This admission is then used to guarantee the objectivity of any mediating factors that he uncovers subsequently. In short, the mediating factor must be objective because the knower is apprehending real things.

This move, however, has the tail wagging the dog. If the Transcendental Thomist insists on introducing a genuine constitutive *a priori* or mediating context, then given what I have said can be true of mediating contexts, the knower is not permitted to make any assertions about the objectivity of the thing mediated until the objectivity of the mediating context itself has been checked out. In other words, the introduction of a mediating context compromises any previous realist claims. These must be placed on hold until the objectivity of

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<sup>55</sup> Hence the skeptic's doubt has nothing to do, as Maréchal claimed (*supra*, n. 14 and the following two quotes), with the lust for "intellectual intuition." The skeptic is hesitant because of weakness inherent in the retorsion methodology. Gilson agrees; see *supra*, n. 38.

<sup>56</sup> In his "Metaphysics as Horizon," in Crowe, ed., *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan, S.J.*, 212, Lonergan compares Gilson and Coreth. Lonergan insists that like Gilson, Coreth is an immediate realist for whom metaphysics has a priority over cognitional theory. Yet unlike Gilson, Coreth insists that this immediate realism can be "mediated."

the mediating context has been verified—something that, in my opinion, cannot be done.

The Neo-Thomist who proceeds to uncover the variegated structure of the human knower does not have this problem of placing realist assertions on hold. Yes, he too begins the analysis from an immediate realism, but nowhere in the analysis as it uncovers sense and intellectual faculties does he introduce items the nature of which could be construed as a constitutive *a priori* or as a mediating context.<sup>57</sup> Even the traditional doctrine of the agent intellect is no support for a constitutive understanding of the knowing powers. To be such a support, the agent intellect's illumination would have to be analogically construed along the lines of "colored" light. Colored light presents things in a way different than they appear otherwise. It "adds" to the perception of the object. In the traditional account, however, the agent intellect is analogically compared to natural light. But natural light is colorless. And so without projecting color, natural light lets one see color that is in the object. Accordingly, the analogy should run: just as natural light is a condition for seeing color without being a case of color, so too the agent intellect is a condition for knowledge without being a case of knowledge.

It is impossible to see any constitutive role in the vein of transcendental philosophy being assumed by the agent intellect. Furthermore, the aptness of this standard analogy for conveying the agent intellect derives from the fact that the object of intellection is the same content found in the individual, but now in a universal manner. Content-wise, man is simply Socrates written large. I see no basis in the facts of cognition requiring the insertion of a constitutive *a priori* factor in order to go from the individual to the intellectual concept.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Transcendental Thomists would note that Aquinas' use of the maxim "Whatever is received into something is received according to the condition of the recipient" indicates a sympathy for their thesis of an *a priori* factor for the intellect. They read the maxim as saying that the subject makes its own contribution to the received. If the receiving subject is the intellect, then the intellect's own contribution will have to be understood in the fashion of an *a priori* factor. But in my opinion, this reading misunderstands Aquinas' use of the maxim. As the maxim is used of the intellect at *S.T. I*, 75, 5c, it does not signal an *addition* by the intellect to what is received, but a *subtraction* from the received, viz., the intellect receives the form without the matter. To be an *a priori* factor, however, the intellect should be adding, not subtracting, something. The senses in their own manner receive form without the matter; see Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 14, 1c.

<sup>58</sup> Of course, Transcendental Thomists would disagree with me on the transcen-

For the Neo-Thomist, the knowing faculties are all more like key-holes that admit some keys but not others. They are unlike a pencil sharpener, which can modify what it admits. Yet the latter does analogically describe what is the case with the constitutive understanding of the knowing faculties.

In a word, the Transcendental Thomist fails to beat the Kantian at his own game. Since no one can confidently say that assertions express more than how the mind works, then Kant's strictures on classical metaphysics remain in place. Also, obviously, skepticism about the objectivity of intellectual dynamism blocks any use of Transcendental Thomism to underwrite a systematic pluralism that avoids relativism. The hope was that since intellectual dynamism is objective, then the conceptually distinct metaphysics that circle the dynamism could all be regarded as true but finite expressions of reality. Somewhat similarly, each great baseball player is a true but finite and limited expression of the analogon of *great baseball player* itself. But the inability to secure confidently the objectivity of the dynamism means that equally possible is that each conceptually irreducible metaphysics is a finite and limited expression of what is false. Now each metaphysics stands as neither true nor false. It falls on our free choice to make what we want of them. Relativism and arbitrariness are rampant.

Coupled with Transcendental Thomist criticisms of aposteriorism, does my criticism of retorsion leave the Thomist between a rock and a hard place? It is too early to tell. Lonergan's complaint that the notion of being cannot be rooted in the sense data *à la* naive realism because of the data's compatibility with phenomenalism and idealism has been met in Chapter 3. *Contra* the sallies of methodic doubt, the self-manifestly real character of the data can be given articulation. There need be little wonder that our notion of being contains the notion of real existence and so compels *An sit* as the crowning question. In aposteriorism, concepts give general expression to the data. Self-manifestly real data will release a notion of being that involves the idea of real existence.

Maréchal's complaints, echoed by Rahner, are another story. At the start of this chapter, I conceded that our present thinking of

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dent, separate from matter, notions of metaphysics. But as I indicated at the end of Chap. 2, I will be taking Owens' interpretation here. In other words, it suffices to begin metaphysics simply with the *habens esse* understanding of the *ratio entis*. The immateriality of the notion is worked out in the unfolding of the science.

being as what really exists does not transcend the material order. For the abstraction proponent, the data controls the abstraction. Currently, the real data are sensible and material. Moreover, there seems to be some truth to the claim that abstraction conjoined with reasoning will not improve matters. At the start of this chapter, I noted that in *S.T.* I, 44, 2c during the first two stages of Western philosophy in which *ens* is considered in terms of either accidental or substantial form, reasoning to a cause not only failed to reach God but also failed to reach spiritual reality. In Chapter 2 we also saw Aquinas attaining spiritual realities, specifically, God, separate substances, and the rational soul, by the prerogative of a metaphysics whose consideration of *ens* is in terms of *esse*, not *forma*.

*S.T.* 44, 2c also described a third stage of philosophical speculation whose consideration was *ens inquantum est ens*, a formula that Aquinas elsewhere employs for the subject of metaphysics. Here the consideration includes not just the accidental and substantial determinations of existing bodies but their *esse* as well. What is not clear at this point is whether this third stage can be elaborated *a posteriori*. The Transcendental Thomists have said nothing about that. I will. My premise has the advantage of initiating metaphysics just in terms of the *habens esse* sense of *ens* and of using the *esse* dimension of *ens* to reach a being that is unequivocally infinite. If real things are finite, then a finite cause will always logically suffice to account for them. This objection is decisive for the Aristotelian Neo-Thomists, who define being in terms of possession of formal act. Formal act in itself is something limited and determinate. That is why even if formal act is conceived as not further limited by reception in some subject, in other words, if it is conceived as subsistent, formal act fails to reach the height of an all-perfect being.

But Existential Thomists could dodge this bullet. For them being is basically understood in terms of possessing *esse*, or *actus essendi*. This is a further and different type of act than formal act. Its addition to a thing does not further determine the thing in the same way as accidents of complexion, height, and posture further determine a human being. In this respect existential act is not a real predicate, and Kant correctly remarked that no difference exists between the possible and the actual. For Aquinas existential act does add to the thing, but it does not add a formal determination. It is a non-formal act whose purpose is to actuate the thing with all of its formal deter-

minations. Because existential act is of itself non-formal, then even where it is admittedly limited by the things whose act it is, one would still recognize a subsistent instance of it to be all-perfect.

In other words, the Transcendental Thomist presupposes that all *a posteriori* reasoning must begin from limited formal act. With that presupposition, pure or subsistent act will still be limited. But with the *esse* of things, *a posteriori* reasoning has a starting point described as limited non-formal act. A pure and subsistent act in this sense will be all-perfect. An *a posteriori* elaboration of Aquinas' *habens esse* understanding of the *ratio entis* is a desideratum for excusing oneself from the kamikaze feat of a transcendental turn in Thomistic metaphysics.

## 6. RETORSION AND *DE VER.* 1, 9

Yet what about *De Ver.* 1, 9c, and *In IV Meta., lectio 7*? Do these texts reveal Aquinas to be a crypto-transcendental philosopher? I will take each in turn. The topic of article 9 is whether truth exists in the sense power. Aquinas answers qualifiedly. Truth exists both in the intellect and in sense, but not in the same way. The difference is that the intellect knows the truth it possesses, but sense does not. Aquinas describes the intellect's knowledge of truth in the second paragraph of the *responsio*:

[Truth] is in the intellect (1) as following the act of the intellect and (2) as known through the intellect. [Truth] follows the operation of the intellect insofar as the judgment [*iudicium*] of the intellect is about the thing according as it is. [Truth] is known by the intellect insofar as the intellect reflects upon its act, not only insofar as it knows its act, but insofar as the intellect knows the proportion [of its act] to the thing: which is not able to be known unless the nature of its act has been known [*nisi cognita natura ipsius actus*]; which is not able to be known unless the nature of the active principle is known [*nisi cognoscatur natura principii activii*], which is the intellect, in whose nature it is to be conformed to things; hence according to this the intellect knows truth, that it reflects upon itself [*supra seipsum reflectitur*].

After remarking that truth both exists in the intellect and is known by the intellect, Aquinas explains both points. On the existence of truth in the intellect, he says, "truth follows the operation of the

intellect inasmuch as it belongs to the intellect to judge about a thing as it is.” Aquinas discussed this doctrine back in article 3. Treating the question of whether truth is only in the composing and dividing intellect, he remarks, “the nature of truth is first found in the intellect when the intellect begins to possess something proper to itself [*aliquid proprium*], not possessed by the thing outside the soul [*res extra animam*], yet corresponding to it, so that between the two—intellect and thing—an adequation may be found.” Such a moment is the intellect’s judgment: “when the intellect begins to judge about the thing it has apprehended, then its judgment [*iudicium*] is something proper to itself—not something found outside in the thing.” But the intellect judges “at the moment when it says that something is or is not.” In article 3 (and consequently article 9), Aquinas uses the words *iudicare* and *iudicium* to designate the intellect’s formation of propositions. *Contra Gentiles* I, 58, *Amplius. Propositionis* confirms this equation: “Furthermore, in the case of a proposition formed by a composing and dividing intellect, the composition itself exists in the intellect, not in the thing that is outside the soul [*in ipso intellectu existit, non in re quae est extra animam*].” In speaking of the proposition as what exists only in the soul, this text also identifies what *De Ver.* 1, 3c, called “proper to the intellect and not possessed by the thing outside the soul.”

Yet this correlation of judging with the intellect’s composing of a proposition fails to reveal the fundamental nature of the *secunda operatio intellectus*. Earlier at *In I Sent.* d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7m, Aquinas characterizes the enunciation, or proposition, as a sign (*signum*) of the *secunda operatio*. In contrast, the *secunda operatio* itself is what *respicit esse rei*.<sup>59</sup> What, then, is the fundamental nature of the second operation itself?

Suitable help comes from Aquinas’ discussions of how God knows the truth of enunciatives, especially as the enunciatives bear upon singulars.<sup>60</sup> These discussions involve explaining God’s knowledge of

<sup>59</sup> “[P]rima operatio respicit quidditatem rei; secunda respicit *esse ipsius*. Et quia ratio veritatis fundatur in *esse*, et non in quidditate, ut dictum est; ideo veritas et falsitas proprie invenitur in secunda operatione, et in signo ejus quod est enuntiatio.” Aquinas, *In I Sent.* d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7m; Mandonnet, ed., *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 1, 489.

<sup>60</sup> Aquinas, *In I Sent.* d. 38, q. 1, a. 3 and *De Ver.* 2, 7. The title of the *De Veritate* article is: “Utrum Deus cognoscat singulare nunc *esse* vel non *esse* . . . et hoc est quaerere, utrum cognoscat enuntiabilia, et praecipue circa singularia.”

particular things. One can conclude that a grasp of the basic nature of the human intellect's second act lies in an understanding of its knowledge of the singular.

In abundant texts Aquinas tells how the human intellect knows the singular. The reiterated Thomistic opinion is that the human intellect knows the universal directly but knows the singular by a reflection to sense or imagination.<sup>61</sup> This reflection should, then, be what Aquinas understands as the "composing" of the intellect's second operation itself.

The *Contra Gentiles* once again provides a double-check. At C.G. II, 96, *Palam*, while showing that angels do not draw their knowledge from sensibles, Aquinas mentions as a contrast the human intellect's twofold operation. Of the second operation he says: "[Noster intellectus] composit autem aut dividit applicando intelligibilia prius abstracta ad res." The thought is quite clear: our intellect composes or divides by applying previously abstracted intelligibles to the thing. The composing of the intellect's second operation is its reflective reintegration of its knowledge of a commonality with its knowledge of an instance from which it drew the commonality.<sup>62</sup>

These reflections allow one to distinguish in Aquinas' thought a cognitional activity sense of judgment, that is, what I have just elaborated as the basic nature of the *secunda operatio*, from a propositional sense of judgment.<sup>63</sup> The intellect's "composing" is likewise ambiguous. On the one hand, the intellect can be composing its awareness of the abstracted universal with its awareness of the singu-

<sup>61</sup> Aquinas, *In II Sent.* d. 3, q. 3, a. 3, ad 1m. Also *De Ver.* 2, 6c.

<sup>62</sup> Back at *De Ver.* 2, 6, ad 3m, Aquinas describes man's reflective knowledge of the singular in terms strikingly similar to C.G. II, 96: "ideo potest applicare universalem cognitionem quae est in intellectu, ad particulare." *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, ed. Raymundus Spiazzi, in Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae*, vol. 1 (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1964), 18.

<sup>63</sup> "[J]udgment' has two meanings that require careful distinction. In one meaning it is the dynamic intellectual act by which synthesizing existence is being grasped. In the other meaning, it is the static, frozen representation of that action's cognitional form. In the first meaning, it denotes the 'second operation' of the intellect. . . . In the first meaning, the object of the cognition is an actual existential synthesizing that is taking place before its gaze. In the other meaning, the object is a static representation of that synthesizing, even though that synthesizing is no longer taking place." Owens, "Judgment and Truth in Aquinas," 47. Also, "Accordingly, 'judgment,' in its technical sense of knowing existence, is a different activity from the constructing of propositions." Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence*, 22; "What is known *dynamically* through judgment is represented *statically* in a proposition," 24.

lar. On the other hand, the intellect can be composing the proposition or enunciation. As far as *De Ver.* 1, 3, and 9 go, the texts seem to employ my latter mentioned senses of judgment and composition.

Different as these senses of judgment and composition are, a relation exists between them. As noted, the *secunda operatio intellectus* has as its sign the enunciation, or proposition. Thanks to this relation of signification, truth comes to be in the intellect. The reason is that now the intellect has something found in itself, specifically, the proposition, that nevertheless corresponds to the thing, as that is the object of the cognitional activity sense of judgment.

I have tried to explain what Aquinas means by saying at *De Ver.* 1, 9c that truth comes to be in the intellect insofar as the intellect's judgment is about the thing as it is. Aquinas' next point is that this truth becomes known when the intellect reflectively grasps the proportion of its act to the thing. Given my interpretation so far, Aquinas should mean that truth is known when the intellect grasps the proportion between the proposition and the object of judgment in the cognitional activity sense. But after saying that the intellect knows the truth it possesses by reflecting upon its own act and the proportion of its act to the thing, *De Ver.* 1, 9c goes on to say that this proportion cannot be known without knowing the nature of the intellect itself. Aquinas summarizes this line by saying that the intellect knows truth by reflecting upon itself. What is Aquinas driving at? The answer should be clear if one recalls a noted line from article 3. There Aquinas insists that truth is the adequation of the thing and the intellect. Hence truth requires two things. First, truth requires something proper (*proprium*) to the intellect and not possessed by the thing outside the soul. Second, this something proper to the intellect must nevertheless correspond to the extra-mental thing so that an adequation results. As I noted, the thing proper to the intellect is the proposition. Obviously, then, knowledge of truth is impossible without self-awareness. The intellectual knower must be capable of reflecting completely on itself to apprehend the item proper to itself and corresponding to the thing outside the soul. Without this complete self-reflection, our awareness of the existence of truth cannot come to be.

That is all Aquinas is intending to say. One cannot construe it as a transcendental analysis intent upon uncovering an *a priori*. The reflection bears upon the intellect as it sees itself proceeding *a poste-*

*riori* and producing within itself a true proposition.<sup>64</sup> The Transcendental Thomist undoubtedly will object that my commentary fails to do justice to the text. For as the condition for knowing truth, Aquinas speaks of the intellect knowing its nature, not just knowing itself. This talk of knowing the nature of the active principle indicates a more profound knowledge than the intellect's self-awareness.

In reply, two good reasons exist to take the words "unless the nature of the active principle is known" simply as "unless the intellect itself is known." In other words, the first is merely a more formal way of stating the second. First, at *In II Sent.* d. 19, q. 1, a. 1c, Aquinas argues the incorruptibility of the human soul. As a third reason for the soul's having an absolute operation, that is, one in which no corporeal organ participates, Aquinas mentions that the intellect understands itself: *intellectus intelligit se*. The elaboration of the third reason has two striking parallels to the remainder of the *responsio* of *De Ver.* 1, 9. The first is that Aquinas gives Avicenna's explanation of the lack of self-reflexivity in a sense power, the need for an organ as a medium would split the power in half. The second parallel is that Aquinas cites the same text of the *Liber de Causis*: "Omnis sciens qui scit essentiam suam, est rediens ad essentiam suam reditione completa." Noteworthy is how Aquinas brings in this quote. He introduces it by way of a summarizing remark simply about the soul's knowledge of *itself*. Aquinas' transposition of self-knowledge into the knower's knowledge of its essence seems a merely terminological concession to the author of the *Liber de Causis*.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> In fact, according to Charles Boyer, "The Meaning of a Text of St. Thomas: *De Veritate*, Q. 1, A. 9," edited as the appendix in Peter Hoenen, ed., *Reality and Judgment According to St. Thomas* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 306–7, the very grammar of the passage is at odds with a transcendental interpretation. Aquinas says that the proportion of the intellect's act to the thing is not able to be known unless the nature of the act has been known: *nisi cognita natura ipsius actus*. Here the past tense is employed. Yet Aquinas shifts to the present tense when talking of knowledge of the intellect's nature. The nature of the act is not able to be known unless the nature of the active principle is known: *nisi cognoscatur natura principii activi*. The knowledge of the nature of the active principle seems simultaneous with knowledge of the nature of the act. This would preclude a knowledge of the intellect by transcendental method. For my discussion of Boyer's classic article, see "Transcendental Thomism and *De Veritate*, I, 9," in John F. X. Knasas, ed., *Thomistic Papers VI* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1994), 238–45.

<sup>65</sup> Later in his commentary on proposition 15 of the *Liber de Causis*, Aquinas says that "anima sciat essentiam suam, redeat ad essentiam suam reditione" means the same as Proculus' "omne suiipsius cognitivum ad seipsum omniquaque conversivum

Second, at other places Aquinas distinguishes a twofold knowledge of the soul.<sup>66</sup> On the one hand, there exists by self-reflection a particular knowledge of one's own soul, its acts, and its species. On the other hand, there exists by our reasoning from objects, to acts, to powers, a common knowledge of the soul. This second knowledge is a knowledge of the soul's essence and demands, in the words of *S.T.* I, 87, 1c, "careful and subtle inquiry." But Aquinas already makes this division at *In III Sent.* d. 23, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3m, and there, in elaborating the first kind of knowledge he again mentions that cognitive powers using an organ as a medium cannot know the existence of their own acts. The use of this argument in the context of the soul's particular knowledge of itself indicates to me, then, that in *De Ver.* 1, 9c the context is again simply the soul's particular knowledge of itself.

In sum, *De Ver.* 1, 9's talk of knowing the nature of the active principle as a condition of knowing truth understandably leads some to suspect an inchoate reference to transcendental method. But if one takes up the article in the light of article 3 and earlier texts from the *Sentences* commentary, one knows how to understand the terminology—to wit, to know the nature of the active principle means just to know the active principle itself.<sup>67</sup> In conclusion, the intellect's

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est." *Sancti Thomae de Aquino super Liberum de Causis Expositio*, ed. H. D. Saffrey, (Fribourg: Société Philosophique, 1954), 90. Finally, it bears pointing out that Aquinas' mention of the soul's self-knowledge at *C.G.* II, 49, *Item Nullius*, and 66, *Item*, lacks the *De Causis* terminology.

<sup>66</sup> "[T]his does not prevent the intellect, by a certain reflexion, from understanding itself, and its act of understanding, and the species whereby it understands. Indeed, it understands its own act of understanding in two ways: particularly, for it understands that it presently understands; universally, so far as it reasons about the nature of its act. So, likewise, the intellect understands both itself and the intelligible species in two ways: by perceiving its own being and its possession of an intelligible species—and this is a kind of particular knowing; by considering its own nature and that of the intelligible species, which is a universal knowing. It is in this latter mode that the intellect and the intelligible are treated in the sciences." Aquinas, *C.G.* II, 75, *Licet*; trans. James Anderson, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 236–37, n. 13. Also Aquinas, *De Ver.* 10, 8c and *S.T.* I, 87, 1c.

<sup>67</sup> No incompatibility exists between the intellectual knower's immediate self-awareness and the understanding that its nature is to be conformed to things. Boyer, "The Meaning of a Text," 307–8, says: "[W]hen the faculty which sees the essence of the act is the same which produces it, then it grasps in a living unity both the fruit of its own activity and the natural direction of its own movement. The intellect in perceiving itself as actually knowing judges itself to be a faculty of knowing, just as a plant, if it could sense itself forming grapes, would know itself as a grapevine

knowing truth by reflecting upon itself is perfectly satisfied by thinking the claim through in the light of *De Ver.* 1, 3c. Consequently, the claim means that the intellect's capacity to self-reflect grasps the proportion between the thing and the proposition about the thing formed within the intellect itself. To go further forces the passage out of context.

### 7. RETORSION AND *IN IV META., LECTIO 7*

A final issue is whether, as claimed by Transcendental Thomists, Aquinas espouses the method of retorsion in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, book IV. Aquinas is defending the objectivity of the first principle: "a thing cannot be and not be at the same time and in the same respect." By the retorsion interpretation, Aquinas is "demonstrating" that the principle is more than a law of thought simply by illustrating that the skeptic implicitly affirms the principle in his very doubt of it, for at least his doubt is itself and not its contradictory. Hence the doubt destroys itself, and so the principle must be affirmed. In sum, because I necessarily think a certain way, then reality is that way.

Is this Aquinas? Aquinas says:

[B]ut it is necessary to take as a starting point that a term signifies something both to the one who utters it, inasmuch as he himself understands what he is saying, and to someone else who hears him. But if such a person does not admit this, he will not say anything meaningful either for himself or for someone else, and it will then be idle to dispute with him. But when he has admitted this, a demonstration will at once be possible against him; for there is straightway found to be something definite and determinate which is signified by the term distinct from its contradictory.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the absence of the Transcendental Thomist phraseologies of *retorsion*, *performative self-contradiction*, *implicit to explicit*, and

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(grape producer)." Likewise, "To know that by nature its act makes it conformed to things and to know that it is a faculty of conforming itself to things, is this not to know one and the same truth?" Boyer, "The Meaning of a Text," 307. In sum, because of the intimacy of act to principle here, to know the act's conformity to the real is to know the principle's same conformity.

<sup>68</sup> *In IV Meta., lectio 7*, n. 611; trans. Rowan, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, 227.

*subjective to objective necessity*, Aquinas' thinking, at least at first glance, appears similar to these things. The passage seems to say that because thought to be thought must be definite, then reality is definite. Everything is not its contradictory.

But the identity is an illusion. Only by anachronistically construing Aquinas' opponents as the Kantian opponents of the Transcendental Thomists does the identity appear. But Aquinas' opponents are all realists, a position from which Kantian types would scrupulously divorce themselves. Unlike Kantians, Aquinas' opponents do not entrench themselves in skepticism that maintains that the first principle might be only subjectively true. Rather, Aquinas' opponents make reality claims. They say that the first principle is not true of reality; contradiction is true of reality. To a Thomist, this position may be monstrous, but it is a realist one. Correctly understood, the opponents are not in thought but in reality.

Closer scrutiny validates this realist characterization. In the indicated paragraph numbers, Aquinas divides his opponents into two groups. The first comprises Heraclitus (683), Protagoras (637), Empedocles (675), Democritus (670), and Anaxagoras (666). They have been led to affirm that reality is contradictory because of difficulties. These difficulties include that contraries are generated from the same thing (665), and that contrary opinions appear equally true (669–70). Note that in both cases a presumed realism is driving the thinkers to deny the first principle. Unlike the Kantian whom the Maréchal is trying to move from thought to reality, Aquinas' opponents are already in reality, for they are using what they think they know of reality to deny the first principle.

Aquinas' second group of opponents are those who deny the first principle because it cannot be demonstrated. A study of Aquinas' treatment of them raises some pertinent observations. They can save their own thought and not suffer a reduction to the level of plants only by affirming that what exists is what is perceived. But that result is unacceptable "because many things are and come to be of which there is neither opinion nor knowledge, for example things which exist in the depths of the sea or in the bowels of the earth."<sup>69</sup> These thinkers likewise cannot be Kantian-style ones who begin in subjectivity,

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<sup>69</sup> *In IV Meta.*, lectio 15, n. 716; trans. Rowan, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, 265.

for subjectivism is used as a threat against them and their position. In other words, subjectivism is not where these thinkers are, but where they will end up. Moreover, when it comes time to criticize subjectivism, Aquinas does not initiate retorsion. Rather, he simply makes the *a posteriori* remark that we know that things exist unobserved.

In conclusion, if the realist nature of Aquinas' opponents is acknowledged, then one understands how his defense of the first principle differs from the retorsion interpretation of the same. Despite *prima facie* similarities, Aquinas' defense differs by including a suppressed premise: "Thought is about the real." This residual realism enables Aquinas to catch the deniers in self-contradiction. All that is required is that the deniers say something meaningful. In other words, if thinking is determined by the real, then to employ words to say something definite is to admit that something definite exists. Everything is not its opposite, and so the principle is affirmed. On the other hand, if the real is the contradictory, it is not definite and so thinking itself should not be.

The Kantian denies this realism consisting in the conformity of thought to reality. The Kantian admits only that thinking is determined by thought itself. As a result, performative self-contradictions in thinking point to what may be exigencies in thought alone. There is no manifest way to go beyond thought to the real. Aquinas' indirect approach would leave a Kantian cold. But it was never meant to deal with a Kantian. The approach is at home in realism. Taken out of that context, it loses all efficacy. Confronted by the Kantian, the appropriate Thomistic response is a patient elaboration of the data revealing that the universal is not added to the data but found within it.<sup>70</sup> For the realist, there is no substitute for abstraction from the real thing directly present in sense.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> For example, see Henle, *Method in Metaphysics*, 29–35.

<sup>71</sup> The anachronism point continues to hold of Transcendental Thomists who cite *S.T. I, 2, 1, 3 obj.* (Vd. Donceel, *A Maréchal Reader*, 89–91; and Donceel, "Transcendental Thomism," 81.) In his reply Aquinas concedes the following portion of the objection: "For whoever denies the existence of truth grants that truth does not exist: and, if truth does not exist, then the proposition *Truth does not exist* is true: and if there is anything true, there must be truth." In sum, one cannot deny truth under pain of contradiction. So the argument presumes that the non-contradiction principle is more than a rule of thought. What is the basis for the presumption? It should be *Meta. IV*, in which, as noted, the opponent is not a Kantian but an *a posteriori* realist. For the Kantian, all the above *Summa* text would prove is that if one is to think, one has to think as if there is truth.

## The Richness of the *Ratio Entis*

EVEN THOUGH not all twentieth-century Thomists regard the *ratio entis* as non-abstractly validated, the *ratio* remains for all a central object of philosophical reflection. For the Existential Thomists especially, reflection discovers that the *ratio entis* is analogical—a commonality, an object of the intellect's first operation, that is shot through the very differences of all things. The *ratio entis* is a first order, or first intention, sameness-in-difference. Along with the trumpeting of the *esse* dimension of the *ratio entis*, the insistence on the analogical nature of the *ratio* is a precious legacy of Neo-Thomism. Throughout the remainder of the book, I will illustrate how the Neo-Thomist understanding of the analogical character of being plays a central role in issues of great human importance. First, beginning in this chapter I want to present the analogical character of the *ratio* as making understandable, in this time during which knowledge is only instrumentally valued, how the life of the mind is called forth. Knowledge for its own sake has a value. At this point the *ratio entis* may seem vague and nondescript, an empty frame without distinctive content, or only minimally so. All richness may seem to be back in the data and absent from the concept. Yet further reflection will show otherwise. Because of its analogical nature, the *ratio entis* will be richer than any datum. The *ratio* will embrace within its sameness the very differences of the data. In that light the data will profile themselves as pouring from an eminently rich intelligibility. The *ratio entis* assumes the status of a transcendental—an analogous notion that applies to everything, both the actual and conceivable. To some measure we apprehend such an understanding of the *ratio entis*. And to do so is to experience an earthquake in one's intellectual life. Thereafter one is not the same. Everything becomes of interest, because every thing in its uniqueness gives one another look at the *ratio entis*, whose treasure contains this difference and who knows what else. The more different beings that one knows, the better does one see the sameness that contains them all. In such manner one easily

appreciates why some are fascinated with the intellectual life, with knowing simply for the sake of knowing. Any item of knowledge is another bloom in the bouquet of being that they are assembling in their minds.

Also, in Chapter 8 I argue that the Neo-Thomist interpretation of the analogical character of being lies behind Aquinas' discussions of the good, the *ratio boni*. This connection makes understandable how the good ignites in us an automatic volition for it. Nevertheless, faced with individual beings we are poised with a genuine indetermination, a real freedom. Finally, if we find ourselves poised before an individual that is a fellow human being, our fellow's intellection of being (also the good) obliges our freedom to be exercised in a respectful and solicitous manner. In short, the reader will see that the analogical character of being addresses key issues both in the philosophy of the human person and of ethics.

Since Aquinas philosophically reaches God as subsistent existence, *esse subsistens*, I contend in Chapter 7 that the analogical character of the *ratio entis* in respect to its *esse commune* dimension is important for understanding how the philosopher achieves a confused knowledge, a *cognitio confusa*, of the divine quiddity. The philosophically attained quidditative knowledge is behind key issues in the philosophy of God, specifically, arguments for the divine infinity and the discernment of middle terms by which to argue the divine knowledge and volition.

Finally in Chapter 9 I insist that the preceding analysis of the human person as what I will call an intellector of being permits one to sketch the delicate line that divides the orders of nature and grace. Understood in terms of the analogical concept of being, the metaphysician's *cognitio confusa* of the divine quiddity can produce, as Aquinas says, the "greatest joy in the soul" such that it marks a decisive achievement in the natural order. This achievement makes some sense of a natural end that would, in turn, establish the gratuity of the supernatural order. But because this metaphysical contemplation is *via* an analogical concept, an evoked natural desire to know being directly and immediately would coexist with this contemplation. This natural desire renders the supernatural not so gratuitous as to become superfluous to us.

The Neo-Thomist interpretation of the analogical character of being is a veritable source for creativity within Thomism and philoso-

phy generally. For its presentation here in Chapter 5, one can do no better than to begin with Jacques Maritain. In incomparable prose, Maritain portrays the character of analogy as the intellectual perception of sameness-in-difference. But since that way of speaking is *prima facie* oxymoronic and is not *ad litteram* in Aquinas, I follow the Maritainian interpretation of analogy with an exegesis of Aquinas' texts. Though Aquinas never speaks that way, he is thinking that way. The chapter's remainder discusses two views opposed to Maritain's interpretation that, if correct, would rob analogical concepts of the intelligible richness that they possess in Maritain's account. With the methodology of the chapter clear, I turn to Maritain.

### 1. MARITAIN'S INTELLECTUAL PERCEPTION OF BEING

Jacques Maritain wrote passionately of the grasp of this intelligibility when he spoke of one sense of *l'intuition de l'être*.<sup>1</sup>

Let us have the courage to require our intellect, acting as such, to look the reality signified by the term [being] in the face. It is something primordial, at once very simple and very rich and, if you will, inexpressible in the sense that it is that whose perception is the most difficult to describe because it is the most immediate. Here we are at the root, at last laid bare, of our entire intellectual life. You may say, if you please, for I am here attempting to employ a purely descriptive terminology as a preliminary to the formation of a philosophic vocabulary, that what is now perceived is, as it were, a pure activity, a subsistence, but a subsistence which transcends the entire order of the imaginable, a living tenacity, at once precarious—it is nothing for me to crush a fly—and indomitable—within and around me there is growth without ceasing. By this subsistence, this tenacity, objects come up against me, overcome possible disaster, endure and possess in themselves whatever is requisite for this. These are metaphors, lamentably inadequate, which attempt to express not so much what my intellect sees, which is super-empirical, as my experience of the vision, and do not themselves

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<sup>1</sup> The two senses are: first, the intellectual intuition of *ens qua ens*, understood as an analogical notion harboring the possibility of immaterial beings; and second, the intuition of *esse, actus essendi*. For the texts of Maritain and a discussion of his "intuition of being" thesis, see my article "How Thomistic Is the Intuition of Being?" in John F. X. Knasas, ed., *Jacques Maritain: The Man and His Metaphysics* (Mishawaka: The American Maritain Association, 1988), 83–92.

enter the domain of metaphysics but which may make us aware that to the word *being*, when it expresses a genuine metaphysical intuition, there must correspond a primary and original datum, of its essence above the scope of observation.<sup>2</sup>

Though Maritain describes being as a “reality,” he is no Platonist. Elsewhere he is quite clear that being is an *abstractum* derived from sensible things that are the realities.<sup>3</sup> “Being” is a reality in the sense of an object of knowledge; hence it is an intelligible reality. It is not a reality in the sense of a subsisting form; hence it is not an ontological reality. But note its description as at once precarious and indomitable. Being is precarious because being is in a fly; it is indomitable because the same being appears in the next living thing. As a motion picture is more than each passing frame in the projector, so too being is much more than each passing thing. In the variety of things, the same being appears and manifests a richness while intimating a more profound horde.

Leaving the metaphor of growth without ceasing, Maritain elsewhere adopts the image of a liquid crystal:

[Being] is a reality independent of myself, which constitutes, thus considered in itself, an entire universe of possible knowledge and intelligibility, of intelligible mystery, and which is not *one* thing, purely and simply one, but which is everywhere found in essentially different forms. We are thus in the sphere where no sensible image avails anything, neither that of a body which is one purely and simply, nor that of a manifold of visible objects, which are an aggregate without unity. Its subsistence is purely intelligible, and far from excluding, requires its multiplicity and diversification. We might speak of it as a liquid crystal which is the environment of the metaphysical intellect. Being presents me with an infinite intelligible variety which is the diversification of something which I can nevertheless call by one and the same name.<sup>4</sup>

Just as a liquid crystal assumes many different forms but is still the same crystal, so too on the intellectual level being is an intelligible object grasped in a multiplicity and diversity of many things. Again, the example of the liquid crystal is only a metaphor. Maritain is not

<sup>2</sup> Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics*, 52–53.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 2, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics*, 63–64.

party to a Hindu metaphysics that envisages us as waves on the ocean of the Absolute. Being is an intelligible object, not a real object. Nonetheless, this qualification does not gainsay the splendor of the intellectual vision. To observe how one and the same intelligible object can portray itself in and through abysmal differences is no small matter.

## 2. NEO-THOMISTS ON THE ANALOGICAL CONCEPT

Later I will have Maritain describing the same phenomenon in formal philosophical parlance. The point to grasp now is that what Maritain<sup>5</sup> describes as a transfixing object of intellectual apprehension is what is analyzed in unparalleled depth, but in apparently clinical terminology, by Aquinas. Camouflaged in the dusty language of *ratio*, *abstractio*, *natura commune*, is a mind on fire. I will confess that Thomism can be a script to be memorized. Like actors who know their lines, Thomists can know that if one says “potency,” the other should say “actuality”; if one says “essence,” the other says “esse,” and so on. Yet the master himself reverberated not just with talk but with thought. The words were like sparks thrown from a more ponderous mental metal that was the subject of Aquinas’ concentration. I will try to show that despite all the complaints about its manuals, Neo-Thomism succeeded in reigniting the forge.

Before discussing the transcendental character of the *ratio entis*, an appreciation of its analogical character is necessary. Introductory to that point, though, is a description of analogical conceptualization itself. Neo-Thomists craft some felicitous ways of expressing the na-

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<sup>5</sup> Gerald B. Phelan, Maritain’s intellectual *confrère*, also eloquently describes the intellectual perception of being in sensible things: “[Y]et, even at that high level, the intuition remains abstractive and its object still trails the garments of its lowly origin. No longer, however, do these garments veil and conceal the true face and figure of being as the trappings of sensible quiddity obscured them in the first concrete apprehension. No! The light of the intellect has wrought a transfiguration. Wrapped in its (now translucent) robes of quality, quantity and individuating characteristics, being shines through, illuminating its very garments with the glow of its substantial light and reflecting the still more brilliant mystery of the Beyond where Being dwells, Who said: ‘I AM WHO AM.’ Thus does *being* become the dominating concept in philosophy, the norm of all reflection in the order of nature and the basis of all rational knowledge. And, being as such is intrinsically analogical.” Gerald B. Phelan, “St. Thomas and Analogy,” in Kirn, ed., *G. B. Phelan Selected Papers*, 99.

ture of analogous conceptualization. Gerald Phelan says: “[Analogy] is, indeed, a difference in the very likeness and a likeness in the very difference; not merely a mingling of likeness and difference wherein likeness is based upon a formal identity and difference is based upon a formal diversity.”<sup>6</sup> Joseph Owens summarizes analogy in this fashion:

[In univocity] in the species of a genus there is the same generic concept and there are concepts of the differentiae. The specific concepts accordingly are partly the same and partly different. Not at all in this sense are the things [between univocity and equivocity] both same and different. Here, partly the same and partly different does not mean the same by one concept and different by another concept. Rather, the one concept that renders the things the same is the concept that renders them different. Conversely the concept that makes them different is the concept that makes them coincide under the one notion. Identity and yet differentiation by the one feature is the only way a notion can escape falling under either the one or the other of the two extremes, univocity and pure equivocity. To fall into the area dealt with by the present discussion [on analogy], the one notion must exercise both functions. It has to both unite and differentiate without the aid of any other concept.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, this classic text by Jacques Maritain ought to be quoted:

Even in the perception of the generic or specific nature the intellect attains in the individual more than the individual itself. It attains a universal object of concept communicable to all the individuals of the same species or of the same genus. And this is called *univocal*, since presented to the mind by a plurality of transobjective subjects and restored to them in judgments, it is purely and simply one and the same in the mind. *Unum in multis*, it is an invariant without actual multiplicity, realized in several, and by that very fact positing among them a community of essence. But in the perception of the transcendentals, we attain in a nature more than itself, an object of concept not only transindividual, but trans-specific, trans-generic, transcategorical, as if in opening a blade of grass one started a bird greater than the world. Let us call such an object of concept *super-universal*. The scholastics call it *analogous*, . . . It differs essentially, even as a concept,

<sup>6</sup> Phelan, “St. Thomas and Analogy,” 114.

<sup>7</sup> Owens, “Analogy as a Thomistic Approach,” 308–9. See also Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 88, n. 14.

from the universals, not only because it has a greater amplitude, but also and primarily . . . it is polyvalent, it envelops an actual multiplicity; the bird we spoke of a moment ago is at the same time a flock.<sup>8</sup>

Maritain leaves the inimitable prose of “a bird that is at the same time a flock” for a more prosaic and philosophically garbed description:

Everything which divides [electrons and angels] from one another is the same being which I find in each of them—varied. I simply have to fix my attention on it to see that it is at once one and multiple. It *would be* purely and simply one if its differentiations were not still itself, or to put it otherwise, if the analogue presented to the mind made complete abstraction from the analogates; if I could think being without thereby rendering present to my mind (whether I am *de facto* explicitly aware of this or not is quite accidental) in essentially different ways some of the others in which this object of concept is realizable outside the mind. It *would be* purely and simply multiple if it did not transcend its differentiations, or, to put it otherwise, if the analogue presented to the mind made no abstraction from its analogates: in which case the word *being* would be purely equivocal and my thought would fly to pieces.<sup>9</sup>

These authors, as well as others, reiterate the same point—an analogous concept is not picked out apart from the differences of its instances, but within those very differences. What does this mean? First, analogy is a type of conceptualization. This point expresses the remote necessity for all discussion of analogy. In general, conceptualization is the cognitional picking out of a commonality amid an appropriate multiplicity. Hence, Maritain speaks of an *unum in multis*. The multiplicity, then, is basic, and the approach to the concept is from there. Essential to the grasp of a concept, analogical or otherwise, will be the careful crafting of the suitable multiplicity. Hence, subsequent discussion of analogy will always be in the light of some multiplicity. Second, the analogous concept is contrasted to the univocal concept. Characteristic of a univocal commonality is that it is picked out *apart* from the differences of the instances in the multiplicity. Hence, what makes the instances the same will not be what renders them different. For example, *triangle* expresses the commonality grasped in the equilateral three-sided figure and the right-angled three-sided figure.

<sup>8</sup> Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 212.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

In this situation the equal sides of the first instance and the right angle of the second instance serve simply to differentiate the instances. The instances are the same in virtue of something else. With the analogical concept, however, one possesses a commonality that is grasped within the very differences of its instances. Since the commonality is within the differences, the differences serve to render the instances the same. Accordingly, Maritain described the analogous concept as making an “incomplete abstraction” from its instances.

The phenomenon of analogical conceptualization necessitates a further nuancing of abstraction. Earlier we described Aquinas’ distinguishing of abstraction into abstraction with and without precision. In the latter, the differences of the instances remained implicit in the concept because the concept left itself open to them. It did not exclude what it did not include. This behavior kept the concept basically identical with the instance, and so predicable of it as one whole of another. In abstraction with precision, the capacity or potentiality for the differences is not included in the concept. In this way, the concept sinks to the level of a part of the whole datum and is not predicable of the datum.

As the Maritain texts make clear in their talk of *ens* as predicable of electrons and angels, analogy is an abstraction without precision. But one cannot leave it at that. Univocal concepts, for instance, “man,” are also abstracted without precision. They too continue to “hug” the instances sufficiently to be predicable of them. They also have an intimate relation with the differences of the instances. Cannot univocal concepts also be described as making an “incomplete abstraction” from the instances? Complete abstraction would be the prerogative of precise abstraction. In sum, need exists to describe more accurately the abstraction without precision of a univocal concept versus the abstraction without precision of an analogous concept. It is somewhat of a delicate affair. We do not want to describe analogical conceptualization so that univocal conceptualization becomes precise; and we do not want to describe univocal conceptualization as so non-precise that no logical room exists for analogical conceptualization.

Fortunately, the Neo-Thomists have taken the lead here. One is Maritain himself in the texts cited. In contrast to univocal concepts, analogical concepts harbor an “actual” multiplicity. Their abstraction is so incomplete that no “dumbing down” of the multiplicity occurs.

Not stated, but presumably the case, univocal concepts would harbor the differences of the instances only “potentially,” not actually. Maritain does say that the univocal notion is “invariant without actual multiplicity.” But this description of the analogical concept is unsatisfying. If in analogical conceptualization the multiplicity is left actual, in what sense can an abstraction be said to have occurred? Why are we not simply at the start of an abstraction rather than at its term? How can one express that an abstraction of an analogous commonality has occurred while conceding the actual presence of the multiplicity?

Another Neo-Thomist helps. In his *Bond of Being: An Essay on Analogy and Existence*, James Anderson says an analogical concept abstracts from its inferiors imperfectly “so as to include them actually and implicitly.”<sup>10</sup> Also, “The analogical concept is radically different: it has only a relative or proportional unity, and it does not include the diversity of its inferiors potentially . . . In order that it may not be univocal in any degree, therefore, the analogical concept must include diversity actually, without in any way rendering that diversity explicit.”<sup>11</sup> Instead of employing just the terminological pair of actual/potential, Anderson enlists the further pair of implicit/explicit. With both pairs he can better articulate the nature of analogy versus univocity. The sameness-in-difference idea of analogical conceptualization is conveyed by saying that the abstracting keeps the differences of the instances actual though rendering them implicit. On the other hand, the sameness-apart-from-difference, characteristic of univocal non-precise abstraction, is glossed as an abstracting that not only renders the differences implicit to the commonality but potential to the commonality as well. Because in both cases, the differences are rendered implicit, then in both cases the abstraction is non-precise. But since in one case the implicitness is congruent with their actual presence, while in the other with their potential presence, the abstraction can be respectively analogical or univocal.

These descriptions of analogical conceptualization entail that it is an exceptionally fit tool for dealing faithfully with reality. No content of the instances is placed outside the concept. The abstractive dumb-

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, *The Bond of Being*, 256.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 256–57. Anderson’s ingenious terminology could have come from a reading of *De Ver.* 21, 1c. See *infra*, n. 20.

ing down of the differences consists only in rendering the differences implicit, not also in rendering them potential. The conceptualization effects no impoverishment. In a science grounded in analogical concepts, one need not fear that the concepts have left something out. Rather, the concepts present an intelligible world that can be patiently explored on the basis of the offered analogates. Progress in the science consists not in substituting new concepts for the old, but in an ever deepening understanding of old concepts.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. EXAMPLES FROM ORDINARY EXPERIENCE

The analogous concept may sound beyond belief and be brushed aside as the fanciful product of metaphysics. Should not any sameness *ipso facto* be apart from difference? Is not escaping difference the purpose of abstraction? But common, non-metaphysical experience provides many instances of analogy. Chapter 1 noted the way in which *great baseball player* is applied both to Willie Mays and Sandy Koufax. Mays was a renowned outfielder and hitter, Koufax was a renowned pitcher. Different as each of these things are, they nevertheless serve to make Mays and Koufax alike. How else than by describing the hitting and fielding would you begin to answer the question, Why is Mays a great baseball player like Koufax? Further, is not Koufax called great because of his pitching? But Mays' way of hitting and fielding is what just Mays possesses and not Koufax, and Koufax's pitching is simply what he possesses and not Mays. What makes both the same is also what makes both different. In these cases there is, as Gerald Phelan remarked, a sameness in the difference and a difference in the sameness.

Also, consider the manner in which *sanctity* is applied to Teresa of Avila and to Francis Xavier. The first was a contemplative, the second a missionary. Yet different as these are, in the cases of Teresa and Francis they have a sameness that allows one to call each a saint.

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<sup>12</sup> Though Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics*, chap. 1, does not mention analogy when discussing the predominance of "mystery" over "problem" in philosophy, analogy understood as sameness-within-difference is essential for understanding "mystery": "The mystery we conclude is a fullness of being with which the intellect enters into a vital union and into which it plunges without exhausting it," 4–5. Later (63–64) Maritain affirms the analogous character of being (*ens*).

Again, the very thing that makes Teresa different from Francis, that is, her contemplation, is the very thing that makes her the same as Francis, and vice versa. Insensitivity to the analogous character of sanctity leads to the emergence of stifling and repetitive stereotypes.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning the analogous concept, two further points are important to note. First, one must not mentally attempt to pry the analogous commonality, or analogon, apart from its instances, or analogates.<sup>14</sup> Recall, the commonality is within the differences of the instances. Any attempt to separate the commonality from these differences results in the loss of the commonality. Hence, inappropriate is the Scotistic demand to specify in what respect the instances are the same and in what they differ.<sup>15</sup> This demand fails to understand the nature of the analogous concept. Here the sameness is in the differences. Hence, one does not wish to avoid the differences of the instances. They carry the sameness.

Second, the analogous notion carries an astonishing intelligible wealth and plenitude. Even though a baseball fan of the 1930s would already have witnessed an impressive array of great players, the parade of further analogates in subsequent decades would have belied his claim to have seen all that there was to great baseball playing. Likewise at the time of Augustine, who could have seen a Teresa or a Xavier? Today, who can guess what further analogates sanctity will

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Fletcher seems to have a sense for the analogous in his discussion of the “loving thing” in *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), 61–62: “[I]f love is to be understood situationally, as a predicate rather than a property, what we must understand is that Jesus’ going to the cross was *his* role and vocation in *his* situation with *his* obligation as the Son of God. . . . Love does not say to us ‘Be like me.’ It says, ‘Do what you can where you are.’” Unfortunately, Fletcher falsely concludes that because one can never know what form the “loving thing” may take, then murder, i.e., deliberate extinction of innocent human life, might be loving. But I do not believe that a prohibition of murder crimps the analogous nature of love. Consider again “sanctity” amidst the saints. Also see *infra*, Chap. 8 on the relation between the *ratio entis* and Aquinas’ natural law ethics.

<sup>14</sup> On the terminology of *analogon* and *analogate*, see Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy*, 6–7.

<sup>15</sup> For the demand, see Patrick Lee, “Language about God and the Theory of Analogy,” *The New Scholasticism* 58 (1984): 40–41. Phelan expresses the mistake in terms of a stern warning: “Those who, in spite of all, have tried to look upon being naked and unadorned have been struck with intellectual blindness. And those who have attempted to express it in clear and distinct ideas have sinned against intelligence; for, clear and distinct ideas banish mystery and bring death to metaphysics.” Phelan, “St. Thomas and Analogy,” 100.

assume? Finally, if the sanctity of Teresa, for example, is awesome to behold, imagine what it would be to behold the analogon itself. The experience must be beyond endurance. In sum, as we consider the analogical situation, we realize an intelligible dynamic existing between the analogates and the analogon. The analogates give expression to an analogon that in itself contains much more. Hence analogons are fascinating objects of consideration, capable of evoking our deepest desires.

#### 4. THOMISTIC CONFIRMATION

It is true that the sameness-in-difference way of speaking about analogous concepts is not literally found in Aquinas. But the idea is there. Early in his career, Aquinas described being (*ens*) as analogical between substance and accident. “[T]he Creator and the creature are reduced to one not by a community of univocation but of analogy. Yet the community of analogy is able to be twofold. [In the first kind of analogical community] some things participate something one according to prior and subsequent, just as potency and act participate in the notion of being [*rationem entis*], and similarly substance and accident.”<sup>16</sup> In another early text, Aquinas tries to describe the analogical connection between being and substance and accident. Listen to how, at *De Veritate* 1, 1c, Aquinas describes making an addition to the *conceptio entis*:

[T]hat which the intellect first conceives as, in a way, the most evident, and to which it reduces all its concepts, is being [*ens*]. Consequently, all the other conceptions [*conceptiones*] of the intellect are had by additions to being. But nothing can be added to being as though it were something not included in being—in the way that a difference is added to a genus or an accident to a subject—for every reality is essentially [*essentialiter*] a being. The Philosopher has shown this by proving that being cannot be a genus. Yet, in this sense, some predicates may

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<sup>16</sup> Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, prol. q. 1, a. 2, ad 2m; Mandonnet, ed., *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 1, 10. The description of *ens* as analogical between substance and accident is reiterated in a text to become famous in Thomistic commentary, viz., *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1m. For my remarks, see *infra*, my text at nn. 51–52. Later writings continue the analogical description of *ens*; see Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2, 11c and *C.G.* I, 35.

be said to add to being inasmuch as they express a mode of being not expressed by the term *being* [*inquantum exprimunt ipsius modum, qui nomine ipsius entis non exprimitur*].<sup>17</sup>

What adds to being does not come from an outside intelligible area. The reason is that everything is essentially a being. In other words, nothing can be thought of as outside being. This phenomenon is what the Transcendental Thomists make so much of in their retorsion defense of the non-contradiction principle. In contrast, addition is made to a genus from an outside intelligible area. Animal is differentiated into its species by adding meaning not found in the genus—the *differentiae* of rational or non-rational. These additions respectively restrict thinking to man and brute. Elsewhere Aquinas explains that the difference of a genus must not include the genus, under pain of placing the genus twice in the definition of the species.<sup>18</sup> For example, if the difference of *rational* includes the generic meaning of *animal*, then man's definition would be not "rational animal" but "rational animal animal." In this thinking, the differences are outside the genus. Hence, we could say that the sameness is apart from the differences.

If one does not add to being from the outside, how does one go from thinking being to thinking this or that being? In the above quote, Aquinas explains that one enlists an addition that is understood simply to express a mode of being not expressed by the name of being. The mode does not make an addition to the commonality as a species does to a genus. There can be nothing to the mode that came from outside being. The mode in its difference just gives expression to the commonality. In other words, differentiation appears on the surface of being not by launching things from the shore, but by surfacing them from the depths of the concept. In Aquinas' struggle to keep the additions to being intrinsic to being, does not one see that Aquinas is understanding being as a sameness within these differences, even though he does not literally put it that way?

Aquinas then connects the above thinking to substance and accident:

First, the mode expressed is a certain special manner of being [*aliquis specialis modus entis*]; for there are different grades of being [*diversi*

<sup>17</sup> Trans. Robert W. Mulligan, *The Disputed Questions on Truth* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), vol. 1, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Aquinas, *C.G.* I, 25, *Quod*.

*gradus entitatis*] according to which we speak when we speak of different levels of existence [*diversi modi essendi*], and according to these grades different things are classified [*diversa rerum genera*]. Consequently, substance does not add a difference to being by signifying some reality added to it, but substance simply expresses a special manner of existing [*specialis modus essendi*], namely, as a being in itself [*per se ens*]. The same is true of the other classes of existents.<sup>19</sup>

Aquinas understands the ten genera that range from substance to the various accidents as modes of being. As such, one should conceive the genera as expressing being in and through their very diversity. Cannot one then say that in respect to substance and accidents, being is a sameness-within-difference?

Yet if being is not differentiated by outside differences, how does it escape the redundancy problem mentioned above? Why is it that when you say “substantial being,” you escape translation into “substantial being being”? If I understand Aquinas, his answer would be that being so permeates the difference signified by *substantial* that no redundancy occurs when *substantial* is added to *being*. You are not reuttering the same exact sense of being when you say “substantial” after saying “being.” The answer to the problem depends upon thinking through in a consistent manner the idea of sameness-*within*-difference.

Later in the *De Veritate* at 21, 1c, Aquinas reemphasizes being’s permeation of the modes of substance and accident. He first describes the contraction of animal to man:

[In a second way] one thing is added to the other as limiting and determining it. Man, for instance, adds something to animal—not indeed in such a way that there is in man some reality which is completely outside [*penitus extra*] the essence of animal; otherwise it would be necessary to say that it is not the whole [*totum*] of man which is animal but only a part [*pars*]. Animal is limited by man because what is contained in the notion of man determinately and actually [*determinate et actual-*

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<sup>19</sup> Mulligan, trans., *Disputed Questions*, vol. 1, 5. The *modi essendi* mentioned here are references to Aquinas’ doctrine of *actus essendi* or *esse*, the key note in his understanding of the *ratio entis*. At S.T. I, 44, 2c, Aquinas makes it quite clear that philosophers knew the *ratio entis* long before they achieved a correct definition of it in terms of *actus essendi*. Hence my present analogical description of *ens* abstracts from Aquinas’ existential definition. The integration of the analogical description with the *actus essendi* doctrine will occur *infra* in Chap. 6.

*iter*], is only implicitly and, as it were, potentially [*implicite et quasi potentialiter*] contained in the notion of animal. It belongs to the notion of man that he have a rational soul; to the notion of animal, that it have a soul, without its being determined to rational or nonrational.<sup>20</sup>

Not by bringing in something wholly outside does rational contract animal to man. If that were the case, animal would only express a part of man and not be predicable of man. You must regard rational as expressing determinately and actually what is implicitly and potentially in man. Everyone should recognize here the abstraction without precision doctrine of the absolutely considered nature from the *De Ente et Essentia*.<sup>21</sup>

This connection is important because it shows that the terminology of genus and difference at *De Ver.* 1, 1c, was not being employed in its strict logical sense. In their strict senses, these terms designate the absolutely considered nature *as it is understood to have an existence in the intellect*.<sup>22</sup> As such, the nature is sufficiently actual to undergo relations of predication that constitute it as either a genus or species. But in its absolute consideration, the nature “abstracts from every *esse*” and so is not anything able to be related to something else. Hence, at *De Ver.* 21, 1c, Aquinas covers the same ground as 1, 1c, but in terminology that applies to the absolutely considered nature. As abstracting from every *esse*, the absolutely considered nature is prior to the entire order of logic.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Trans. Robert W. Schmidt, S.J., *The Disputed Questions on Truth* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), vol. 3, 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 2, sect. 2.

<sup>22</sup> “From this we can see how essence or nature is related to the notion of species. The notion of species is not one of those items that belong to the nature when it is considered absolutely, nor is it one of the accidents that follow upon the nature because of the being it has outside the soul, like whiteness or blackness. Rather, the notion of species is one of the accidents that follow upon the nature because of the being it has in the intellect [*secundum esse quod habet in intellectu*]; and it is in this way, too, that the notions of genus and difference belong to it.” Maurer, trans., *On Being and Essence*, chap. 3, 50; “and how they are related to the logical notions [*intentiones logicas*] of genus, species, and difference,” 28.

<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, Aquinas remarks, “But that to which the intellect attributes the notion of predicability, combining it with something else, is not the concept itself of genus, but rather that to which the intellect attributes the concept of genus, as for example what is signified by the term *animal*.” Maurer, trans., *On Being and Essence*, 49–50. This remark sharply distinguishes the idea of genus from the absolutely considered nature. Yet in the previous chapter of the *De Ente*, Aquinas can use what is meant by the term *body* for the genus of animal: “The term *body* can

How does being relate to this second mode of addition? Aquinas explains: “But in the second way certain things are found to add to being [*ens*], since being is narrowed down in the ten categories, each of which adds something to being—not, of course, an accident or difference which is outside the essence of being, but a definite manner of being [*determinatum modum essendi*] which is founded upon the essence of the thing [*essentia rei*].”<sup>24</sup> Aquinas admits for being the second way of addition. But there is a qualification. Even though a difference like rational is not *penitus extra* the essence of animal, it is still too extrinsic to be the model for accurately understanding the contraction of being to its modes of substance and the various accidents. A difference that retains any measure of extrinsicness cannot be a difference of being. The modes of being add to being not by bringing in something in any way extrinsic. They add simply by determining being. The qualified comparison of the modes of being with the difference rational shows that the modes are *especially* intrinsic to being. Hence, the Neo-Thomists have a textual base for their talk about analogy as sameness-in-difference.

In his later career, Aquinas continues to describe being as analogical but does not repeat the explanation of being’s differentiation through *modi*. The *Summa Theologiae*, however, contains a general remark about analogy that echoes the sameness-in-difference idea. At *S.T.* I, 4, 3c and in the course of determining whether any creature can be like God, Aquinas describes three ways in which things can agree or communicate in form.

Some things are said to be like, which communicate in the same form according to the same formality, and according to the same measure

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also be taken to mean a thing having a form such that three dimensions can be counted in it, no matter what that form may be, whether some further perfection can be derived from it or not. In this sense of the term, body is the genus of animal, because animal does not include anything that is not implicitly contained in body.” Maurer, trans., *On Being and Essence*, 39. In other words, *before* its discussion of logical notions, the *De Ente* itself uses genus, species, and difference of the nature abstracted without precision, and so as absolutely considered. The ambiguity of Aquinas’ use of terminology here must be respected. Hence someone like Ralph McInerny is wrong to conclude that the analogy of being is a logical doctrine simply because Aquinas says being is not a genus, as if the question were being discussed in a logical context. For more on McInerny’s interpretation of Thomistic analogy, see this chapter below.

<sup>24</sup> Aquinas, *De Ver.* 21, 1c; trans. Schmidt, *The Disputed Questions on Truth*, vol. 3, 5–6.

[*in eadem forma secundum eandem rationem, et secundum eundem modum*]; and these are said to be not merely like, but equal in their likeness, as two things equally white are said to be alike in whiteness; and this is the most perfect likeness. In another way, we speak of things as alike which communicate in form according to the same formality, though not according to the same measure [*in forma secundum eandem rationem, et non secundum eundem modum*], but according to more or less, as something less white is said to be like another thing more white; and this is an imperfect likeness. In a third way some things are said to be alike which communicate in the same form, but not according to the same formality [*in eadem forma, sed non secundum eandem rationem*]; as we see in non-univocal agents.<sup>25</sup>

The third kind of formal communication sounds oxymoronic. Does not the denial of the same formality deny communication in the same form, and does not the assertion of the communication in the same form assert the same formality? The third division of formal communication between things stretches thinking to the limits and would drive not just analytic thinkers to distraction. But does it not have a striking resemblance to the Neo-Thomist descriptions of analogy as sameness-in-difference? In fact later in the *responsio*, Aquinas uses the third division to explain how *esse* is common both to God and creatures and designates this way “a sort of analogy [*secundum aliqualem analogiam*].” Though *ens* is unmentioned it is logically proximate, since *esse* will be the keynote in Aquinas’ understanding of the *ratio entis*. We have already seen mention in the *De Ver.* 1, 1, that the *diversi modi entis* reduce to *diversi modi essendi*.

So what Neo-Thomists call analogy and describe as sameness-in-difference is, in so many words, in Aquinas’ texts, especially those pertaining to the *ratio entis*.

## 5. TYPES OF ANALOGY

Within the above general notion of analogy as sameness-in-difference, Aquinas distinguishes types of analogy. The principle of distinction is the manner in which the analogon is found in its analogates. If the analogon is found in the instances according to a priority and a posteriority, one finds a first type of analogy. A non-metaphysical ex-

<sup>25</sup> Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 4, 3c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 40.

ample of this first type might be what is meant by *holiness* as it is ideally realized in Christ and subsequently realized in some follower. Here no one instance is the embodiment of the analogous notion itself. Presumably God the Father is that. Nevertheless, Christ is an ideal realization of it, while the follower is a realization derivative from an imitation of Christ.

On the other hand, if the analogon is found without any reference between the analogates, that is, with a certain equality, one finds a second type of analogy. A non-metaphysical example is again what we mean by *sanctity* as that is realized among Teresa of Avila, Francis Xavier, Augustine, and so on. *In their differences* all these followers of Christ express *sanctity* among themselves. Yet no reference of one to the other exists. Among themselves each is an independent realization of the analogous notion.

That analogous concepts can be realized in the aforementioned way is expressed in this Thomistic text from the commentary on Lombard's *Sentences*:

2. Also, as Aristotle says (*I Posteriorum*, para. 43), one science is of one genus. But God and the creature, of which are treated in divine science, are not reduced to one genus, neither univocal, nor analogical. Therefore the divine science is not one. The proof of this middle is this. Whatever things belong in one genus either univocally or analogically, participate something the same, either according to priority or posteriority, just as substance and accident participate the notion of being, or equally just as horse and ox participate the notion of animal. But God and the creature do not participate something the same, because that would be more simple and prior to both. Therefore in no way are God and the creature reduced to one genus.<sup>26</sup>

Even though the text comes from an objection, Aquinas' reply makes clear that his only problem with the objection is its application of analogy to God and creatures. Otherwise it can be taken as an indication of how analogy breaks down into types. How these analogies must be modified for talk of God and creatures is another matter.

Aquinas has names for these two types of analogy. He labels the first analogy of proportion, and the second analogy of proportionality. Here is Aquinas from his *De Veritate*:

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<sup>26</sup> Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, prolog. q. 1, a. 2, 2 obj.; Mandonnet, ed., *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 1, 9.

[T]wo kinds of community can be noted in analogy. There is a certain agreement between things having a proportion to each other from the fact that they have a determinate distance between each other or some other relation to each other, like the proportion which the number two has to unity in as far as it is the double of unity. Again, the agreement is occasionally noted not between two things which have a proportion between them, but rather between two related proportions—for example, six has something in common with four because six is two times three, just as four is two times two. The first type of agreement is one of proportion; the second, of proportionality.<sup>27</sup>

As Owens points out, the first type of analogy was also called analogy of intrinsic attribution, and the second type was called analogy of proper proportionality.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2, 11c; trans. Mulligan, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, vol. 1, 113. The same breakdown appears to be reiterated at *In V Meta.*, *lectio* 8, n. 879.

<sup>28</sup> Owens, “Analogy as a Thomistic Approach,” 308–9, 316. Neo-Thomists who agree on analogy as a first order conceptual sameness-in-difference do nevertheless disagree on what kinds of analogy apply to particular situations. For example, despite Thomistic texts such as *In I Sent.*, prolog. q. 1, a. 2, ad 2m; *C.G.* I, 34, *Sic Igitur*; and *S.T.* I, 13, 5c, that appear clearly to assign proportion as the basic analogy between God and creatures, Anderson, *The Bond of Being*, lucidly argues for analogy of proportionality as the analogy between God and creatures. In texts such as those just referenced, Anderson argues that we do not have a distinct type of analogy, but a mix of proportionality and proportion. In the mix, proportionality is basic (248–49). Formally speaking, there is proportionality; materially, there is proportion (232–33). Anderson’s view leads to this strange expression: “Once more, however, it must be pointed out that the very being itself of the creature does not consist in its *relation to God*: the relation itself is ontologically posterior to the being of the creature,” 119. This remark seems to say that the *ontologically prior* situation is an independence of God and creatures. Anderson’s interpretation is overly influenced by Cajetan’s claim that the analogy *secundum intentionem et secundum esse* at *In I Sent.* d. 19, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1m is only proportionality. That this analogy is also meant to encompass proportion, see the discussion of Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy*, 14–15. Also, that the apparent Thomistic denial at *De Ver.* 2, 11c of an analogy of proportion between God and creatures only concerns proportions involving an interdetermining relationship, see texts given by Klubertanz, 26–27. To be noted is Klubertanz’s opinion, 92–95, that *De Ver.* 2, 11c and *De Ver.* 23, 7, ad 9m indicate a temporary Thomistic adherence to proportionality as *the* analogy between God and creatures. In my opinion, however, the cited texts merely reject one type of proportion (the interdetermining type) and go on to say that proportionality can be found between God and creatures. The texts do not say that *only* proportionality can be found. As regards the second alternative mentioned at *De Ver.* 23, 7, ad 9m for understanding the likeness between God and creatures, it is not the case that “proportionality appears as an exclusive option” (Klubertanz, 92). The Latin indicates that proportionality is still being picked over a mutually determining proportion only. For philosophical difficulties with proportionality as the basic analogy between God and creatures, see Owens, “Analogy as a Thomistic Approach,” 310–15.

6. RICHNESS OF THE *RATIO ENTIS*

As mentioned, an analogon, understood as a sameness-in-difference, possesses an astonishing intelligible wealth and plentitude. This wealth and plentitude superabounds the parade of its analogates. As I said, after decades of watching the game of baseball, would anyone be so foolish to claim that he has seen all there is to great baseball playing? The foolishness of such an individual in 1930 is now apparent. So too for him in 1970, 1990. And how could we excuse ourselves in 2000? Yet as ample as the intelligible plentitude of *great baseball player* is, it is not infinite. Some items are not and never will be analogates of this analogon. For example, unique as my way of playing baseball is, it will never be a difference that will carry greatness. Also, trees, flowers, and four-legged animals will never be analogates of this analogon. So though its richness is awesome, *great baseball player* is not all-encompassing. Some differences are impermeable to this sameness; not all things are its analogates.

Can the same be said of the analogon that is the *ratio entis*? As was noted from *De Ver.* 1, 1c, being is the concept into which all others are resolved. Those others include the ten genera of substance and the various accidents. The differences that mark the accidents also present the analogon of being. The chasm between them and substance is not so wide that being fails to cross it. Elsewhere Aquinas refers to an accident as an *ens entis*.<sup>29</sup> Nor is it necessary that the accidents be physical accidents and not immaterial activities such as thought and willing. These too Aquinas ascribes to the study of metaphysics, whose subject is *ens inquantum ens*.<sup>30</sup> Even mental items

<sup>29</sup> "Ideo dicit, quod [accidentia] non dicuntur simpliciter entia, sed entis entia, sicut qualitas et motus." Aquinas, *In XII Meta.*, lectio 1, no. 2419; ed. M. R. Cathala and Raymundus M. Spiazzi, *In Duodecim Libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Expositio* (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1950), 568.

<sup>30</sup> While explaining how metaphysics deals not with things in motion despite treating the angels, in which there is choice and movement in regard to place, Aquinas says, "Motion with respect to choice [*secundum electionem*] is reducible to the sense in which the act of the intellect or will [*actus intellectus uel uoluntatis*] is called motion; which is an improper sense of the term [*improprie dictum*], motion being understood as operation [*pro operatione sumpto*]." Aquinas, *In de Trin.*, V, 4, ad 3m; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 47. At *In de Trin.*, V, 2, ad 7m, Aquinas explicitly removes from natural philosophy the study of choice [*electio*] and motions of that sort [*talis mutatio*]. He assigns the study of them to the metaphysician [*diuinum*]. Finally, vd. "Life, wisdom, and the like are desirable only so

like privations and negations also are regarded as falling within being.<sup>31</sup> Finally, the perfection of the *ratio entis* is reflected in Aquinas' later remarks about its key note of *esse* or *actus essendi*. *Esse* is the "act of all acts and the perfection of all perfections,"<sup>32</sup> and "all perfections pertain to the perfection of being [*perfectio essendi*]."<sup>33</sup> So unlike other analogons, being has an all-perfect or infinite intelligible wealth and plentitude. Among analogons it deserves a special and distinctive name. Maritain remarks that the Scholastics called being a "transcendental."<sup>34</sup> Being is an intelligibility that contains the differences of all things not just implicitly and potentially (*implicitae et potentialiter*), as generic notions do. Being contains the abysmal differences of things implicitly and actually.

With such a rich understanding of the *ratio entis*, one can suspect that for Aquinas, the grasp of being will not be a passing affair in the life of the intellect. In a later chapter I will explain that the other side of this coin is that the *ratio entis* is also the *ratio boni*. Hence the intellectual grasp of being presents the will with its object and ignites volition; it stirs our heart's deepest longings. The grasp is also responsible for the appearance of things as finite and limited goods, and so sets us before them with a real indetermination, a freedom. Finally, because of their intellection of being, humans stand before us as special analogates of being. In the human, the analogon is present in a more intense way than in trees, cows, and daisies. To strike at the human takes on the character of striking at the good. The action manifests a patent impropriety. In other words, the intellection of

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far as they are actual. Hence in each one of them some sort of being [*esse*] is desired. And thus nothing is desirable except being [*ens*], and consequently nothing is good except being [*ens*]." Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 5, 2, ad 4m; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 45.

<sup>31</sup> "[P]er quem modum privationes et negationes entia dicuntur." Aquinas, *Opusculum De Ente et Essentia* (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1957), Prooemium, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7, 2, ad 6m; and *S.T.* I, 4, 1, ad 3m.

<sup>33</sup> Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 4, 2c.

<sup>34</sup> "Before knowing that Peter is a man, I have already attained him as something, as a being. And this intelligible object 'being' is not the privilege of one of the classes of things that the Logician calls species, genus, or category. It is universally communicable. I find it everywhere, everywhere itself and everywhere varied. I cannot think anything without positing it before my mind. It imbues everything. It is what the scholastics called a transcendental object of thought." Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 210. As noted, for Maritain being is an *abstractum*. So "transcendental" should not be given the Kantian sense of an *a priori* of the human mind. Aquinas appears to call being a transcendental at *S.T.* I, 30, 3c.

being by our fellows presents them as obligatory objects of respect and solicitude.

### RALPH MCINERNEY AND ANALOGY

But before turning to these implications, two other understandings of Thomistic analogy need to be considered. In these interpretations, the *ratio entis* emerges as something more impoverished than in the Neo-Thomist interpretation. First, Neo-Thomist talk about the transcendental richness of being is eclipsed by Ralph McInerney's claim that in Aquinas, analogy is only a logical doctrine. As he will explain, the analogous common notion is best understood as a combination of the thing signified and a place-marker, a blank, that determinate modes of signification can fill in. When one carries this interpretation of the analogous concept to the *ratio entis*, it generates a staggering loss to Neo-Thomist thinking about being. Are there "place-markers" or "blanks" that can be "filled in" in the *ratio entis*? Understanding the indeterminacy of being by a blank seems to render being the most empty of concepts. How does this remarkable turning of the tables result?

McInerney succinctly describes analogy this way:

As a logical term, *analogy* signifies the relations among several meanings of a given word; analogy is a kind of signification, and it is usually exemplified by *healthy*. Consider the following list: (1) Fido is healthy, (2) urine is healthy, (3) food is healthy. Although the same term occurs as predicate in each of these sentences, it does not seem to have the same meaning in all of them as *man* does in "Socrates is a man" and "Plato is a man." Nor does it seem to have entirely unrelated meanings as *top* does in "he spins the top" and "he opens the top." That is, the meanings of *healthy* in our list, while different, seem related. *Healthy*, to use Thomas' language, is imposed to signify from health, and we might formulate a common meaning for the various uses in (1), (2), and (3) above by saying that *healthy* means "related in some way to health" or "referring to health in some way." This would be what Thomas means by the common notion (*ratio communis*) of an analogous name, but unlike the common notion of a univocal term (the example of *man* above) it does not apply equally to the things of which it is predicated. By applying equally Thomas means that when I say Socrates is a man I make no reference to anything else called a man,

something else that might be thought to have prior right to the name. The common notion of the term Thomas calls analogous is unequally common to many things in this sense, that it applies to one thing primarily and to others secondarily. That is beyond the *ratio communis* of *healthy* (referring in some way to health), we can formulate a proper notion (*ratio propria*) which expresses a determinate reference to health, say, “subject of health,” which is the principal meaning of the term and is the meaning it has in (1). In (2) it would mean “sign of health,” and in (3) “preservative of health.”<sup>35</sup>

Analogy signifies the relations among several meanings of a given word. What does this mean? He gives as an example a relatedness seen in the meanings of *healthy* and that is expressed by a common meaning of *healthy*. From this it is clear that the relatedness between the various meanings is a sameness perceived in them. How does this sameness get described as analogical? *Healthy* must distinguish itself from the various instances, but all the while suffering or undergoing different relations to the instances. Hence, *healthy* is more strongly related to the animal and more weakly related to the medicine. In contrast, a univocal common notion would be another relatedness seen in various instances. For example, “related in some way to man” as seen in “Tom is a man,” “Dick is a man,” “Harry is a man.” The common notion is univocal, because the blank expressed by the words *in some way* is always filled in the same fashion, specifically “subject of.”

Interestingly, there seems to be no intrinsic difference between an analogical *ratio* and a univocal one. Intrinsically, both *rationes* contain blanks to be filled. The difference between both is caused extrinsically. An analogical *ratio* is one whose blanks are filled in with different relations, for example, some strong, some weak. A univocal *ratio* is one whose blanks are filled by relations of the same kind. From the traditional Thomist perspective, all the *rationes* in McInerny’s account are univocal. Finally, since these relations are undergone by the sameness only as it exists in the mind, then analogy is only a logical doctrine. The sameness-and-difference idea of analogy occurs only on the level of second intention. It is a concept of a concept.

<sup>35</sup> Ralph McInerny, *A History of Western Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 324–25; also by McInerny, *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of St. Thomas* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 75–79.

In other words, to the Neo-Thomist first intention understanding of analogy as a sameness-within-the-differences of real things, McInerny substitutes a second intention sameness undergoing different predicational relations. Instead of analogy remaining a sameness in real differences, it is now a sameness with logical differences only.

Shortly thereafter, McInerny summarizes his position this way: “What is called the common notion (*ratio communis*) is quite indeterminate and might be thought of as involving the thing signified and a place-marker for determinate modes of signifying it, something like ‘——— health,’ where the blank can be filled by ‘subject of,’ ‘sign of,’ and so forth, though, again, one mode of signifying will be controlling and enter into the secondary modes of signifying the *res significata*.”<sup>36</sup> He then applies the model to being: “The common notion of being is ‘that which exists,’ so that existence (*esse*) is *the res significata*, and *that which* (or *having* in ‘having existence’) may be regarded as a place-marker for determinate modes of being.”<sup>37</sup>

In place of the Neo-Thomist conception of analogy as sameness-within-difference, McInerny offers the idea of sameness-with-difference. Why is the Neo-Thomist version of analogy not even mentioned to be rejected? It is not simply a matter of the texts. True, the texts do contain a doctrine of analogical predication, and predication is undoubtedly a logical notion for Aquinas.<sup>38</sup> But that is no reason to restrict analogy to logic. I find at least seven reasons given by McInerny. First, McInerny notes, “Thomas agrees with Aristotle that the sentence [‘being is a genus’] is false, but we have already seen the type of predicate *genus* is, we know what it means to say that *genus* is a logical term. Well, ‘Being is analogous’ is the affirmation Thomas offers when he decides that ‘Being is a genus’ is false. *Analogy* must be a logical term, too.”<sup>39</sup> Earlier, he remarked: “[A] genus, in the sense of being predicable of many specifically different things, is true of the nature only as it exists in the mind. Furthermore it is only in

<sup>36</sup> McInerny, *History*, 325–26. See also Ralph McInerny, “The Analogy of Names Is a Logical Doctrine,” in Ralph McInerny, ed., *Being and Predication* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 282–83.

<sup>37</sup> McInerny, *History*, 326. Also, “That is, *habens* in *habens esse* is a blank or variable whose fillers or values will differ.” McInerny, “Analogy of Names,” 283.

<sup>38</sup> Speaking of the logical genus, Aquinas says, “Nevertheless, it is essential to a genus to be predicated: this is included in its definition.” Maurer, trans., *On Being and Essence*, 49.

<sup>39</sup> McInerny, *History*, 324.

the mind that substance exists apart from further determinations like *living* and *nonliving*. Thus, in this case certainly it is our abstractive mode of knowing, the fact that we move through progressively less vague ‘fixes’ on things to determinate knowledge, that is productive of the ‘things’ related by logical relations.”<sup>40</sup>

Unfortunately, Aquinas’ use of *genus* is not so logically tidy. I have noted that at *De Ver.* 21, 1c, Aquinas goes over the same ground as that of *De Ver.* 1, 1c, enlisting the *De Ente* discussion of non-precise abstraction. In the *De Ente* he introduced that discussion to explain how matter is included in the definition of man. But later in the *De Ente*, the consideration of an essence from the point of view of what belongs to its definition is called “absolute consideration.” Absolute consideration abstracts the essence from every existence that the essence can have, including existence in the soul. In other words, the non-precise discussion of *De Ver.* 21, 1c is prior to the entire order of logic. As McInerny admits, logic in its technical sense begins only when the essence abstracted without precision is considered with its *esse in anima*. Hence, despite its terminology of *genus* and *difference*, *De Ver.* 1, 1c is not indulging in a properly logical discussion. Aquinas more loosely employs the terminology to designate objects abstracted without precision. In this chapter, I believe we have seen Owens and Maritain doing the same in their cited descriptions of the analogical concept (*supra*, nn. 7 and 8).

Furthermore, the *De Ente et Essentia* itself indulges both in the loose and strict uses of *genus*, *species*, and *difference*. In the second chapter Aquinas presents these as definitional notes abstracted without precision. Only in the third chapter does a reader find him offering the logical meaning of these terms as recounted by McInerny. As logical terms, they are instances of “universals.” Universality is something generated in the mind, insofar as the essence has an existence in and through which it is related to things outside the mind. Recall, the absolutely considered essence abstracted without precision is thoroughly existence-neutral. It is, then, not an item in any way set up to undergo relations to many and become a universal in the present sense.

Finally, Aquinas acknowledges an ambiguity to *universal*.<sup>41</sup> Not

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>41</sup> For the texts, Owens, “Common Nature: A Point of Comparison,” 6–7. Armand Maurer, “St. Thomas and the Analogy of Genus,” *The New Scholasticism* 29 (1955):

only is the mentally existing essence a universal, but also the absolutely considered essence. Does not this ambiguity pave the way for a parallel ambiguity for the divisions of *universal* that are *genus*, *species*, and *difference*?<sup>9</sup> In sum, given Aquinas' ambiguous use of terminology, it is by no means clear that Aquinas' assertion "Being is a genus is false" implies, as McInerny claims, a logical doctrine of analogy.

Second, McInerny cites Aquinas distinguishing two ways of being "one." At *In V Meta.*, *lectio* 7, no. 848, Aquinas specifies a natural mode and a logical mode. In the following *lectio*, n. 876, Aquinas divides the logical mode into one in number, genus, species, and by analogy. McInerny concludes that "analogy emerges quite explicitly as a second intention, something of logic."<sup>42</sup> But conceding McInerny's observation, I must insist that it is not the entire story. Along with Aquinas' logical remarks are ontological ones. For instance, at no. 877 "things" are one in species because they "have" one "intelligible structure" (*ratio*) or definition (*definitio*). These terms are a reference to the absolutely considered essence that can exist in different instances because it abstracts from all existence.<sup>43</sup> The same is true for oneness in genus mentioned in the next paragraph. Those are "things . . . hav[ing] one way of being predicated." Hence, "all substances have one way of being predicated inasmuch as they are not predicated as something which is present in a subject." Taken logically, this remark makes no sense. It would at least mean that what substance possesses is being predicated. But John is a substance, and John is not something predicated. That is why Aquinas says that Socrates is not a species.<sup>44</sup> No, *being predicated* means

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138, discovers a non-logical use of the term *genus*: "The natural genus, considered according to its concrete ratio, is not the logical genus of the logician or the mathematician."

<sup>42</sup> Ralph McInerny, "The Logic of Analogy," *The New Scholasticism* 31 (1957): 150; also McInerny, *The Logic of Analogy*, 33–34.

<sup>43</sup> Speaking of the absolute consideration of the nature, Aquinas says, "For example, to man as man belong 'rational,' 'animal,' and everything else included in his definition [*in eius definitionem*]; but 'white' or 'black,' or any similar attribute not included in the notion of humanity [*de ratione humanitatis*], does not belong to man as man." Aquinas, trans. Maurer, *On Being and Essence*, 46.

<sup>44</sup> "That is why the term *species* is not predicated of Socrates, as though we were to say "Socrates is a species." This would necessarily happen, however, if the notion of species belonged to man in his individual being in Socrates, or according to his absolute consideration, namely insofar as he is man; for we predicate of Socrates

“being meant.” Aquinas is speaking of the definition of substance. The definition is “not existing in a subject.” This is what all things have insofar as they are substances. Later set up as existing in the mind, this definition becomes a genus in the logical sense.

In sum, discoverable behind Aquinas’ remarks about the logical oneness in species and genus is talk about the absolutely considered essence. It is within this item that Neo-Thomists locate analogy as sameness-in-difference. When the absolutely considered essence implicitly but actually involves the differences of the instances, then abstraction has broken through to analogy. No Neo-Thomist claims that analogy does not have logical reverberations, but the Neo-Thomist will emphatically deny that analogy is only a logical doctrine. For Aquinas, logic itself is not just a logical doctrine. Logic involves the absolutely considered nature as a prior condition.

That Aquinas’ remarks on the logical intentions of genus, species, and difference involve ontological remarks is also a relevant point for dealing with McInerny’s third reason. Noting that Aquinas often contrasts analogy with univocity and equivocity, he cites Aristotle from the first chapter of the *Categories*: “On the other hand, things are said to be named ‘univocally’ which have both the name and the definition answering the name in common.” McInerny’s comment is: “This is a logical discussion which is examining the way in which the mind orders and expresses what it knows: nothing is being said of the way in which things exist. Every logical intention is based on reality as on a remote foundation, but this has no bearing on the discussion of second intentions as such: the explanation remains within the confines of the intentional.”<sup>45</sup> But again, with all due respect, ontological points are contained in Aristotle’s remark. *Things* have in common the definition.<sup>46</sup> The remark does not say, *à la* McInerny’s under-

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everything that belongs to man as man.” Aquinas, trans. Maurer, *On Being and Essence*, 49.

<sup>45</sup> McInerny, “The Logic of Analogy,” 153.

<sup>46</sup> For an extensive discussion of the ontological focus of Aristotle’s remark, see Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1963), 112–15, 126–35. Of the description of equivocals in the *Categories*, Owens concludes, “The precise meaning of the expression ‘things said in many ways’ follows from this analysis. The name is identical, the many ways result from the differences in form or definition. The Greek . . . signifies either ‘to say’ or ‘to mean,’ to express something either in word or in thought. The meaning then is: ‘Things expressed by the same word in ways that vary according to form or definition.’ The best translation of the compact Greek phrase would be:

standing of univocity, that things as known are equally related to the *ratio commune*.<sup>47</sup>

Fourth, returning to Aquinas, McInerny cites *S.T. I*, 13, 5c on analogy for the purpose of illustrating that the text “in no way goes beyond the limits of a logical discussion.”<sup>48</sup> “Et iste modus communitatis medius est inter puram aequivocationem et simplicem univocationem. Neque enim in his quae analogice dicuntur est una ratio, sicut est in univocis; nec totaliter diversa sicut est in aequivocis; sed nomen quod sic multipliciter dicitur, significat diversas proportionales ad aliquid unum.” Again, though, the text is talking about what *is* in “things.” In particular it is speaking about the diverse proportions in things to something one. This is all outside the soul, *extra anima*.<sup>49</sup> The logical discussion of predication here is clearly taking place in a larger ontological context. That larger context is where one should locate Neo-Thomist remarks on analogy as sameness-in-difference.

Fifth, McInerny cites *In I Sent.*, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3, to show that in discussion of analogy, Aquinas’ use of the term *ratio* “never gets outside the logical order.”<sup>50</sup> Here is McInerny’s cited Thomistic text: “Nec tamen hoc nomen ‘ratio’ significat ipsam conceptionem, quia hoc significatur per nomen rei; sed significat intentionem huius conceptionis, sicut et hoc nomen ‘definitio’ et alia nomina secundae impositionis.” McInerny’s point escapes me. As I read the text, *ratio*

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‘Things expressed in various ways,’” 115. The form with which Owens is equating the definition is not a properly logical notion. But McInerny insists on a logical interpretation: “It is Aristotle, however, who points out that our names refer to things insofar as they are known, and when we are talking about equivocals, we are talking about something which happens to things thanks to our mode of knowing, not something which belongs to them as they exist *in rerum natura*.” McInerny, *The Logic of Analogy*, 67–68. McInerny misses the point that the name can stand for the *ratio* or *intentio* of the concept, both being objects of knowledge in the sense of the intellect’s absolute consideration. As so considered, the object is not a logical item because it abstracts from every being, even being in the soul. *Contra* McInerny, *ratio* and *intentio* can designate objects of first intention; see my text, *infra*, at n. 50.

<sup>47</sup> “[U]nlike the common notion of a univocal term (the example of “man” above) [the analogous name] does not apply equally to the things of which it is predicated. By applying equally Thomas means that when I say Socrates is a man I make no reference to anything else called a man, something else that might be thought to have prior right to the name.” McInerny, *History*, 324–25.

<sup>48</sup> McInerny, “The Logic of Analogy,” 154.

<sup>49</sup> The same remarks hold for Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 13, 6c, cited by McInerny, McInerny, “The Logic of Analogy,” 154, n. 14.

<sup>50</sup> McInerny, “The Logic of Analogy,” 159; also McInerny, *The Logic of Analogy*, 62–63.

does not stand for the “conception” that a few lines later is said to be in the soul “as in a subject.” Rather, *ratio* stands for the *intentio* of that conception. What is meant by *intentio*? Earlier lines described *ratio* as the “signification” of a name and as the definition of things that have a definition. Do not these descriptions link *intentio* with the essence or nature abstracted without precision in the *De Ente*? For example, in the *De Ente* Aquinas says that abstracted without precision, the signification of the name *man* includes undesignated matter in its definition.<sup>51</sup> But the essence abstracted without precision is also the absolutely considered essence that abstracts from every existence and so is not yet a properly logical notion. The latter is subsequent upon the essence having an existence in the soul. In sum, it is in no way clear that *ratio* “is the name of a second intention.” Rather, read in the light of another early text, Aquinas is speaking of a first intention—the absolutely considered nature.

It does no good to note that in the next line Aquinas denies that “*ipsa intentio quam significat nomen rationis sit in re,*” as if to imply that like a logical entity, the *ratio* exists *in anima*. The reader can take Aquinas as continuing to speak of the absolutely considered nature of which in the *De Ente* he says, “*falsum enim est dicere quod natura hominis, in quantum huiusmodi, habeat esse in hoc singulari.*” In general, McInerny’s entire discussion of analogy remains strangely bereft of any mention of the absolutely considered nature that abstracts from every *esse*.

Sixth, McInerny refers to Cajetan’s handling of a famous early Thomistic remark on analogy. At *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1m, Aquinas distinguishes three types of analogy. To do this he uses various combinations of the phrases *secundum esse* and *secundum intentionem*. The first kind of analogy is called not *secundum esse*, but *secundum intentionem*. It is illustrated by the overwrought example of how the animal, urine, and diet are called healthy. Only the animal is called healthy in the proper sense of the term. The diet and urine

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<sup>51</sup> “[Designated matter] is not part of the definition of man as man, but it would enter into the definition of Socrates if Socrates could be defined.” Aquinas, trans. Maurer, *On Being and Essence*, 37. “For example, the term *man* signifies the essence of the species, and therefore ‘man’ is predicated of Socrates. But if the nature of the species is signified with precision from designated matter, which is the principle of individuation, then it will have the role of a part,” 42–43. See also texts from the *De Ente* cited *supra*, n. 43.

are called healthy only in virtue of having various reductions to health in the animal. For Cajetan this is not a true analogy. Rather, analogy is a metaphysical doctrine, and so the truly analogous notion ought to be found existing in all the instances. McInerny points out the obvious discrepancy of Cajetan's position with the text. For Cajetan *healthy* is not a case of analogy; for Aquinas it is. In fact, it is the standard example throughout the Thomistic texts.<sup>52</sup> McInerny criticizes Cajetan for not being sufficiently attentive to analogy as a logical doctrine, especially indicated by the phrase *secundum intentionem*.

Must one understand *secundum intentionem* as *secundum secundam intentionem*? I do not think so. In my reply to McInerny's fifth reason, I noted that earlier in the *Sentences* commentary, Aquinas employs *intentio* for the *ratio* or *significatio* of the conception. This manner of describing *intentio* is markedly similar to the *De Ente* description of the absolutely considered essence abstracted without precision. This is an object of first, not second intention. Moreover, at the end of the *responsio*, Aquinas replaces his earlier talk about "una intentio refertur ad plura" with talk of "Natura communis habeat aliquod esse in unoquoque eorum de quibus dicitur." But *natura communis* is the absolutely considered nature of the *De Ente*, that abstracts from every *esse* in order to exist genuinely in different ways: "[Natura communis] . . . habet duplex esse: unum quidem materiale, secundum quod est in materia naturali; aliud autem immateriale, secundum quod est in intellectu."<sup>53</sup>

In the wake of these observations, Aquinas' talk about *secundum intentionem* should be talk about the situation in first intention. Hence, something analogous *secundum intentionem* would be a sameness-within-the-differences of various things. So, with the example of health, the mind sees the sameness in the nature of the animal and in the different relations that urine and diet have to health in the animal. But if *secundum intentionem* has the sense of a first intention, what could be the meaning of the contrasting expression, *secundum esse*? Does any room exist for a contrasting meaning? If one goes back to the example of health, one can see that further room exists. Even with one's intellectual gaze remaining in first intention, health

<sup>52</sup> For McInerny's two observations, see his "Analogy of Names," 278, 286.

<sup>53</sup> Aquinas, *In II de An.*, *lectio* 12; ed. Angelus M. Pirotta, *In Aristotelis Librum de Anima Commentarium* (Turin: Marietti, 1936), nos. 378–80. For other texts, see Joseph Owens, "Common Nature: A Point of Comparison," cited *supra*, n. 41.

is not analogous *secundum esse*. Health fails to belong to the very natures of all the instances. In the diet, it is found only in an accidental relation to the animal. Health is not in the nature of the diet itself. Likewise for the urine. So the situation in first intention involves fundamental dimensions in whose differences the intellect does not grasp the *ratio* of health. In those respects, one can deny that health is analogous *secundum esse*. This interpretation of the first division of analogy preserves the idea of analogy as a first order consideration whose object is a sameness-in-difference.

The interpretation also illustrates why Cajetan was unhappy with it. The first division leaves room for a division in which the sameness is found within the very natures of the various instances. In fact, this situation will be the third division in which the common nature has some existence in each of the things concerning which it is said: “*natura communis habeat aliquod esse in unoquoque eorum de quibus dicitur.*”

A more troubling point for my reading *secundum intentionem* as *secundum primam intentionem* comes from a remark Aquinas makes in his second division of analogy, specifically, *secundum esse et non secundum intentionem*. Aquinas illustrates this division with an example taken from the cosmology of his day. The example is *body*, as said of earthly and heavenly things. According to intention, the term has one meaning or *ratio* and so is not analogous. But according to a consideration of its realization in things, it has many meanings because heavenly bodies are more perfect than earthly ones. In this respect the term is analogous. Aquinas then remarks that the metaphysician and the natural philosopher consider *body* in this second way, while the logician considers *body* in the first way. The given reason is “[*Logicus*] *considerat intentiones tantum*: the logician considers intentions only.” Now as mentioned, the logician does not consider natures just absolutely. He considers them, but in their existence in the intellect. In other words, logic considers natures in their second intention. So, this remark appears to indicate that *secundum intentionem* means the properly logical sense of *secundum secundam intentionem*. The obvious reading indicates that the consideration *secundum intentionem* is a logical consideration, just as McInerney argues.

Yet given the noted first intention use of *intentio*, a reader would be inclined to take a second and closer look at the remark before

conceding agreement. One important fact is that the same thing that the logician considers is considered as existing in things by the physicist and the metaphysician.<sup>54</sup> For sure, then, Aquinas cannot be talking about a second intention here. A second intention has an *esse in anima* only. Rather, it makes better sense to consider the object as the absolutely considered essence that abstracts from every *esse* in order to be both in things and in the soul.

But what would be the sense of *tantum*? Certainly it cannot be taken to mean that the logician considers first intentions to the exclusion of second intentions. For Aquinas, second intentions are the very subject of logic. Taken in itself, my reading appears patently incorrect. But Aquinas' remark does not occur by itself, it occurs in the context of the response. In that context, *tantum* is meant to exclude *secundum esse*. The logician considers first intentions to the exclusion of their *secundum esse*. Should that not mean that logic deals with first intentions irrespective of whether they are analogical or univocal? Logic would deal with first intentions as such, with *any* intention that when given *esse in anima* is a fit subject for predication. In other words, the *tantum* would not mean to exclude logic from notions analogical *secundum esse* as one generic type is excluded from another generic type. As mentioned, even analogical notions are predicated, and predication is a logical phenomenon. Rather, the *tantum* would exclude logic from notions analogical *secundum esse* as a generic consideration is distinguished from a specific one. That reading of *tantum* would enable one to keep *secundum intentionem* as *secundum primam intentionem* throughout, as is required by other points from the *responsio*.

Finally, McInerny cites C.G. I, 34, in which Aquinas makes a distinction between the real order and the order of knowing.<sup>55</sup> It can happen that what is first in the order of reality is last in the order of

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<sup>54</sup> “[S]ed *esse hujus naturae non est ejusdem rationis in corporibus corruptibilibus et incorruptibilibus.*” Aquinas, *In I Sent.* d. 19, q. 5, a. 2c; Mandonnet ed., *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 1, 486. Consider, “By this distinction St. Thomas does not mean that there are two kinds of genera really distinct from each other, one logical and the other natural. He is simply describing two ways in which a genus can be considered by the intellect.” Maurer, “St. Thomas and the Analogy of Genus,” 131. Also, “[A natural genus] is simply the generic *ratio* considered in connection with the existential factors from which the logician precisely abstracts when he considers the same generic *ratio*,” 134.

<sup>55</sup> McInerny, “The Logic of Analogy,” 162–63.

knowing. For instance, as the first cause, God is first in reality. But since we know God from his effects, God is last in the order of our knowing. Aquinas associates one mode of analogical predication with this situation. Since analogy does not have to reflect the order of reality but only the order of knowing, McInerny concludes that analogy is a logical doctrine. In other words, if analogical predication were immediately based on real things, then it would always follow the order of reality. That analogy follows another order shows that it is immediately based on non-real, that is, logical intentions.

But is McInerny correct to take Aquinas' mention of the "order of knowing" as a reference to the order of logic? The trouble with the equivalency is that the knowing about which Aquinas is speaking is of real things, specifically, first and not second intentions. The knower is beginning from real things that are understood to be effects of another real thing, God. This order in real things, not second intentions, determines the analogical imposition of the same name of God and creatures. As well as the order that is the causing of things by God, reality also contains the order that is the dependency of things on God. It is this real order of dependency that our knowledge fastens upon to undergird one manner of analogical predication. Far from proving that analogical predication is fundamentally a logical doctrine, this *Contra Gentiles* text indicates a first intention, or metaphysical, basis.

## 8. ANALOGY AND LOGICAL DEMANDS

Throughout his discussion of analogy, McInerny does not mention the Neo-Thomist idea of analogy as a sameness-*within*-difference. Why? As should be clear, it is not simply a matter of the texts. McInerny's cited texts can be, even should be, interpreted as inclusive of this idea. What is driving his interpretation? In my opinion, the root of McInerny's non-use of the sameness-within-difference idea goes back to the mentioned difficulty of understanding how this idea could possibly designate the product of an abstraction. In other words, the sameness seems to be insufficiently set apart from the instances to do justice to the requirements of predication. Without some distinction, you lack a sameness that when given cognitional existence can

undergo the relation of predication. Because of that problem, McInerny interpretes analogy as exclusively logical. In other words, underlying McInerny's exclusively logical notion of analogy is the following thinking. In Aquinas, analogy is at the least a logical doctrine. Any interpretation must preserve that. But the Neo-Thomist metaphysical interpretation does not preserve it. Hence the Neo-Thomist interpretation self-destructs.

Understood as the apprehension of a sameness precisely within the differences of the instances, analogical abstraction is admittedly a difficult notion to grasp, though I think ordinary experience can be mined for illustrations of it. But even after one acknowledges the phenomenon, the task of technically describing it bristles with difficulties. How can the sameness abstract from the differences, how can it effect some distance here, without rendering itself univocal? On the other hand, how does the sameness keep the differences intimate to itself without obliterating itself? How can Maritain's riveting image of a bird that is at the same time a flock be given a more formal expression? I mentioned Anderson's ingenious play with the pairs implicit-explicit and potential-actual. Recall that at *De Ver.* 21, 1c, Aquinas drew upon these pairs to describe the univocal notion of animal. Animal contains *implicite et quasi potentialiter* what is *determinate et actualiter* in man. Anderson reshuffles the notions to express the analogous concept. What is in the different instances, the analogous concept contains *implicite et actualiter*.

From my reading, the Neo-Thomists offer no better formulation of the analogical concept. Perhaps others will craft a superior way to express the fascinating occurrence of sameness-in-difference. But the present issue is whether the Neo-Thomist formulation suffices for the needs of predication. As I contemplate the formulation, I think that it does suffice. Insofar as the differences of the instances are rendered implicit to the analogon without being rendered potential, one can say that an abstraction has taken place. Enough of a distinction between the instances and the sameness has been achieved. The sameness can then be accorded a cognitional *esse* on the basis of which it can undergo relations of analogical predication. So the need for predication to have a distinct universal term that is related to individuals, as Aquinas describes logical notions in the *De Ente*, can be met in the Neo-Thomist understanding of analogical conceptualization. Though the notion of sameness-within-difference might at

first appear to conflict with predicational needs, nuancing of the notion obviates the difficulty. It would be a profound tragedy if logical considerations of analogical predication eclipsed the Neo-Thomist understanding. Lost would be an appreciation of the fundamental richness and density that intelligibly stands behind our experience of things.

### 9. ANALOGY AS SUPRA-CONCEPTUAL

Another criticism of the analogical richness of the *ratio entis* occurs in the debate between French Jesuits and Dominicans after World War II and prior to *Humani generis* (1950).<sup>56</sup> The Dominicans argued for the mind's ability to frame concepts that provide the foundation for a definitive fundamental expression of reality. The speculative system adequately based upon these concepts is the one true philosophy. It is an absolute grasp of the truth. On the other hand, the Jesuits argued that human concepts are essentially imperfect. Speculative systems obviously possess the same limitation. Hence, no system is the one true system. No system possesses absolute truth. Rather, necessarily or *de jure*, a plurality of systems exists. Each system tries desperately to express reality but always falls short. In its conceptual expression, each philosophy is the proverbial flea on the elephant. Each flea describes the elephant from its limited perspective. Accordingly, Bonaventure's metaphysics will better express something about reality than Aquinas', and vice versa. In terms of the categories of this chapter, the Jesuit view could be expressed this way: there are no conceptual expressions of analogons; rather, every concept at best only expresses some analogate of the analogon. Obviously, no place exists for transcendental concepts, that is, concepts that include the differences of all things, actual and conceivable. Transcendental concepts are oxymoronic. As essentially limited, a concept cannot be all inclusive.

The Jesuit view misses the Neo-Thomist refinements on the ana-

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<sup>56</sup> For clear descriptions of this gripping foundational debate, see Robert F. Harvaneck, "Philosophical Pluralism and Catholic Orthodoxy," *Thought* 25 (1950): 21–52; and McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, chap. 9. For the Dominican point of view, especially as involving Marie-Michel Labourdette, see Nichols, "Thomism and the Nouvelle Théologie," 1–19.

logical concept. As the product of an abstraction without precision, the analogical concept can include the differences of the instances actually, albeit implicitly. What the concept dumbs down here are not the lineaments of the analogon, but the further analogates in which those lineaments can be found. By reflecting upon a substance and an accident, we do succeed in understanding what it is to exist extra-mentally, though no one would claim that that success is tantamount to knowing, for example, the spectrum of substances. Before a Neo-Thomist heard about a platypus, could a Neo-Thomist have imagined a platypus as an analogate of being?

But is it not the case that our understanding of the lineaments of being changes? Does not being portray a variety of faces in different philosophies? Yes it does, and Gilson's *Being and Some Philosophers* is an excellent description of the parade of understandings of being in Western philosophy. Also, it is worth repeating that to grasp a commonality is not *ipso facto* to grasp the definition of that commonality. Both remarks are important. And they indicate that a philosopher's work is far from finished with a grasp of a transcendental. There remains the difficult task of hammering out the definition of the transcendental. This does not change the fact, however, that this field of work is far removed from world of essentially impoverished concepts. The nature of the work is not to replace one concept with another, but to work out the correct definition of the one concept that all philosophers are contemplating. For the Neo-Thomist, that work proceeds by a deepening understanding of the instances that portray the analogon. The more deep the understanding of the instances, the better the portrayal of the lineaments of the analogon. The focus is on the instances whose differences are already included within the analogon. So we are never going outside the analogon and in that way confessing its impoverishment.

Aquinas illustrates what I have in mind. At *S.T. I*, 44, 2c, he presents a threefold breakdown of the history of philosophy. All three stages are talking about the same thing, the notion of being as spied in the sensible given. Especially to be noted is what distinguishes the three stages. Distinction is in terms of increasing penetration of the sensible given. At the first stage, philosophers analyzed the given into the components of substance and accident. Aquinas is referring to Greek atomism, in which macro-bodies are aggregates of true atomic

bodies. The former come and go in virtue of the aggregation and separation of the latter. The atomic bodies are uncaused. Progress to the second stage is made from the recognition of substantial change. The atoms of the first stage transmute. Change in this zone of the sensible given leads to understanding substance itself as a composition of substantial form and matter—the latter being uncreated. Finally, advance is made to a third consideration—*ens inquantum est ens*. The nature of this third consideration is not delineated. But by extrapolating from the first two stages, one can understand the third consideration—at least in a rudimentary way.

The consideration of the first stage is denominated *ens inquantum tale ens*. As noted, the object of the consideration is composite—a substance in light of its accidental determinations. The consideration of the second stage is denominated *ens inquantum hoc ens*. Again, the object characterizes the consideration; the object is a composite—the thing in the light of its substantial form. With this procedure in mind, *ens inquantum ens* should signal a consideration marked by the discovery of a still more profound region in the sensible given. This region will be the substance's *esse*. Earlier at *S.T. I, 8, 1c*, Aquinas did describe *esse* as what is most intimate (*magis intimum*) and deeply set (*profundius*) in creatures. Hence Aquinas will arrive at his unique definition of *ens* to be *habens esse*.

According to Aquinas, the philosopher considers *ens* throughout these three stages of Western philosophy. This sustained object of philosophical reflection is indicated in the phraseologies for each stage. But there is a dynamic running through the three. The philosopher attains better definitions of being by better penetration of the sensible given. The sensible instances that originally portrayed the analogon are completely englobed by the analogon. That is why penetration of the instances does not result in a variety show of analogons. The mind is not shifting to different objects, but focusing in on the original object.

Crucial here will be Aquinas' offered philosophical analysis that pushes the consideration from stage two to stage three. How does one come to realize that there is more to existing changeable substances than matter and form? How does Aquinas know that to be existing, a changeable substance, requires the addition of a further *actus*? Is Aquinas' analysis sufficiently cogent to reveal his *habens*

*esse* definition of being as the controlling definition?<sup>57</sup> In Chapter 6, I will offer my understanding of this analysis. But even if in the eyes of the reader the analysis lacks cogency, we are still a long way from essentially impoverished concepts. It will not be the concept of being that is impoverished. One continues to see being in and through all the abysmal differences of the instances. Being continues to convey itself as an infinitely rich analogon. Any impoverishment is located in the philosopher's analysis of the instances.

## 10. LE BLOND AND THE POVERTY OF CONCEPTS

J.-M. Le Blond, in *L'Analogie de la vérité*, is particularly apt for expressing the reasons behind the view that all concepts are essentially impoverished. Le Blond provides three remarks on conceptualization that entail an impoverishment for concepts. First, he recalls the equivalency of being and the true. Being is purely and simply in God, and deficiently and imitatively in creatures. Hence the true should be likewise. At best, creaturely truth is a deficient and never equaling imitation of divine truth.<sup>58</sup> In the light of this view of reality, no philosophy could claim to be *the* expression of the truth. Just as no created being can claim to be the representation of being as such, so too no speculative system can claim to be the expression of truth as such. Le Blond adds the disclaimer that his position is not a denial of truth. Just as finite created beings are really and properly beings, so too finite truth is really and properly truth.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Within this context of ever-deepening penetration rather than never-ending substitution, one ought to situate: "And what about the principles themselves? Is there no possibility for the further deepening of the notion of being? I do not know. Did I see one, I would proclaim it. No Christian philosopher could have guessed, at the time of Saint Augustine, that it was possible. But Saint Thomas was to show that it was possible. God alone knows if a new discovery of the same type remains possible and if, in the course of time, it will take place." Etienne Gilson, *The Philosopher and Theology* (New York: Random House, 1962), 235.

<sup>58</sup> "La contrepartie de cette affirmation . . . est celle-ci . . . à savoir que toutes les autres vérités sont complexes et déficientes, qu'elles imitent la vérité simple, sans pouvoir l'égaliser dans leur multiplicité, qu'elles sont, en un mot, des vérités *analogues* à la Vérité première." Jean Marie Le Blond, "L'Analogie de la vérité," *Recherches de science religieuse* 34 (1947): 130.

<sup>59</sup> "En réalité, déclarer que nos vérités humaines sont analogues ne conduit nullement à nier qu'elles soient réellement et proprement des vérités." Le Blond, "L'Analogie de la vérité," 131.

Second, building from the first remark, Le Blond launches into a fairly detailed epistemology. He notes that just as something is a being only in and through a relation to pure existence, so too human truth implies a relation to God. This relation is the tendency of the human spirit to the Absolute. This tendency is the “form” of every affirmation and is implied in the copula of every judgment. The diverse representations in the affirmation are its “matter.” In other words, the basic and fundamental contact of human knowing with reality is found in its tendency to the Absolute. Truth is apportioned to other things in and through their relation to that dynamism. Since the mind’s contact with reality is supra-conceptual, an impassible divide (*une coupure infranchissable*) exists between even the most clear and best built human system of thought and Truth itself. The best human system will never be the best possible.<sup>60</sup> In the wake of this epistemology, no absolute system, no unique system, can exist. Hence the Thomist synthesis exists side by side with that of Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, and Suarez as complementing rather than opposing positions. All these systems and future ones are part of the asymptotic effort (*l’effort asymptotique*) of man to reach the Absolute. In his second remark Le Blond mentions no Thomistic texts. But the described epistemology has unmistakable echoes of Maréchal’s understanding of the human intellect’s constitutive *a priori* dynamism to the Infinite. The reader can assume that in his second remark, Le Blond is coming out of Maréchal’s interpretation of the Thomistic texts.

Third, Le Blond continues to drive home his point about the essential deficiency of human knowledge by noting its “abstractive” character. Human truth cannot consist in total adequation (*une adéquation totale*) to reality. Only God’s knowledge attains things absolutely such as they are. Because human knowledge is abstractive, it always omits (*laisse tomber*) some aspect of things. Human knowledge remains incomplete and imperfect because it considers what it

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<sup>60</sup> “[L]e meilleur système humain, au contraire, ne pourra jamais être *le meilleur possible*, ‘*quo verior cogitari nequit*,’ ce qui, dans l’ordre de la vérité aussi bien que dans celui de la perfection et de l’être, demeure la prérogative divine; il sera simplement le meilleur, *en fait*, toujours séparé, par un abîme de l’intuition simple qui est la possession de Dieu et qu’Il peut seul communiquer dans une participation à son être. Aussi, parler du système absolu, du système unique, paraît-il peu raisonnable.” Le Blond, “L’Analogie de la vérité,” 132–33.

knows as aside from the whole (*le considère à part du tout*).<sup>61</sup> Each concept is only a perspectival view of reality that necessarily hides other sides. Each concept is like the view of each proverbial flea on the elephant.

As clever and as immensely popular as these reasons are, all miss the Neo-Thomist gloss of Aquinas' analogy doctrine. For the Neo-Thomists, the analogical concept bears upon the analogon, the sameness-in-difference. For Le Blond and others, the analogical concept gives expression only to what the tradition calls the analogate.<sup>62</sup> The analogical concept bears upon the difference in the sameness. The sameness escapes conceptual expression. The sameness is more the target of the mind's *a priori* dynamism than of its conceptualizing capacity. From that perspective, Le Blond thinks through the deficiency and limitation of analogical knowledge.

Hence, just as Sandy Koufax in his differences gives limited expression to great baseball playing, so too each great metaphysics through its basic concepts gives a limited expression to reality. Furthermore, just as no great player contradicts another, so too no great metaphysics does the same. Rather, a relation of mutual complementarity reigns between all. Again, the reason for this result is that no basic metaphysical concept succeeds in capturing the reality that is the common focus of each metaphysics. Just such a concept is the

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>62</sup> Consider how the following understands analogical conceptualization simply in terms of analogates: "Si on lui substitue une autre notion, elle sera analogique aussi et, qui plus est, elle sera analogue aussi à la première. Si maintenant on veut exprimer la vérité absolue qu'elles traduisent toutes deux d'une manière différente, on ne pourra le réaliser qu'en faisant appel à une troisième notion qui sera, elle aussi, fatalement analogique." Bruno de Solages, "Autour d'une controverse," *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 2 (1947): 10. Pierre Rousselot, *The Intellectualism of St. Thomas*, trans. James E. O'Mahony (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), 96–100, similarly argues for the deficiencies of concepts in our knowledge of material things. "Abstractiveness" is the source of the deficiency. Our concepts "leave out" the richness of the real (98; also 3–9). The partialness of concepts makes them only "analogical" (106) and makes understandable the need to add further concepts in the *differentiae* of the definition. But duality, or multiplicity, of concepts always intimates deficiency. Again, Rousselot's way of thinking about concepts and analogy makes perfect sense when one realizes that the concept has been restricted to what the tradition calls the analogate. Just as no analogate gives perfect expression to the analogon, no concept gives perfect expression to the real. Still further in back of the way of thinking about analogy in Le Blond, de Solages, and Rousselot is an understanding of abstraction as only precise abstraction. Vd. my reply *infra* to Le Blond's third criticism.

claim in the Neo-Thomist understanding of analogy. *Ens* is a conceptual fix on reality itself. Aquinas refers to *ens* as a *ratio*, a *natura communis*, and as an *aliquid unum*. He also contrasts the relation of *ens* to its differences, and the relation of a genus to its differences. Since in the Neo-Thomist understanding of analogy, conceptualization reaches as far as the analogon, then each great metaphysics will be attempting to express the character of this analogon. They will do this successfully or not. For just as other commonalities, for example the notion of triangle, have only one definition, so too will *ens*. Only the metaphysics that seizes upon this definition would be the true metaphysics. Since in the Neo-Thomist tradition the concept of being is an abstraction, then presumably this one true metaphysics would validate its definition of being in and through the cogency of its fundamental analysis of individual beings. The definitional understanding of being would be a reflection of the results of this analysis.

In this vein, the deficiency and limitation of analogical knowledge is understood differently than in Le Blond. The metaphysician will be ambushed not by new definitions of being, but by new analogates of being. One will be amazed by the many new and different ways of realizing the sameness-in-difference with which one is already acquainted. The concepts of the Neo-Thomist metaphysician will not be asymptotic to reality, as they are for Le Blond. The concepts will not just approach the totality of reality but never quite grasp it. Rather, they will capture all of reality. They will span the breadth of the real. Their deficiency is not in that respect. Their intrinsic richness is complete and total. Their deficiency resides in their inability to express the wealth of instances that they implicitly but actually contain.

Hence, a Neo-Thomist can admit Le Blond's first reason, yet understand the terms of the conclusion differently. Creaturely truth is deficient not because it is expressed through concepts that make only an asymptotic approach to reality. No, creaturely truth is deficient because it is founded on analogical concepts understood as samenesses grasped precisely within the differences of the instances. The embrace of reality by the concept is total. But because reality is seized only through the differences of a finite array of analogates, the intellect never plumbs the richness of the concept. New and unheard of ways of realizing being are acknowledged. Divine knowledge of

being would be an unmediated knowledge. It would be a grasp of the analogon in itself, not in and through its analogates.

What of Le Blond's second reason? According to the described epistemology, our basic contact with reality is in and through a supra-conceptual intellectual dynamism to Infinite Being. The philosopher's fidelity to the exigencies of intellectual dynamism guarantees the limited objectivity of his concepts. Different but complimentary conceptual systems form in the wake of this dynamism. In the eyes of many, this validation of a *de jure* metaphysical pluralism is much more attractive than the unseemly task of validating one's own position by slaying the opponents. But because of its indebtedness to Maréchal, Le Blond's epistemology has all the previously mentioned weaknesses thereof. First, *prima facie* texts for an *a priori* intellectual dynamism evaporate on closer analysis.<sup>63</sup> Second, the attempt to underwrite the objectivity of intellectual dynamism through the technique of retorsion never assures us that we are dealing with more than ways that we must think.<sup>64</sup> The second impasse obviously blocks the achievement of a systematic pluralism that avoids relativism.

In his last reason, Le Blond complains that the abstractive approach to reality can only provide us with a portion of the reality. Obviously, in some sense all abstraction leaves something out. All parties admit that an abstraction gives us a part of the real.<sup>65</sup> The issue is how we are to understand this partial knowledge. Is it such that it prevents a definitive knowledge of the real or allows it? To appreciate what Le Blond is saying in this third reason, the reader must remember that he is intent upon establishing that all concepts are the earlier mentioned asymptotic ones. In every respect, concepts necessarily only go so far in grasping reality. In every respect, the whole remains outside the concepts. For example, the Existential

<sup>63</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 2, text at nn. 35–46.

<sup>64</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 4.

<sup>65</sup> “[Metaphysica] considerat omnia in quantum sunt entia, non descendens ad propriam cognitionem moralium, vel naturalium. Ratio enim entis, cum sit diversificata in diversis, non est sufficiens ad specialem rerum cognitionem.” Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, prol., q. 1, a. 2c; Mandonnet, ed., *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 1, 10. Also, “Although the subjects of the other sciences are parts of being, which is the subject of metaphysics, the other sciences are not necessarily parts of metaphysics. For each science treats of one part of being in a special way distinct from that in which metaphysics treats of being.” Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 1, ad 6m; trans. Maurer, *Division and Methods*, 16.

Thomist understanding of the *ratio entis* as *habens esse* fails to grasp being even in respect to what it is fundamentally. Even on the fundamental level, that metaphysical conception can be only partial. Other sides of the fundamental level of being are necessarily hidden and lie in wait to ambush any Existential Thomist claims to closure. Hence the real issue is whether the abstractive character of our knowing entails the asymptotic view of concepts.

Aquinas gives us reasons to think otherwise. Le Blond's position is insufficiently attentive to Aquinas' nuanced *De Ente et Essentia* doctrine of abstraction that subdivides it into abstraction with and without precision. For example, we can think what is common to me and Mt. Everest, specifically, something extended in three dimensions, in such a way that the differences of living and non-living are not only not included but are also excluded. This thinking is an abstraction with precision. It gives a notion of body that is just a portion, a part, of me and Mt. Everest. But we can abstract "something extended in three dimensions" such that the differences, though not included, are not excluded. This gives the genus body, of which animal and mineral are species. Because there is no exclusion of what is not included, the concept remains basically identical with the whole, in some respect, and can be predicated of the whole. You can say, "I am a body."

In a manner reminiscent of Suarez on abstraction,<sup>66</sup> Le Blond identifies abstraction with precise abstraction. Because it excludes that from which it abstracts, precise abstraction produces only a part of the initial totality. Its product is never equivalent to the whole in any respect; in every respect, it is always a part. Hence, the product of a precise abstraction cannot function in an affirmation in which predicate is identified with subject. No part is its whole. You are always "assembling" a knowledge of the real; you are never in any respect completing it. Any definitive knowledge claim about the whole is ruled out, just as the pluralists claim.

On the other hand, non-precise abstraction does not exclude what it does not include. It does this differently with univocal commonalities and analogical ones. The univocal commonality includes the differences of the instances implicitly though potentially. Analogi-

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<sup>66</sup> For texts and discussion, see Owens, "The Accidental and Essential Character of Being," 84–85.

cal commonalities include them implicitly but actually. In both cases and in different ways, the commonality is in some respect sufficiently identical with the initial whole to be predicable of it. Since what is not included is not excluded, the concept is in some respect equivalent with the whole. We can then speak of the whole, that is, make definitive knowledge claims, from that respect.

For example, in respect to describing being fundamentally, the concept of *habens esse* does not hide some side of that fundamental level. Non-precise abstraction does not produce Le Blond's asymptotic concepts that always exclude something of the data. For Aquinas, only precise abstraction is essentially impoverishing. In their respective fashions, both univocal and analogical conceptualization retain the richness of the real. If in thinking about being, univocal conceptualization is set aside for analogical conceptualization, it will not be because the product of univocal conceptualization fails to remain identical with the whole. Rather, one sees that all the differences include the sameness. As Aquinas remarked, "Every nature is essentially a being."

In conclusion, if the *habens esse* understanding of the *ratio entis* is inaccurate or incomplete, it will not be because of abstraction *qua* abstraction. The reason will lie in a faulty analysis of the data that is claimed to release this understanding. Either the analysis of the data was not impartial, or it was too superficial. In the next chapter I want to present my understanding of Aquinas' metaphysical analysis of the data and to assess its probity.

## *Actus Essendi*

UNDERSTOOD ANALOGICALLY, that is, as a sameness-within-difference, the *ratio entis* is already fraught with implications. One can understand how the intellectual life, knowledge sought for its own sake, can be so compelling. Each thing by its difference reveals some more of the richness of being. Also, because of its richness, being is convertible with the good. This conversion sets us within striking distance of ethics. To understand the human as an intellector of being is to understand that the good resides in the human more intensely than in any other analogate that parades before us. Before the human analogate, there emerges the obligation to be respectful and solicitous. Textual idiosyncrasies require postponing a study of Aquinas' transit from the *ratio entis* into ethics. The texts speak not only of the *ratio entis* but also of its defining note of *ratio essendi*. Understanding how Aquinas secures that defining note is the first task and is the concern of this chapter.

To recognize being, even as analogous, is not *ipso facto* to know how to define being.<sup>1</sup> Many times we know a commonality long before we know its defining notes. In an epistemology where the intellect abstracts commonalities from data, one can better understand a commonality by better analyzing the data. The understanding is the long shadow cast by the analysis. What is the most profound analysis of the data of real existents that will open the most profound understanding of the *ratio entis*?

### 1. THE DEFINITION OF *HABENS ESSE*

Aquinas mentions *ens* when discussing the subject of metaphysics. Standard formulae for the subject include: *ens qua ens* (being as

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<sup>1</sup>“One of the first things we know with certitude is that being is, that it is what it is, and that it cannot be anything else, but to know what being is is a very different matter. It has been discussed for almost twenty-five centuries, and even Martin Heidegger has not yet discovered the answer.” Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 51.

being), *ens inquantum ens* (being inasmuch as being), the *ratio entis* (the notion, or concept, of being), *ens commune* (common being).<sup>2</sup> All of these phrases designate an intelligibility or commonality. Besides the meaning of *man* picked out as a commonality in Tom, Dick, and Harry, and *triangle* as discerned in the right angle triangle, the isosceles triangle, and the equilateral triangle, “being: *ens*” is another commonality that we can find in the sensible things of our experience. Being is special from other commonalities, as man and triangle. Aquinas characterizes being as “separate from matter both in being and notion.”<sup>3</sup> What he means is that being is a commonality that need not be realized as a body. A being could be a non-body, such as an angel or the rational soul. In contrast, a man or a triangle must always be realized in a bodily way.

The non-materiality of being is not, however, its defining note. In fact, non-materiality also characterizes other notions, for example concepts of substance, act, potency, one, and many. If we want to find what is especially characteristic of being, we must pay attention to other remarks. Aquinas says that something is called a being in virtue of possessing its *esse* or *actus essendi*. Consequently, a being is a *quasi habens esse*.<sup>4</sup> A being is “as if a haver, or possessor, of *esse*.”

<sup>2</sup> “[J]ust as metaphysics, which considers all things insofar as they are beings [*omnia inquantum sunt entia*], not descending to a proper cognition of morals or of natural things. For the notion of being [*ratio entis*], although it is diversified in diverse things, is not sufficient for a special knowledge of things.” Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, Prol., q. 1, a. 2c. See also *supra*, Chap. 2, nn. 33–35.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 2, nn. 33 and 35.

<sup>4</sup> That *esse*, *actus essendi*, is the defining note of the *ratio entis* is a thesis that spans Aquinas’ theological career. “Since in the thing there is its quiddity and its being [*esse*], truth is based on the being of the thing more than on the quiddity, just as the name of being [*nomen entis*] is imposed from the being [*esse*].” Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1c. “Just as motion [*motus*] is the act of the mobile inasmuch as it is mobile; so too being [*esse*] is the act of the existing thing [*actus existentis*], inasmuch as it is a being [*ens*].” Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 2, a. 2c. “In the statement, ‘To be [*esse*] is other than that which is,’ the act of being [*actus essendi*] is distinguished from that to which that act belongs. But the name of being [*ratio entis*] is taken from the act of existence [*ab actu essendi*], not from that whose act it is.” *De Ver.* 1, 1, ad 3m, second set; trans. Mulligan, *Disputed Questions*, vol. 1, 8. “For no creature is its being [*esse*], but is a possessor of being [*habens esse*].” *Quodl.* II, q. 2, a. 2c. “[B]eing [*esse*] is called the act of a being inasmuch as it is a being [*actus entis in quantum est ens*], that is, by which something is named a being [*ens*] in act in the nature of things. And so being [*esse*] is not attributed except to things which are contained in the ten categories; whence being [*ens*] by such being [*esse*]

Just why Aquinas makes a qualification here, I will explain later. Now I want to describe generally what he means by *esse* or *actus essendi*. Neo-Thomists have rendered these phrases into English as “the existence of a thing.” This translation is unfortunate, because we can start thinking about *esse* or *actus essendi* as if it were just the fact of a thing. In ordinary talk, “the existence of a thing” means just the fact of the thing. For example, if we ask, Does so-and-so exist? all that we want to know is whether so-and-so is a fact, is in the world.

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is divided by the ten genera.” *Quodl.* IX, q. 2, a. 3c. “Yet we signify one thing through that which we call being [*esse*], and another thing through that which we call that which exists [*id quod est*]; just as we signify one thing when we say running [*currere*], and another through that which is called a runner [*currens*]. For running and being [*currere et esse*] are signified in the abstract, just as white; but what is, that is a being and a runner [*ens et currens*], are signified in the concrete, just as a white thing [*album*]. In *de Heb.*, ch. II. “Then, too, because being [*esse*] is compared even to the form itself as act. For in things composed of matter and form, the form is said to be the principle of being [*principium essendi*], for this reason: that it is the complement of the substance, whose act is being [*esse*]. Thus, transparency is in relation to the air the principle of illumination, in that it makes the air the proper subject of light. Accordingly, in things composed of matter and form, neither the matter nor the form nor even being [*esse*] itself can be termed that which is. Yet the form can be called *that by which it is*, inasmuch as it is the principle of being; the whole substance itself, however, is *that which is*. And being [*esse*] itself is that by which the substance is called a being [*ens*]. . . . On the other hand, in substances composed of matter and form there is a twofold composition of act and potentiality: the first, of the substance itself which is composed of matter and form; the second, of the substance thus composed, and being [*esse*]; and this composition also can be said to be of *that which is* and being, or of *that which is* and *that by which a thing is*.” Aquinas, *C.G.* II, 54, *Deinde*; trans. Anderson, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 2, 157–58. “Then others advanced further and raised themselves to the consideration of being as being [*ens inquantum est ens*], and who assigned a cause to things, not only according as they are *these* or *such*, but according as they are *beings* [*entia*]. Therefore, whatever is the cause of things considered as beings, must be the cause of things, not only according as they are *such* by accidental forms, nor according as they are *these* by substantial forms, but also according to all that belongs to their being [*esse*] in any way whatever. And thus it is necessary to say that also primary matter is created by the universal cause of things.” Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 44, 2c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 429. “Nam ens dicitur quasi esse habens, hoc autem solum est substantia, quae subsistit: for a being is called as if a possessor of being, this is substance alone which subsists.” Aquinas, *In XII Meta.*, *lectio* 1, no. 2419; ed. Cathala and Spiazzi, *In Duodecim Libros Metaphysicorum*, 567. “Et ideo hoc nomen *Ens* quod imponitur ab ipso *esse*: and so this name being which is imposed from the being itself.” Aquinas, *In IV Meta.*, *lectio* 2, no. 558; ed. Cathala and Spiazzi, *In Duodecim Libros Metaphysicorum*, 155. Finally, at *In VI Meta.*, *lectio* 3, no. 1215, Aquinas says that God is a cause to *omnia inquantum sunt entia* because he is an *agens per modum dantis esse*.

As mentioned in the above opening pages of my Introduction, one can regard Aristotle, Averroës, Kant, and contemporary logicians as all philosophically reiterating the existence-as-fact understanding. Also, I noted Gilson's observation that even some contemporary Thomists favor an Averroistic interpretation of being. These Thomists could emphasize Aquinas' repeated assertions that a substance is essentially a being.<sup>5</sup> This could not be true if a substance were a being by its distinct act of existence. When a thing is denominated something on the basis of something distinct from it, the denomination is always accidental. For example, my being called a pianist is an accidental denomination because its basis is an act distinct from me, that is, it refers to my acquired habit of being able to play the piano. These Thomists also point out that the only other sense of being about which Aquinas speaks is that of the truth of a proposition. This echoes the above mentioned contemporary logical analysis of *exists*.

But other assertions of Aquinas exclude for him the merely fact-sense of the existence of a thing. I have already mentioned Aquinas' notion of *ens* as *habens esse*. In still other passages exemplified in note 4, Aquinas regards existence as a distinct principle composed with the individual substance to render the substance a being (*ens*), an existent. In fact, *esse* is sufficiently distinct to compare its composition with a substance to form's composition with matter within the substance. Moreover, he compares the meaning of *ens* and *esse* to those of *currens* and *currere*. Just as a runner is a man plus his act of running, so too a being is something plus its act of existing. But the act of running is something distinct from the man, hence a thing's act of existing should also be distinct from it.

The same thinking is revealed in a most famous remark on *esse*. Both in his *De Potentia Dei* and in his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas

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<sup>5</sup> "We must realize [with the Philosopher] that the term *a being [ens]* in itself has two meanings. Taken one way it is divided by the ten categories . . ." Aquinas, trans. Maurer, *On Being and Essence*, 28. "Now as Avicenna says, that which the intellect first conceives as, in a way the most evident, and to which it reduces all its concepts, is being [*ens*]. Consequently, all the other conceptions [*conceptiones*] of the intellect are had by additions to being. But nothing can be added to being as though it were something not included in being—in the way that a difference is added to a genus or an accident to a subject—for every reality [*natura*] is essentially a being [*ens*]." Aquinas, *De Ver.* 1, 1c; trans. Mulligan, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, vol. 1, 5. Repeating Averroës *contra* Avicenna, Aquinas argues at *In IV Meta.*, lect. 2, n. 555, that "being [*ens*] and one [*unum*] are predicated of the substance of every thing through itself [*per se*] and not according to an accident [*secundum accidens*]."

says that he understands by *esse* the act or actuality of all acts and the perfection of all perfections.<sup>6</sup> But as an act or actuality, substantial and accidental forms are distinct items composed with another item that is in potency to the act. Hence, calling *esse* an act and an actuality should indicate on Aquinas' part similar thinking. Aquinas will also be considering *esse* as a distinct item composed with another item that is in potency to the act. Finally, Aquinas also uses the infinitive *esse* as a noun, or substantive, in the context of referring to the individual generable and corruptible thing as *possibile esse et non esse*.<sup>7</sup>

In sum, it is not so much that Aquinas disagrees with the fact-sense of the thing's existence, but rather that he insists that the fact-sense

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<sup>6</sup> "Being [*esse*], furthermore, is the name of an act [*actum quendam*], for a thing is not said to be because it is in potency but because it is in act. Everything, however, that has an act diverse from it is related to that act as potency to act; for potency and act are said relatively to one another." Aquinas, *C.G.* I, 22, *Amplius. Esse*; trans. Pegis, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975) vol. 1, 120. "Being [*esse*], as we understand it here, signifies the highest perfection of all: and the proof is that act is always more perfect than potentiality. Now no signate form is understood to be in act unless it be supposed to have being. Thus we may take human nature or fiery nature as existing potentially in matter, or as existing in the power of an agent, or even as in the mind: but when it has being it becomes actually existent [*sed hoc quod habet esse, efficitur actu existens*]. Wherefore it is clear that being as we understand it here is the actuality of all acts [*actualitas omnium actuum*], and therefore the perfection of all perfections [*perfectio omnium perfectionum*]." Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7, 2, ad 9m; trans. L. Shapcote, *On the Power of God* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1934), vol. 3, 12. "Being itself [*ipsum esse*] is the most perfect of all things, for it is compared to all things as that which is act [*actus*]: for nothing has actuality except so far as it is. Hence being is the actuality of all things, even of forms themselves." Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 4, 1, ad 3m; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 38. "Now all the perfections of all things pertain to the perfection of being [*perfectio essendi*]; for things are perfect precisely so far as they have being after some fashion." Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 4, 2c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 39. In reading these texts it is important to not lose sight of the fact that *esse* is the act in virtue of which the thing is a fact or actuality. *Esse* is not just the actuality of the thing, but it is the act by which the thing is an actuality.

<sup>7</sup> "We find in the world, furthermore, certain beings, those namely that are subject to generation and corruption, which can be and not-be. But what can be has a cause because, since it is equally [*de se aequaliter*] related to two contraries, namely, being and non-being [*esse et non esse*]." Aquinas, *C.G.* I, 15, *Amplius*; Pegis, trans., *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 1, 98–99. "Again, everything that can be and non-be has a cause; for considered in itself [*in se consideratum*] it is indifferent to either, so that something else must exist which determines it to one." Aquinas, *C.G.* II, 15, *Praeterea*; trans. Anderson, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 2, 48. Cf. "[Y]ou will see that the notion of existence emerged with the question whether the particularized concept, *this thing*, was anything more than a mere object of thought." Lonergan, "Insight: Preface to a Discussion," 162.

be deepened to include the act in virtue of which the thing is a fact. A thing is a fact in virtue of its *actus essendi*. The relation of this act to the substance with which it is composed also bears mention. In respect to the substance rendered a being by composition with *esse*, *esse* is prior (*prius*),<sup>8</sup> first (*primus*),<sup>9</sup> most profound (*profundius*) and most intimate (*magis intimum*).<sup>10</sup> *Esse* is the core around which the thing revolves. It is like the hole of a donut. Just as the hole is outside the donut yet “inside” it, so too *esse* is an act distinct from the thing, but for all its distinctness, *esse* is most intrinsic to the thing.

We are so used to conceiving acts of a thing as items subsequent and posterior to a thing that the notion of an act basic and fundamental to its thing is strange. But for reasons yet to be given, if one is correctly to appreciate *esse*, usual ways of thinking must be suspended. Here is how one Neo-Thomist metaphysician explains the relation of *esse* to the thing:

The notion that there is an accident prior to substance in sensible things is repellent to the ingrained human way of thinking. Yet the effort has to be made for the metaphysical understanding of existence. Not substance, but an accident, being, is absolutely basic in sensible things. This has to be understood, however, in a way that does not make being function as the substance. Strictly, it is not the being that is there, but the substance that has the being. The nature cannot take

<sup>8</sup> “[I]t follows that something is the cause of its own being [*causa essendi*]. This is impossible, because, in their notions the existence of the cause is prior [*prius*] to that of the effect. If, then, something were its own cause of being [*causa essendi*], it would be understood to be before it had being [*haberet esse*]—which is impossible.” Aquinas, *C.G. I*, 22, *Amplius. Si*; trans. Pegis, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 1, 119. Even though the cause is called *prius*, clearly the *esse* is also. The thing cannot trump the priority of its own *esse* to be a cause of it.

<sup>9</sup> “Now the first [*primus*] of all effects is being [*ipsum esse*], which is presupposed to all other effects, and does not presuppose any other effect.” Aquinas, *De Pot.* 3, 4c; trans. Shapcote, *On the Power of God*, vol. 1, 102. The primacy of *esse* is implied in further texts: *S.T. I*, 4, 1, ad 3m, cited *supra*, n. 6; “From the very fact that being [*esse*] is ascribed to a quiddity, not only is the quiddity said to be but also to be created; since before it had being [*esse*] it was nothing, except perhaps in the intellect of the creator, where it is not a creature but the creating essence.” Aquinas, *De Pot.* 3, 5, ad 2m; trans. Shapcote, *On the Power of God*, vol. 1, 110; “God at the same time gives being [*esse*] and produces that which receives being [*esse*], so that it does not follow that his action requires something already in existence.” Aquinas, *De Pot.* 3, 1, ad 17m; trans. Shapcote, *On the Power of God*, vol. 1, 88.

<sup>10</sup> “But being [*esse*] is innermost [*magis intimum*] in each thing and most fundamentally present [*profundius*] within all things, since it is formal in respect of everything found in a thing.” Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 8, 1c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 2, 64.

on an adverbial relation to its being. Man cannot be regarded as basically a certain portion of being that exists humanly, or a horse as another portion of being that exists equinely. The man and the horse are not portions of being, but substances that have being. They, and not their being, have to be expressed substantively, even though their being is prior to their natures. Not the subject, but the predicate, is absolutely basic.<sup>11</sup>

The priority of *actus essendi* to the thing that it actuates seems to explain Aquinas' earlier mentioned qualification in describing the *ratio entis* as *quasi habens esse*. Usually what is possessed by a thing is regarded as subsequent and posterior to the thing. For example, if I have a tan, I have an item distinct from me, yet posterior and subsequent to me. We come to understand the tan as distinct and posterior because I can be found without it. This manner of verification obviously fails for *esse*. Without the *esse*, I am not found at all. So if we can cogently come to distinguish *esse* from the thing, we should not be surprised to find that *esse* is an act of the thing that does not fit the familiar parameters of an act of the thing.<sup>12</sup>

Priority also enables one to understand how being (*ens*) can be essentially predicated on the basis of *esse*. As mentioned, predication on the basis of an act distinct from a thing is usually an accidental, not essential, predication. But the radical priority of *esse* not only distinguishes *esse* from the thing, but, in its own manner, the priority places the *esse* in the thing. As *prius*, *esse* is *magis intimum*. Somewhat similarly, by its central location the hole of the donut is not just outside but also inside the donut. Hence, predication on the basis of *esse* is not simply accidental but also essential.<sup>13</sup> Along with analogy

<sup>11</sup> Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 75. Cf., "Given what I have been saying, Aquinas's teaching on *esse* is decidedly matter of fact and even pedestrian." Davies, "Aquinas, God, and Being," 514. For references to Neo-Thomists who appear to regard the nature as taking on an adverbial relation to its *esse*, see *infra*, Chap. 9 at n. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Unlike the thing's other "possessions" that are all posterior and subsequent to the thing, the *esse* "had" by the thing is prior and fundamental to the thing. Hence, "*esse est accidens, non quasi per accidens se habens, sed quasi actualitas cuiuslibet substantiae*" (Aquinas, *Quodl.* II, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2m; ed. Spiazzi, *Questiones Quodlibetales*, 24). And at *Quodl.* XII, q. 5, a. 1; ed. Spiazzi, *Questiones Quodlibetales*, 226, the priority of angelic *esse* to the angel itself is used to deny that *esse* is an ordinary accident: "*quia accidens intelligitur inesse alicui praeexistenti. Angelus autem non praeexistit ipsi esse.*"

<sup>13</sup> This point escapes Brian Davies who remarks, "[ 'Is a being' ] does not tell us

understood as sameness-in-difference, the dual status of *esse* as both accidental and essential is guaranteed to drive analytical minds mad. Some ideas cannot be perfectly isolated from others.

## 2. *ACTUS ESSENDI* AND THE METAPHYSICAL CONCEPT OF BEING

At this point the investigator of Aquinas' definition of the *ratio entis* is poised to make a conclusion of great strategic bearing upon his further reading of Aquinas. Let me lead up to this conclusion. First, Aquinas understands the *ratio entis* as a composite commonality. As noted, a thing is denominated an *ens* in virtue of its *esse*. *Ens* is *quasi habens esse*. Second, as I explained in Chapter 2, in Aquinas' epistemology commonalities are abstracted from data. Also, *S.T.* I, 84, 7c explains that even previously known commonalities are recalled only by first presenting oneself with an image of some particular in which the commonality will be found. Third, for Aquinas the fundamental data for the abstraction of the commonalities that come to reside in our intellect are sensible things. And so—fourth—we are brought to confront the conclusion that in order to attain Aquinas' definition of the *ratio entis*, it is first of all necessary to transform in some way our appreciation of sensible existents into an appreciation of sensible things plus their own acts of existence.

In other words, to abstract *ens* in the *habens esse* sense requires the preliminary setting up of the data into instances of various things and their *esses*. For Aquinas abstraction is controlled by the data. You cannot get any commonality from any multiplicity. For example, you can concentrate on a series of quadrilaterals forever and never grasp the meaning of *circle*. Circle is just not present in the data. Hence, where that commonality is the *ratio entis* in the *habens esse* sense, then here also we must pay special attention to crafting the appropriate multiplicity that will release the notion to us. So given what Aquinas says about the *ratio entis* and what he says about intellection of commonalities, the crafting of a multiplicity of various things, each seen to be composed with their respective acts of existence, seems to be the key philosophical requirement for understanding of *ens* as *quasi habens esse*.

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anything about anything. . . . It cannot serve to tell us what something is." "Aquinas, God, and Being," 510.

Verifying Aquinas' consideration of an existent as a *quasi habens esse*, as a composition of a thing and its fundamental and basic *actus essendi*, involves high stakes. Aquinas' position would be a decisive answer to a common and popular criticism of metaphysics. The criticism comes from the twentieth-century British logical positivist Alfred Jules Ayer. In his well-known *Language, Truth and Logic*, Ayer criticizes metaphysics for its making the existence or being of the thing an attribute of the thing. Ayer says:

A simpler and clearer instance of the way in which a consideration of grammar leads to metaphysics is the case of the metaphysical concept of Being. The origin of our temptation to raise questions about Being, which no conceivable experience would enable us to answer, lies in the fact that, in our language, sentences which express existential propositions and sentences which express attributive propositions may be of the same grammatical form. For instance, the sentences "martyrs exist" and "martyrs suffer" both consist of a noun followed by an intransitive verb, and the fact that they have grammatically the same appearance leads one to assume that they are of the same logical type. It is seen that in the proposition "martyrs suffer," the members of a certain species are credited with a certain attribute, and it is sometimes assumed that the same thing is true of such a proposition as "martyrs exist." If this were actually the case, it would, indeed, be as legitimate to speculate about the Being of martyrs as it is to speculate about their suffering. But, as Kant pointed out, existence is not an attribute. For, when we ascribe an attribute to a thing, we covertly assert that it exists; so that if existence were itself an attribute, it would follow that all positive existential propositions were tautologies, and all negative existential propositions self-contradictory; and this is not the case. So that those who raise questions about Being which are based on the assumption that existence is an attribute are guilty of following grammar beyond the boundaries of sense.<sup>14</sup>

Ayer's argument against metaphysics is as follows: Metaphysicians who are engrossed with talking about the existence of a thing as if it were an attribute of the thing simply have had their thought misled by the way they speak. Metaphysicians have wrongly assumed that because we speak about the existence of the thing in the same grammatical fashion as we speak about genuine attributes of a thing, then

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<sup>14</sup> Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), 42–43.

the existence of the thing is also an attribute of the thing. But for two reasons, this thinking of the metaphysicians, understandable as it is, must be erroneous. Logically speaking, both the ascription and the denial of an attribute to a subject presupposes the subject as there. For example, "Dr. Knasas studies Thomas Aquinas" attributes studying Aquinas to an already existing Dr. Knasas. Hence, it really is saying "The existing Dr. Knasas studies Aquinas." And if we made the negative attributive statement, "Dr. Knasas does not study Hegel," we once more would be presupposing the fact of Dr. Knasas, as is indicated by the appropriateness of asking, "Well, what then is Dr. Knasas doing?"

If we now turn to existential propositions, but logically considered to be subject-attribute in character, watch what happens. According to the logical norms of ascribing attributes, "Dr. Knasas exists" would become the useless redundancy "The existing Dr. Knasas exists." And according to the logical norms of denying attributes, "Dr. Knasas does not exist" would become the embarrassing self-contradiction "The existing Dr. Knasas does not exist." Hence, thought through, the metaphysical attempt to make something of the being of a thing by considering the being an attribute collapses. The attempt collapses because it renders perfectly good ways of speaking into bad ways of speaking. Whatever the logic of existential propositions is, the logic is not subject-attribute as maintained by the metaphysicians.

Ayer's refutation of metaphysics is just another way that a philosopher makes the case for the fact-view of existence. For Ayer, saying something exists is simply saying something is a fact. Would it be appropriate to include Aquinas in the metaphysicians of being ably refuted by Ayer? It seems not. For these metaphysicians, the being of the thing is not simply an attribute. More accurately speaking, they conceive existence as an attribute posterior and subsequent to the thing. What force would Ayer's argument have against the view that the existence the thing possesses is basic and fundamental to it? Such is Aquinas' view, and later I will return to see if it is victim to the two criticisms made by Ayer.

### 3. *PRIMA OPERATIO INTELLECTUS*

A reader of Aquinas who is trying to determine how he defines the *ratio entis* as *quasi habens esse* has been confronted with this decisive

question: How does Aquinas come to appreciate existing sensible things as composites of themselves and their *esses*? If the data can be construed that way, then it is clear how Aquinas reaches his definition. In a word, he will reach this definition by abstracting it as a commonality from the said data. So, does Aquinas ever tell a reader how one resolves the beings given in sensation into various things composed with their *esses*?

In passages from works only early in his literary career, but as far as I can tell never revoked by what he said in later writings, Aquinas presents his doctrine of the *duplex operatio intellectus* as natural reason's access to *esse*. In his *De Trinitate* commentary,<sup>15</sup> he says that these two intellectual operations correspond to two principles in the thing. The first operation concerns the nature of the thing. Besides calling the object of the first operation the nature of the thing, Aquinas also calls it the essence and the quiddity of the thing. The object is what I earlier called a commonality. The second operation, variously referred to as "composition and division" and "judgment," has to do with the thing's *esse*. In the commentary on Lombard's *Sen-*

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<sup>15</sup> "We must realize that, as the Philosopher says, the intellect has two operations: one called the 'understanding of indivisibles,' by which it knows what a thing is; and another by which it joins and divides, that is to say, by forming affirmative and negative statements. Now these two operations correspond to two principles in things. The first operation concerns the nature itself of a thing, in virtue of which the object known holds a certain rank among beings, whether it be a complete thing, like some whole, or an incomplete thing, like a part or an accident. The second operation has to do with a thing's being [*esse*], which results from the union of the principles of a thing in composite substances, or, as in the case of simple substances, accompanies the thing's simple nature." Aquinas, *In de Trin.*, V, 3c; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Method of the Sciences*, 28. John M. Quinn does not regard this text, nor others like it (vd. my following notes 16 and 17) as speaking of the very act of being. His expressed reason is: "Not being composed, the actuality of actualities cannot issue from prior principles. Rather, since a whole being derives from the composition of its principles, *ipsum esse rei* here must denote the concrete reality." John M. Quinn, *The Thomism of Etienne Gilson* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1971), 66. But see C.G. II, 54, cited *supra*, n. 4; Aquinas has *esse* in the *actus essendi* sense resulting from the principles of things. As I will point out, since judgment grasps *esse* not by itself but as the act of the thing, then any causes of the thing are in a sense causes of its *esse*. One of these causes is the form as it determines the matter, and so completes the substance that will then have *esse* as its act. Finally, a look at Aquinas' *responsio* from which *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7m (cited in my n. 16) is taken removes any doubt that in Aquinas, the *secunda operatio intellectus* refers to *esse* in the *actus essendi* sense. In the *responsio*, the *esse* that founds truth is the same *esse* from which the name *ens* is taken. This *esse* is *actus essendi*, not the concrete reality. For the relation between *ens* and *esse*, see *supra*, n. 4.

tences, the second operation *respicit esse rei*<sup>16</sup> and *comprehendit esse rei*.<sup>17</sup> I want to illustrate how a reader can plumb the depths of these texts for purposes of grasping Aquinas' *habens esse* understanding of the *ratio entis*.

I will present first a general, that is, non-metaphysical, description of the intellect's *duplex operatio*. Later I will detail the "metaphysical application" of the *duplex operatio*. Rather than jumping into the metaphysical application, I have found it to be pedagogically advantageous to preface the metaphysical application with the general description. The philosophical warrant for the division of labor is that the doctrine of these two intellectual operations is not original to Aquinas. He takes the doctrine from Aristotle's book *De Anima*. But as far as I can tell and despite Aquinas' protestations to the contrary, the historical Aristotle possesses no knowledge of the metaphysical principle of *esse, actus essendi*.<sup>18</sup> In fact some Thomists themselves read the *duplex operatio* texts without any reference to the metaphysical principle of *esse*.<sup>19</sup>

Let me begin by identifying generally the intellect's first operation. As mentioned, the first operation grasps the essence of the thing but not the thing's *esse*. In another early work, *De Ente et Essentia*, Aquinas

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<sup>16</sup> "There is a twofold operation of the intellect. One of these is called by some the *imaginatio intellectus*. In the third book of his *De Anima*, the Philosopher names it the understanding of indivisibles [*intelligentiam indivisibilium*]. It consists in the apprehension of the simple quiddity. By another this operation is called by the name *formatio*. The other of these [operations] is what they call *fidem*, which consists in the composition or division of the proposition [*propositionis*]. The first operation looks on the quiddity of the thing; the second looks upon its being [*esse*]. And because the notion [*ratio*] of truth is based on being [*esse*] and not on quiddity . . . so truth and falsity are properly found in the second operation and in its sign which is the enunciation [*enuntiatio*], and not in the first or in its sign which is the definition." Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7m.

<sup>17</sup> "Since in the thing, two items exist, the quiddity of the thing and its being [*esse*], to these two responds the twofold operation of the intellect. One [operation] is what is called by philosophers *formatio*, by which [the intellect] apprehends the quiddities of things and which by the Philosopher, *In III De Anima*, is called *indivisibilium intelligentia*. The other [operation] comprehends the *esse* of the thing, by composing an affirmation, because the *esse* of a thing composed from matter and form, from which cognition is taken, consists in a certain composition of form to matter, or accidents to subject." Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 38, q. 1, a. 3c.

<sup>18</sup> See my "Aquinas' Ascriptions of Creation to Aristotle," *Angelicum* 73 (1996): 487–506.

<sup>19</sup> See John Quinn as cited *supra* in n. 15.

nas speaks about an “existentially neutral” apprehension of essence.<sup>20</sup> There is, he says, an absolute consideration of essence that abstracts from every *esse*, but in such a way that it prescind from no one of them. Hence a reader can surmise that a determination of “absolute consideration” as an abstraction without precision would provide a general understanding of the first operation.

Two paragraphs earlier, and as I recounted in Chapter 2,<sup>21</sup> Aquinas says that absolute consideration attributes to essence only what belongs to the essence itself, or only what falls in the definition of the essence. For example, to the essence man, absolutely considered, we attribute rational and animal but not white or black. How is this absolute consideration of essence achieved? Given what Aquinas has said about the absolute consideration of the existentially neutral essence, the answer to the question lies in the direction of an understanding of abstraction without precision. So our attempts at pinning down the character of the intellect’s first operation turn to abstraction without precision.

This type of abstraction is also discussed in the *De Ente et Essentia*. As I have stressed, in Aquinas’ philosophy abstraction without precision is always controlled by the data. And so, for example, Aquinas says things like the following: To the essence of man it belongs neither to be one nor many, for if the former, then Socrates and Plato would be identical; and if the latter, then Socrates would not be one. In other words, because man can be both one and many, we understand that of itself man is neither. The point to note is how the facts control this consideration of man.

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<sup>20</sup> “This nature has a twofold being [*esse*]: one in individual things and the other in the soul, and accidents follow upon the nature because of both beings. In individuals, moreover, the nature has a multiple being [*esse*] corresponding to the diversity of individuals; but none of these beings [*esse*] belongs to the nature from the first point of view, that is to say, when it is considered absolutely. It is false to say that the essence of man as such has being in this individual: if it belonged to man as man to be in this individual it would never exist outside the individual. On the other hand, if it belonged to man as man not to exist in this individual, human nature would never exist in it. It is true to say, however, that it does not belong to man as man to exist in this or that individual, or in the soul. So it is clear that the nature of man, considered absolutely, abstracts from every being [*abstrahit a quolibet esse*], but in such a way that it prescind from no one of them.” Aquinas, trans. Maurer, *On Being and Essence*, 47.

<sup>21</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 2, text at nn. 16–19.

Likewise, Aquinas says that essence itself is neither composite nor simple. The given reason is that we know essence to be simple in God but composite in man. Also, finger, foot, and hand and other parts of this kind are outside the definition of man because whether or not he has these parts, someone will still be a man. Finally, the nature of animal is abstracted from reason because it is known to be in brutes. What is typical about abstraction without precision is the relation of the abstracted essence to the particularities of the data, for example the relation of man to the white complexion of Tom and the black complexion of Dick. When abstracted without precision, the absolutely considered essence does not “cut” itself off from the particularities of the data but continues to remain “open” to them. In other words, as abstracted without precision, essence does not exclude what it does not include. For example, though man is not understood to be white or black, it is understood to be able to be, to be open to being, white or black. In short, the essence abstracted without precision is still regarded as a “potentiality” for the particularities.

Since the abstraction keeps the essence basically identical with the real individual, abstraction without precision does not render the essence simply a portion of an existent. This basic identity between the essence and the individual allows a predication of the essence to the individual. In predication essence is identified with the individual, for example, “Socrates *is* a man.” On the other hand, abstraction *with* precision again grasps the same essence, or commonality, but in a different fashion. Here the abstraction does cut off the essence from the particularities of the instances. Now, essence does exclude what it does not include. The essence is not considered as open to, or in potency to, the particularities. In this case, essence is abstracted simply as a part of the entire existent. In this status, essence is unable to be identified in predication with the individual. For example, besides abstracting human nature in Tom, Dick, and Harry as man, one can abstract it precisely as humanity. And so, while one can say “Tom is a man,” one cannot say “Tom is humanity.” At best one can say only “Tom has humanity.”

This way of speaking about humanity indicates its abstraction in the precise manner. As noted back in Chapter 2, abstraction with precision accords some prerogative to the abstractor. As a result, the product of the abstraction does not quite fit the data. In sum, the

abstractor can take the prerogative of ignoring the capacity in the commonality for determination by the differences of the instances. Hence the commonality will be understood as excluding what it does not include.

While this *De Ente et Essentia* discussion of the two types of abstraction may seem esoteric, the subject of two types of abstraction is a crucial tool by which to answer the Platonist who claims that conceptualization, or the intellect's first act, is not at all correctly regarded as "abstractive," as "drawing out" a commonality in the particulars. Rather for the Platonist, conceptualization is a reminiscence of a direct and immediate encounter with, or an intuition of, the commonality in a previous life. At best, sensible things remind us of this knowledge. But sensible things could never have provided the knowledge in the first place. Part of the reason for this position is the Platonic claim that the commonality has features that exclude its abstractive derivation from sensible things. A great discrepancy exists between sensible things and objects of conceptualization, so that the latter could never come from the former. For example, the triangle studied by the geometrician must have no width and no color. But no sensible triangle is like that. A sensible triangle is always thick and is colored. Hence, for the Platonist, we never could have abstracted the geometrical triangle from sensible things.

This argument is clever and is susceptible to many permutations. Here I want to indicate how the abstractionist can defend himself. The Platonic argument fails because it does not realize that there is also a third triangle. This third triangle is distinguishable from the sensible triangle and the geometrical one. This third triangle is also an object of conceptualization. Also, like the geometrical triangle, the third triangle has no width or color. But unlike the geometrical triangle, the third is unopposed to having width and color. In other words, I am understanding the third triangle as a three-sided figure open to but not actually containing these things. Such a triangle is suggested by the data of at least two sensible triangles of different widths and colors. Three-sidedness without any width and color is the commonality here, because assuming any definite width or color will stop the commonality from being common. Yet this same commonality of three-sidedness is seen as open to width and color. Even though it fails to include any definite width or color, it does not by that fact exclude any. So, in the data one conceptualizes three-sidedness as of

itself having no width or color, but as of itself able to have width and color. Because the notion is not excluding what it does not include, it can admit realization in the instances of the data and be considered as “abstracted” from them.

It is this third triangle that is an object of an abstraction *without* precision. In fact this notion of triangle is more primitive and basic than the geometrical triangle. The geometrical triangle is drawn from it by deliberately ignoring the capacity for width and color found in the notion of three-sidedness. By closing off this capacity of the notion, we attain the geometrical triangle. It is three-sidedness abstracted *with* precision. If one is sensitive to these two ways of abstracting, the Platonic argument against an abstractive understanding of the intellect’s first operation loses its force.

What has one learned of the general character of the intellect’s first operation? If the grasp of essence without *esse* is an absolute consideration that abstracts without precision, then the first operation presupposes the presentation of a multiplicity of different individual things. The first operation then proceeds by cognitively penetrating that multiplicity to attain the essence as such. The attainment of the essence as such is guided by the facts of the multiplicity. For example, if the meaning of animal is presented in the multiplicity of Tom and Fido the dog, these facts steer the intellect to abstract the meaning without including reason. It is not for nothing, according to Aquinas, that the first operation is also called *intellectus*.<sup>22</sup> *Intellectus* derives from the combination of *inter* and *legere*, which means “to read into.” Such is what the first operation does when it attains essence. The intellect’s attention penetrates into the data. So in conclusion, the general character of the first operation is a penetrative movement of attention into a multiplicity in order to achieve a commonality.

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<sup>22</sup> “The name *intellect* arises from the intellect’s ability to know the most profound elements of a thing; for to understand [*intelligere*] means to read what is inside a thing [*intus legere*]. Sense and imagination know only external accidents, but the intellect alone penetrates to the interior and to the essence of a thing.” Aquinas, *De Ver.* 1, 12c; trans. Mulligan, *Disputed Questions*, vol. 1, 50. “Understanding [*intellectus*] seems to indicate simple and absolute knowledge. And one is said to understand [*intelligere*] because in some sense he reads [*legit*] the truth within [*intus*] the very essence of the thing.” Aquinas, *De Ver.* 15, 1c; trans. Mulligan, *Disputed Questions*, vol. 2, 272.

4. *SECUNDA OPERATIO INTELLECTUS*

Turning to the second of the intellect's operations, Aquinas describes this as consisting in the composition and division of an enunciation, or a proposition. Such talk suggests that the second operation is *identical* with composing a proposition. But surely the second operation cannot be that simple. Remember, Aquinas also says that the second operation touches reality, for it *respicit esse rei*. I can, however, compose the proposition "the weather is sunny" in the midst of a thunderstorm. Also, in our texts, Aquinas describes the proposition as a *signum* of the second operation, a "sign" of the second operation. This remark invites us to ask what is the second operation in itself.

At least three ways exist to determine the fundamental nature of the *secunda operatio intellectus*. First, as just mentioned, the enunciation, or proposition, is called a sign of the second operation. Now, throughout many of his works in which are found texts on the *duplex operatio intellectus*, Aquinas discusses how God knows the truth of enunciations, especially as these enunciations bear upon singular things. These discussions amount to Aquinas explaining God's knowledge of particular things. Hence a reader of Aquinas can conclude that a grasp of the nature of the *secunda operatio* lies in the direction of understanding how our intellect knows the singular. The thinking here is that knowing the truth of these propositions has something to do with knowing how they were formed in the first place. What process underlies them so that they are its *signa*?

In abundant texts, Aquinas explains how our intellect knows the singular.<sup>23</sup> The reiterated Thomistic opinion is that the human intel-

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<sup>23</sup> "[T]he human intellect is last in the gradation of intellectual substances. And so there is in it the greatest possibility in comparison to other intellectual substances. And so it more weakly receives intelligible light from God, and it is less similar to the light of the divine intellect. Hence, intellectual light is not sufficiently received in the [human intellect] for determining a proper knowledge of a thing, unless through species received from things, which must be formally received in it according to its mode; and so from [these species] singulars are not known, which are individuated through matter, unless by a certain reflexion of the intellect to imagination and to sense, namely when the intellect applies the universal species, which it abstracted from singulars, to the singular form preserved in the imagination." Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, d. 3, q. 3, a. 3, ad 1m. "Therefore, inasmuch as our intellect, through the likeness which it receives from the phantasm, turns back upon the phantasm from which it abstracts the species, the phantasm being a particular likeness, our intellect gets some kind of knowledge of the singular because of its dynamic union

lect knows the universal directly, but knows the singular by a reflection back to sense or imagination, *per reflexionem quandam*. This *reflexio* should, then, be what Aquinas generally understands as the “composing” of the intellect’s second act.

Second, confirmation of this conclusion is provided by a passage from the *Contra Gentiles*. While showing that angels do not draw their knowledge from sensibles, Aquinas again mentions as a contrast the human intellect’s twofold operation. Of the second operation he says, “Our intellect composes or divides by applying the previously abstracted intelligibles to the thing: [Noster intellectus] componit autem aut dividit applicando intelligibilia prius abstracta ad res.”<sup>24</sup> The composing of the intellect’s second operation is its reflective reintegration of its knowledge of a commonality with its knowledge of an instance from which it drew the commonality. Interesting to note is that in the just earlier *De Veritate*, Aquinas describes man’s reflective knowledge of the singular in terms strikingly similar to the above mentioned *Contra Gentiles* passage. Aquinas says that by its reflection, the intellect is able “to apply” the universal cognition that is in the intellect to the particular.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, the fundamental character of the second operation is again indicated in Aquinas’ mature work, *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>26</sup> He is explaining how our intellect reaches its perfection not all at once, but by degrees. First the intellect apprehends the quiddity of the thing, and second, by composition or division, the intellect understands the properties, accidents, and various dispositions affecting the essence. We obviously have here a reference to the intellect’s twofold activity.

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with the imagination.” Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2, 6c; trans. Mulligan., *Disputed Questions*, vol. 1, 93.

<sup>24</sup> Aquinas, *C.G.* II, 96, *Palam*; trans. Anderson, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 2, 328.

<sup>25</sup> “[I]deo potest applicare universalem cognitionem quae est in intellectu, ad particulare.” Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2, 6, ad 3m; ed. Spiazzi, *Quaestiones Disputatae*, vol. 1, 42.

<sup>26</sup> “The human intellect must of necessity understand by composition and division. For since the intellect passes from potentiality to act, it has a likeness to generable things, which do not attain to perfection all at once but acquire it by degrees. In the same way, the human intellect does not acquire perfect knowledge of a thing by the first apprehension; but it first apprehends something of the thing, such as its quiddity, which is the first and proper object of the intellect; and then it understands the properties, accidents, and various dispositions [*proprietas et accidentia et habitudines*] affecting the essence. Thus it necessarily relates one thing with another by composition or division.” Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 85, 5c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 823.

This time, though, Aquinas has the second operation bearing upon the accidents of the quiddity. This remark is valuable. Since these accidents are found in the singular thing, then obviously apropos for understanding the second operation is an understanding of how the intellect knows the singular. In the next question Aquinas provides the already familiar explanation.<sup>27</sup> The intellect knows the singular by a kind of reflection back to sense. For even after abstracting the intelligible species and in order to understand actually, the intellect needs to turn to the phantasms in which it understands the species.

Hence the nature of the composing activity of the intellect's second act is again clear. The composing is the intellect's reintegrating of its awareness of the quiddity with its awareness of the sensed individual. The intellect can always perform this act of reintegrating, because abstraction must always begin with the phantasm. As a result of this composing, the object of our awareness is now no longer just the quiddity, but the quiddity-in-the-individual. This is a complex object of consciousness. Hence it can only be expressed in the complex way of a proposition. Interpreting the composing of the intellect in terms of the above reflection, Aquinas not surprisingly says that the intellect "forms the proposition *Socrates is a man*." Evidently, forming a proposition does not constitute the intellect's second act; it crowns that act. The act itself is the mentioned reflective composition.

In summary, from the above three works we understand that the intellect's twofold operation is a swinging of cognitive attention. In the first operation there is a narrowing of one's attention upon the commonality in some multiplicity. In the second act of the mind our attention regains its original perspective, but not without the loss of what it spied in its first act. The intellect's second operation of composing is evidently like a "rebounding" of one's attention back off the commonality to the particular instance in which it is spied.

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<sup>27</sup> "Hence our intellect knows directly only universals. But indirectly, however, and as it were by a kind of reflexion, it can know the singular, because, as we have said above, even after abstracting the intelligible species, the intellect, in order to understand actually, needs to turn to the phantasms in which it understands the species, as is said in *De Anima* iii. Therefore it understands the universal directly through the intelligible species, and indirectly the singular represented by the phantasm. And thus it forms the proposition, '*Socrates is a man*.'" Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 86 1c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 830–31.

5. METAPHYSICAL APPLICATION OF THE *PRIMA OPERATIO*

What we have said so far is not particularly useful for coming to appreciate the *quasi habens esse* understanding of the *ratio entis*. It is difficult to glimpse *esse* in the additions that the intellect's second operation of judgment makes to the essence. These additions are what absolute consideration of the essence had left out. For example, for the essence man these additions were tall, dark, and handsome in Al Gore. But none of these additions to the essence as found in Gore are Gore's *actus essendi*. At the least, their posterior and subsequent status to Gore would disqualify any of them from being the *actus essendi* that is *profundius* and *magis intimum*. So about what is Aquinas thinking when he reserves for judgment a grasp of *actus essendi*? The answer to that question lies in the metaphysical application of the *duplex operatio intellectus*.

What must be the starting point of the *duplex operatio intellectus* if it is to culminate in a grasp of *actus essendi*? A reader of Aquinas can begin an answer this way. Bearing in mind the absolute consideration interpretation of the intellect's first operation, we can say that the starting point will be some multiplicity, a set of data. Somehow these data will lend themselves to intellectually skimming off simply the individual thing apart from its *esse*. Judgment could then "kick in" and reflectively integrate the thing with its existence, now understood as a distinct *actus* and hopefully appreciated as *profundius* and *magis intimum* to the thing.

In this chapter we have seen Aquinas speak of the individual thing itself in distinction from its *esse*. As mentioned at *C.G.* II, 54, somehow we can consider the individual substance made up of matter and form to be composed with *esse* as a potency with its act. Does not his talk presuppose our ability to abstract the individual thing itself from its *esse* to talk in turn about that thing as composed with its *esse*? Also, we saw Aquinas using the phrase *possibile esse et non esse* of the individual generable and corruptible thing. What is called possible to exist and not to exist can be an individual body. So again, with what set of data must we start to come to an absolute consideration of the individual such that the consideration of the individual abstracts from its existence?

Obviously, if we found the individual existing in different ways, this data would enable us to abstract the individual as existence-neutral.

Somewhat similarly, because you find me with different complexions, you are led to understand me as complexion-neutral. Only by being of myself complexion-neutral could I genuinely take on various complexions.

But do we ever find the individual existing in different ways? At first thought, it seems not. Rather, what we appear to find is the thing really existing or simply not existing. This consideration is not the thing really existing plus also actually existing in some other way. But if we continue to read Aquinas with the above question in mind, other texts will begin to stand out. These texts concern sense cognition or awareness, and I have cited them.<sup>28</sup> In these texts Aquinas makes points such as the following: knowledge is the existence of the known in the knower; the perfection of the knower is that the known is in some way in the knower; cognition is the existing perfection of one thing brought to be in another; cognition is the existence of the known in the knower. As noted in Chapter 3, Aquinas is a realist as far as sensation. Actual sensation attains individual items existing externally. For example, sight attains the color in the body. Hence the known that comes to exist in the knower is a real existent. In other words, knowledge is the existence of the real existent in the knower.

This is what is called the direct realism of Aquinas. It seems to be taken by him as an evident fact. One Neo-Thomist elaborates Aquinas' position this way:

Aquinas writes as though this notion of cognition is apparent to immediate reflexive observation. He offers no demonstration of it, nor does he illustrate it by any comparison or analogy. Is it actually borne out by reflexive observation? What is meant by saying that you are aware of the platform in front of you, the chair on which you are sitting, the walls around you? What do you imply by your "perceiving" or "knowing" them? Do you not mean that all these things are in your awareness, in the sense that they somehow exist in it? You may claim to observe directly that they exist in themselves independently of your cognition of them. But reflexively you are aware that they are also in your mind as you think about them. What else can that mean than their existence for the moment in your awareness? Spontaneously you regard this as a lesser and rather shadowy way of existence. But a way

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<sup>28</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 2 at nn. 5 and 6.

of existence it must be, if your immediate reflexive observation that the things are in your awareness is correct. They are there, as you perceive them or think about them, and “being there” means existence. The sense of the preposition *in* is in this case the relation of contained to container. The new existence of the thing known is in something. It is in the cognitive activity of the knower.<sup>29</sup>

Since Descartes, Aquinas’ position about the direct and immediate presence of the real in sense cognition has been a thesis many philosophers are unwilling to accept. In Chapter 3 I defended the self-manifestly real character of the data of sensation from salient Cartesian objections. Though immediate realism is a presupposition for Neo-Thomism both in its Aristotelian and Existential forms, here I want to show how immediate realism functions as a basis for Existential Thomism.

What does the fact of a real thing also cognitively existing imply? Does it not imply that the thing is of itself not existent at all? First, an intrinsic reality for the thing would make the thing impervious, “bulletproof,” to take on genuinely another way of existing. But the thing does also truly cognitively exist. Contrariwise, one realizes that if the individual were of itself a cognitive existent, then the individual would always only cognitively exist. Its real existence would be bogus, or illusory. In these ways the intellect’s first operation focuses on the individual thing as existence-neutral. No type of existence belongs to the thing of itself. To be able to have various types, the thing must possess none. In sum, if reality is to cognitively exist, reality cannot be real of itself. And if what cognitively exists also really exists, it cannot be cognitive of itself. Somewhat similarly, one must understand the water in the pan on the stove to be intrinsically, or of itself, temperature-neutral. Only in that way does one do justice to the fact that the water is found to be both hot and cold. If the water were of itself not temperature-neutral, for example, if it were heat-positive, then it would always be hot and never cold.

The grasp of the individual thing as existentially neutral is the culmination of the metaphysical exercise of the intellect’s first act. Crucial for the exercise of that act is the initial data, which must present the individual thing as truly and genuinely existing in different ways.

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<sup>29</sup> Owens, “Aquinas on Cognition as Existence,” 76.

Thanks to that presentation, the intellect's first act can abstract the individual from all existence.

## 6. METAPHYSICAL APPLICATION OF THE *SECUNDA OPERATIO*

One can now begin the metaphysical application of the second act of the intellect. Recall, generally speaking, the second operation is a rebounding of one's attention from a grasped commonality back to the data in which the commonality was noticed. If one conducts the second operation from the conceptualized existentially neutral individual back to the datum that is the individual really existing, one should notice two things. First, the real existence is added to or composed with the thing as one distinct item with the other. Simple sensation delivered our first instance as a really existing thing. Now the intellect reveals that instance to be more accurately described as an individual thing *with* its real existence. To use some terminology from the world of photography, thanks to the metaphysical application of judgment, our appreciation of reality has gone from "glossy" to "grainy." It may have appeared that in returning to the sensed really existing thing, the second operation simply returned to our starting point. This impression is false. We have done more than spin on our heels. Now, by acknowledging the composition present in the datum, we are aware of something new; we are aware of detail not noticed before.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> It is not yet clear if judgmentally grasped *esse* actuates the thing by merging with it or actuates the thing by remaining really distinct from it. The existence-neutral status of the individual allows for either, and the "rebounding" act of judgment is too quick to discern the exact nature of the terrain below. Again, the issue is the nature of the border along both the thing and its *esse*. In actuating the thing, does *esse* cross the border or not? In other words, use of the *duplex operatio intellectus* does not enable one to know if the grasped distinction is just conceptual or real. *Esse* clearly does not belong to what we mean by the thing. But to know that point is not to know how *esse* relates to the thing when it actuates the thing. In "Aquinas's Route to the Real Distinction: A Note on *De Ente et Essentia*," *The Thomist* 43 (1979): 292, John Wippel claims that Aquinas uses the distinction made by the *duplex operatio intellectus* to argue the real distinction. According to Wippel (289), Aquinas shows from a merely hypothetical consideration of a unique thing whose meaning includes its existence that in all other things essence and existence really differ. My problem with this hypothetical consideration is that it is logically geared to prove only a conceptual distinction. In other words, if a conceptual identity between essence and existence destroys multiplicity, then a conceptual distinction

Second, metaphysical judgment not only reveals the thing to be composed with its real existence, but also shows the character of the composition. Judgment does not click on the real existence to the thing just in any manner. Rather, a specific alignment is manifest. In that alignment, the real existence is presented as basic and fundamental to the thing. The two items, specifically, the thing of itself existentially neutral and its real existence, are not composed in an equal side-by-side fashion like two books on a shelf, nor are they composed like a subject and its attribute posterior and subsequent to its subject. The very exercise of metaphysical judgment provides the reason for placing the real existence as basic and fundamental to the thing. Since the reflective rebounding of judgment starts from the individual understood as existentially neutral, then one cannot understand the thing to be already there to have the real existence added to the thing in the manner of a posterior and subsequent attribute. Rather, the thoroughly existentially neutral status of the individual thing offers no ontological resistance to the added real existence. This real existence must be understood as sinking through the peripheries of the thing to occupy, in turn, a position of priority and fundamentality. Like the hole of a donut that is inside the donut by being outside, judgment places the thing's real existence most intimate to the thing by placing the existence prior and fundamental to the thing. Because *esse* is *profundius*, *esse* is *magis intimum*.

The metaphysical application of judgment is the crucible, the engine, the furnace, of the rest of Thomistic metaphysics. By judgment a thing is clearly seen to be denominated a being in and through composition with its *actus essendi*, just as in similar fashion a man is called a runner in and through composition with his *actus currendi*. Before that thing has its real existence, it is existentially neutral, it is actually nothing. It has of yet no recognized status in being. The recognition of that status comes through the *esse* grasped in judgment.

## 7. CRITICISMS AND REPLIES

My rendition of the metaphysical application of the *duplex operatio intellectus* approach to *actus essendi* supplements the work of Joseph

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will save it. The same conclusion would follow from a hypothetical consideration of an eternal being whose meaning includes its existence, viz., a changeable being is one whose meaning does not include its existence. Neither of these hypotheses extends the distinction between a thing and its existence into a real distinction.

Owens. Owens has performed the inestimable service of distinguishing between the second operation that grasps the *esse* of the thing and the activity of forming propositions. In the writings of many other Thomists, this second operation appears to be identified with forming propositions.<sup>31</sup> Yet surely there must be more to judgment. Propositions may express existence but they do not grasp it, as the phenomenon of forming the proposition “the weather is sunny” in the middle of a downpour illustrates. Owens differentiates the two. The proposition is only the expression of what the second operation is already grasping. The proposition is related to the second operation, but not by way of identity. It is an effect of the second operation rather than the second operation itself.<sup>32</sup> Owens’ distinction leaves as the more

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<sup>31</sup> Despite a common opinion that Gilson “theologizes” Thomistic metaphysics, he is explicit that judgment is natural reason’s access to *actus essendi*. For a defense of Gilson against the theologizing charge, see *infra*, Chap. 7, sects. 4 and 5. Nevertheless, Gilson does describe judgment propositionally. “Existential judgments are meaningless unless they are meant to be true. If the proposition ‘Peter is,’ means anything, it means that a certain man, Peter by name, actually is, or exists.” Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 201. Also, “Assuredly, the actual existence of what the terms of a judgment signify is directly or indirectly required for the truth of any predication, but the formal correctness of such a judgment as *all swans are white* is independent of its truth,” 196. “The proper function of judgment is to say existence,” 202. “The formula in which this composition is expressed is precisely the proposition or judgment.” Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 41. “All this becomes evident in the case of a judgment of existence, for example: *Socrates is*. Such a proposition clearly expresses by its very composition the composition of the substance Socrates and its existence in reality.” Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 41. Actually, Gilson is fully aware of what I am identifying as judgment. In his *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, 191 and 205, he says that “the problem of the existential judgment is linked to the analogous problem of the apprehension of the singular.” But despite the importance of the intellect’s indirect knowledge of the singular for understanding judgment, Gilson continues to distinguish it from judgment. The former is only “linked” to the latter. Also, Gerald Phelan, “Suppose I should say, ‘this paper is blue’; I make a judgment in regard to a fact.” “*Verum Sequitur Esse Rerum*,” in Kirn, *G.B. Phelan Selected Papers*, 139. “The judgment thus essentially consists in affirming the existence (in a unity of real existence) of a thing in which two concepts united by the mind (in a unity of intentional existence) are actually or possibly realized. This is the composition and division effected by the judgment.” Phelan, “*Verum Sequitur Esse Rerum*,” 148. Finally, Robert J. Henle, “Yet, in order to form the judgment ‘Socrates is a man,’ intellectual knowledge of the individual is necessary,” *Method in Metaphysics*, 69. “[A] judgment concerning a material individual (e.g. ‘Socrates is a man’) is possible only through an intellectual awareness of and an operational unity with the sense powers in which the individual is presented.” Henle, *Method in Metaphysics*, 71.

<sup>32</sup> “[J]udgment” has two meanings that require careful distinction. In one meaning it is the dynamic intellectual act by which synthesizing existence is being grasped.

exciting philosophical issue not the investigation of the proposition, but the description of the second operation. What is it? As far as I can tell, Owens does not provide that description. Rather, he insists that the second act is a grasping, even an intuiting, of the thing's act of existence.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, he calls the second act dynamic, synthesizing, and conditioned by time.<sup>34</sup> But we never have this further described.

My proposal is to understand metaphysical judgment as a particular case of the intellect's capacity to rebound reflectively from an apprehended commonality back to the data from which the commonality was abstracted. In metaphysical judgment, the intellect rebounds from the individual thing conceived as existence-neutral back to that thing as really existing in sensation. At that moment one appreciates the real existence as a distinct item apart from which the thing is nothing.

My account of Aquinas' metaphysical employment of the *duplex operatio intellectus* may evoke some questions with readers of Aquinas. The first question pertains to the data that are employed to start the metaphysical application of the two operations. That data includes the real thing cognitively existing. Fellow Thomists might wonder about the correctness of such a datum. Abundant Thomistic texts assert that what is in cognition is not the thing itself, but its similitude. Typical is this text: "For the stone is not in the eye, but the similitude [*similitudo*] of the stone."<sup>35</sup> This set of texts seems to contradict the datum that is "the real thing cognitively existing." The texts do not portray the thing as entering cognition. Instead of the thing, one finds its similitude.

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In the other meaning, it is the static, frozen representation of that action's cognitive form. In the first meaning, it denotes the 'second operation.' . . . In the first meaning, the object of the cognition is an actual existential synthesizing that is taking place before its gaze. In the other meaning, the object is a static representation of that synthesizing, even though that synthesizing is no longer taking place." Owens, "Judgment and Truth in Aquinas," 47. Also, "Accordingly, 'judgment,' in its technical sense of knowing existence, is a different activity from the constructing of propositions." Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence*, 22; "What is known dynamically through judgment is represented statically in a proposition," 24.

<sup>33</sup> Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence*, 24.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. See also Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 49–52.

<sup>35</sup> Aquinas, *De Ver.* 10, 8, ad 2m (to the contraries); trans. James V. McGlynn, S.J., *The Disputed Question on Truth* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), vol. 2, 45. Also: Aquinas, *De Ver.* 2, 3, ad 1m; 8, 1c; Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 85, 2, ad 1m.

Yet the objection is superficial at best. In Chapter 3, I explained that Aquinas' fundamental position about cognitive species should not be confused with talk about two-sided mental items. In short, one should not confuse impressed species with expressed ones. Thanks to their formal reception by the knower, the impressed species are the very form of the thing known. They are numerically identical with that form. Far from mitigating any presence of the thing itself in cognition, similitude in this sense is the very condition for that presence. Aquinas' remark about the stone should not be taken to deny his immediate realism. The stone is in the eye, but only in and through the reception of its form by the formal amplitude that is the sense power of sight. Also, Aquinas' position is perfectly compatible with my ignorance of being known by someone else. Even though it is the real existent me that exists in that person's cognition, no continuity of matter exists. In fact, the lack of continuity is the very condition for my existence in someone else's cognition. Hence I am not in someone's cognition as my hand is in a heated oven. The continuity of matter in the second case assures that the oven's action upon my hand is felt by me. The lack of material continuity in cognitive becoming obviates such self-knowledge even while it assures my very presence in the knower.

Second, it might be argued that the just-sketched Aristotelian mechanics of cognition reduce talk about cognitional *esse* to talk about reception of form by the form of the knower. Talk about the real thing existing cognitively is simply talk about that thing's form being immaterially received. Hence the question of how a real thing can truly and genuinely take on another way of existing is answered not by any mumbo jumbo asserting the existence-neutral status of the thing, but simply by saying, as noted above, that its form is formally received by the knower. Cognitional *esse* is double talk for the presence of the thing's form in the form of the knower.

This reduction not only fails, but the Aristotelian mechanics of cognition morph back into talk about existential neutrality and *esse*. To begin, if cognitional *esse* reductively means immaterial reception of the form, then real *esse* should reductively mean material reception of the form. Hence the form as received by the knower could never make the thing as real present to the knower. The disaster for a realism of sensation is evident. Whatever the real thing's matter is, it does not constitute the thing as real. For its absence in cognition

would entail that the real is not in cognition. Rather, the thing is real by what also enters the knower, and that is the thing's real form. Subsequent discussion must remain in terms of that.

Furthermore, it is an illusion to view cognitional presence simply in terms of formal reception. Formal reception is not equivalent to a man coming into a room. It is more like a man appearing in a room. The reason is that though the man physically exists before he enters the room, the form received exists nowhere in cognition before its formal reception. In other words, when form is received by the knower, it is not just received. Form also comes to exist in the knower. It genuinely takes on another way of existing.<sup>36</sup> Cognition is, then, also the cognitional existence of the real form in the knower.

We can ask what is implied by this fact. Is not the answer that the form is not real of itself? Only as not real of itself could it genuinely exist in the different way it does in cognition. Likewise for cognitional existence. The form is not cognitional of itself under pain of not genuinely really existing. In these ways, one grasps the form as existence-neutral. This conclusion alerts one to further non-formal acts that render the form real or cognitional. Far from being diverted from the metaphysical application of the *duplex operatio intellectus*, a more profound look at Aristotle's mechanics of sense cognition essentially repeats it. Instead of talking about the real thing cognitively existing, we talk about the real form as cognitively existing and proceed from there.

But does not talk about the real form cognitively existing imply

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<sup>36</sup> "But the medieval perspective offered a new way of explaining immaterial reception. The immateriality consisted in a different way of existing. To exist in matter meant that the form was received materially. To exist in the soul meant that the form was received in a different way, a way that in contrast could be termed immaterial. Against this new background Aquinas repeats the tenets that every patient whatsoever receives form without matter from the agent, and that an agent 'acts through its form and not through its matter.' But he goes on to locate the meaning of 'without matter' in the different mode of existence had by the sensible thing in being perceived." Joseph Owens, "Aristotelian Soul as Cognitive of Sensibles, Intelligibles, and Self," in Catan, ed., *Aristotle: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens*, 91–92. Elsewhere Owens emphasizes the *bona fide* existential character of cognition: "To exist in one's own self in the real world is obviously much more meaningful than to exist only in someone's imagination. But both are genuine ways of existing. Neither is a 'half-way' stage of existence at all. Each, though in its own characteristic way, has all the significant difference between existing and not existing. There is no infringement on the principle of excluded middle. Each is a whole-way existence in its own order." Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence*, 38–39.

that the real *esse* of the thing is also formally received by the knower? It certainly seems to, for the form is not real of itself. To be in the knower as real, the form must be in the knower with the *esse* that makes the form real. But does it make sense to speak of the *esse* as formally received? For the form to be so received, the form could not be real of itself. Formal reception of the *esse* should have the same neutering effect. The real existence, or *esse*, would not be real of itself. The immediate realism at the heart of Neo-Thomism would again be lost. The actual existent real thing would still be absent from sense cognition.

This conclusion is unassailable if the *esse* of the real item is formally received in a *direct* manner. The *direct* reception of form entails that form is not real of itself. The same should be true of the thing's *esse* if the *esse* also is directly received in the knower's formal amplitude. Fortunately, the problem indicates its own solution. The formal reception of *esse* is an indirect one. One should understand the *esse* as "piggy-backed" on the form that the knower directly receives. Just as something can be in motion *per accidens* (for example, the pen in my pocket as I move about the room),<sup>37</sup> so too it should be possible that something is received *per accidens*. Such reception must be the case with the *esse* of the thing that is received by the knower. With the *per se* reception of the thing's form is the *per accidens* reception of the thing's *esse*.

Finally, third, metaphysical application of the intellect's two operations draws upon Aquinas' apparent remarks about the intellect's absolute consideration of the individual. How are these remarks compatible with the explanation of his other cited remarks that the intellect directly knows only the universal and not the singular thing? Aquinas explains that since what is received is received according to the mode of the receiver and the intellect possesses not just amplitude over matter but also separateness from it, then the intellect can receive only forms that are separate from matter. This would leave the intellect knowing only the universal and not the individual.

The confusion stems from conflating the existing sensible individual with intellect's absolutely considered individual. They are not the same. The latter abstracts from every *esse*. Aquinas' prohibition of

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<sup>37</sup> For examples of something in motion *per accidens*, see Aquinas, *In VIII Phys.*, *lectio*. 7, n. 1022.

the intellect directly considering singulars applies to the former, not to the latter. Why? In the existing singular, matter is still actual. The presence of actualized matter in the singular prevents the singular's reception into the immaterial intellect. In the absolutely considered individual, matter is present but unactualized. The intellect's abstracting the individual from every *esse* has rendered the matter non-actual. In a true and literal sense, an "immaterialization" has occurred. Hence no problem exists with the absolutely considered individual informing the immaterial intellect so as to be directly known by the intellect. Aquinas has the intellect receiving common sensible matter and both individual and common intelligible matter.<sup>38</sup> Why cannot unactualized designated matter be added to this list? That addition would explain how Aquinas speaks both of individual mathematical objects and individual material things as composed with their *esse*.

#### 8. REPLY TO A. J. AYER AND COMMENTS ON BRIAN DAVIES

From a number of acts of judgment, an array of various things composed with their respective *esses* can be brought before the conceptualizing capacity of the mind. Because of the appreciated graininess of the instances, this is not the original multiplicity given by sensation; it is correctly considered as *new*. But anytime a new multiplicity is present, the intellect's first operation can attempt to reduce the multiplicity to the unity of some grasped commonality. In this case, the grasped commonality is the *ratio entis* in the *habens esse* sense. What is common to all the instances is that we have something possessing *esse*.

The judgmental grasp of the thing's real existence enables Aquinas to treat the logic of positive and negative existential propositions as subject-attribute without incurring any of the problems of which A. J. Ayer spoke. For Aquinas, the existence of the thing means more than the fact of the thing. It is an act of the thing. But because the thing's existence is a prior and fundamental act, it is not just *an* act but *the*

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<sup>38</sup> For these divisions of matter, see Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 85, 1c. For the abstraction of individual mathematical objects within a species, see Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 3, ad 3m and *supra*, Chap. 2, sect. 3.

act of the thing. It is *the* act of the thing because without it we have the thing just as existentially neutral. Accordingly, for Aquinas “martyrs exist” is subject-attribute but translates to “the existentially neutral martyrs exist.” This is not a tautology. Also, “martyrs do not exist” translates to “the existentially neutral martyrs do not exist.” This is not a contradiction. Aquinas is not one of the metaphysicians of being whose thinking is led astray by the way they speak. It is not the superficialities of grammar that have engendered Aquinas’ metaphysics, but the hard cold facts of reality manifested through the metaphysical exercise of the *duplex operatio intellectus*.

Ayer’s argument works with a presupposition: the thing’s existence considered as an attribute, as a predicate, can only be an item subsequent and posterior to a subject that is understood to be already there. Aquinas’ thinking about *esse* escapes Ayer’s mold. *Esse* is, if you will, an attribute or predicate, but one that the metaphysician observes is basic and fundamental to a subject that is understood to be of itself existence-neutral. As noted, this Thomistic conception renders Ayer’s tautology and self-contradiction embarrassments nugatory.

The same single-mindedness about attributes holds true of a recent attempt by “analytic” Thomist Brian Davies, to argue that existence is not a predicate.<sup>39</sup> In his “Aquinas, God, and Being,”<sup>40</sup> formatted in medieval *disputatio* style, Davies provides three arguments. As with Ayer’s text, so too with Davies’ arguments, a myopia exists in terms of Aquinas’ unique *actus essendi* conception. As an act, existence is basic and fundamental to its subject and fully actuates the subject from that stance.

Davies’ first argument is that if a Thomist considers existence to be a predicate, then positive existential statements are true of necessity and negative ones are of necessity false. Beginning with the latter, Davies argues:

[I]f “\_\_\_ exist(s)” serves to tell us something significant about some object or individual, then denying that “\_\_\_ exist(s)” is truly affirmable

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of whether Thomism can and should become “analytic,” see *The New Blackfriars* 80 (1999).

<sup>40</sup> Davies, “Aquinas, God, and Being,” 500–17. For an excellent discussion of whether Davies’ Fregean view of existence is suitable for Aquinas’ notion of *actus essendi*, see Brian J. Shanley, “Analytic Thomism,” *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 125–37.

of some object or individual is denying that this something significant (expressed by “\_\_\_\_\_ exists”) is truly affirmed of some object or individual. But of what non-existent object or individual can “\_\_\_\_\_ does not exist” be saying anything significant? . . . So, on the assumption that “\_\_\_\_\_ exist(s)” can serve to tell us something about some object or individual, it looks as though denials of existence must always be false.<sup>41</sup>

In other words, if existence is a predicate, then it is ascribed to something even when it is being denied. Hence, “Fun-loving Welshmen do not exist” is really saying “The fun-loving Welshmen that exist do not exist.” This last is a contradiction and, of course, is necessarily false. But this fate for negative existential propositions cannot be right. For example, “Sunny weather does not exist” is not necessarily false. A little imagination should reveal how positive existential statements become necessarily true. If existence is a predicate, then existence will be truly affirmed of some object or individual, thus rendering the proposition a tautology and so necessarily true.

Davies’ first argument is quite similar to Ayer’s. Ayer’s handling of negative existential propositions emphasizes the existence of the subject even when denying the putative attribute of existence. Hence negatives become contradictions. Davies lingers in the same logical context. Instead of stopping with the contradiction embarrassment, Davies prolongs the argument into negatives becoming necessarily false. Davies’ handling of existential positives mirrors Ayer’s. For both, tautologies result. But Ayer leaves the embarrassment with that; Davies goes on to note the resulting equally embarrassing, necessarily true status.

Again, I cannot overemphasize the common matrix for both philosophers—the attribute or predicate view of existence is monochromatically understood as an item subsequent and posterior to an already there subject.<sup>42</sup> This conception of attribute seems tied to a view of the individual as *ipso facto* an existent. As noted, Aquinas does not share that point.<sup>43</sup> To have an individual substance, a compo-

<sup>41</sup> Davies, “Aquinas, God, and Being,” 503.

<sup>42</sup> Hence there is some justification to Gilson’s claim that in the contemporary signification of *predicate*, Thomistically understood existence is not a predicate. For a discussion of the Gilsonian claim, see Quinn, *The Thomism of Etienne Gilson*, 60–62.

<sup>43</sup> D. F. Pears, in Pears and J. F. Thomson, *Is Existence a Predicate?* (London: Aquin Press, 1963), 4, thinks that some existential propositions can be so constructed

sition of matter and form, is not *ipso facto* to have an existent. It may suffice for Aristotle and Averroës, and for most of us in ordinary conversation, but Aquinas requires the addition of a further *actus* if the substance is to be an existent (*ens*). Hence Ayer and Davies are working with a presumption that fails to engage Aquinas. *Esse* is basic and fundamental to its subject that is of itself existence-neutral. Ascription of *esse* to its subject, then, does not presume that the subject is there or that it is not there. The existential neutrality of the subject is not an assertion that the subject is not there nor that it is there. That is why it makes sense to wait for further information about the existence or non-existence of our fun-loving, but existence-neutral, Welshmen. On Aquinas' account, "Existentially neutral fun-loving Welshmen do not exist" is not a contradiction and so not necessarily false.

Davies' second argument against existence as a predicate is that positive existential propositions can be morphed into propositions without *exists*. "[T]he work done by \_\_\_ *exist(s)* in sentences like 'Fun-loving Welshmen exist' is the same work as that done by *some* in sentences like 'Some Welshmen are fun-loving.' Nobody, I presume would take *some* to ascribe any kind of property or characteristic to any object or individual. But if in such cases the work done by \_\_\_ *exist(s)* is the same work as that done by *some*, then \_\_\_ *exist(s)* does not function so as to ascribe any kind of property to any object or individual."<sup>44</sup> In some following tightly reasoned paragraphs, Davies underwrites the equivalency of "Fun-loving Welshmen exist" and "Some Welsh are fun-loving" by showing that the negation of the latter is equivalent to "Fun-loving Welshmen do not exist."<sup>45</sup>

In comment, Davies' second argument requires and presupposes the success of his first. For the second argument, *exists* functions only

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that the subject alone referentially implies existence, e.g., "This room exists," and so these propositions are tautologies. The only way to avoid tautology is to have the subject referring to an existence different from the existence asserted by *exists*. If what I have said in this chapter is accurate, Aquinas would claim that the use of the demonstrative pronoun does not imply some kind of actual existence for the subject. The pronoun continues to qualify a room of itself existence neutral. Hence, in terms of his epistemology, the full meaning of the proposition is "This of itself existence-neutral room exists." Aquinas could give the same treatment to "I exist." These treatments clear the way to regard *exists* as expressing the addition of the *sui generis* attribute of *actus essendi*.

<sup>44</sup> Davies, "Aquinas, God, and Being," 503.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 504–5.

in propositions in which the subject is a description. That thesis is what allows translation of \_\_\_ *exist(s)* into assertions of the fact of individuals of a certain nature. Propositions such as “I exist” are particularly resistant to this analysis, and Davies denies that they “make sense.”<sup>46</sup> Why? Ordinary conversation is full of assertions of the existence of individuals. The answer appears to be the controlling idea of Davies’ first argument, specifically, since individuals already exist, then *exists* as a predicate would render the proposition a tautology and so a necessary truth. But Aquinas regards individuals as not *ipso facto* existent. Rather, he sees them as, of themselves, existence-neutral. Hence it is appropriate to assert or to deny their existence. Aquinas could grant Davies’ second argument, yet would go on to insist that when the subject is an individual, *exists* is a predicate signifying an attribute, albeit a *sui generis* one.<sup>47</sup>

Davies’ third argument against existence as a predicate or property is twofold.<sup>48</sup> First he borrows from Frege the rejection that numbers are properties. On the one hand, the expression of number may mimic the expression of a property. I can speak of “four horses” just as I can speak of “thoroughbred horses.” Nevertheless, I know that though each horse is a thoroughbred, each horse is not a four. Hence the number four fails to designate a property of any individual horse. On the other hand, if numbers did designate properties of objects, of what object does 0 designate the property in the statement “Venus has 0 moons”? Rather, is it not the point of the statement that Venetian moons do not exist?

An affirmative answer here brings one to the second portion of Davies’ argument. If “0 moons” means no moons exist, then asserting existence means asserting another number. Davies quotes Frege, “Affirmation of existence is in fact nothing but denial of the number nought.” Here Davies also appeals to C. J. F. Williams to make the

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 507.

<sup>47</sup> In an essay accompanying that of Pears cited in n. 43, J. F. Thomson argues that Russell’s theory of descriptions can dispense with *exists* in propositions involving proper names as their subjects. For instance, “Homer does not exist” can be translated into “No one wrote both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.” But existence of individuals is more resistant to this Russellian exorcism. One can ask, “Absolutely no one?” To which the reply will be, “No, no one really existing wrote both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.” This admission returns us to the issue of how to regard the real existence of individuals.

<sup>48</sup> Davies, “Aquinas, God, and Being,” 505–6.

second portion of his argument. For Williams, statements of number are answers to “How many A’s are there?” But “A’s exist” is one legitimate answer to that question. Hence, “A’s exist” is a statement of number. In sum, if existence statements are statements about number and number is not a property of objects or individuals, then existence is not a property or a predicate.

Davies’ third argument cleverly makes the point that existence statements imply number statements. The trouble is that the reverse is untrue. To be numbered does not necessarily mean to be existent. I can be thinking of a Hawaiian vacation that I wish to take. My going on to think it a six day vacation brings it no closer to existent. It can remain frustratingly unrealized. In Thomistic categories, number can be applied to what is existence-neutral without introducing any redundancy. Just as “Existence-neutral martyrs exist” is not redundant, so too “Six existence-neutral martyrs exist” makes good sense. That observation suffices to break Davies’ equivalency between existence and number and to ruin his third argument. Existence still may not be a predicate, but that will be for other reasons. The only further arguments mentioned by Davies are his first two, and I have replied to these.

## 9. THE INTELLIGIBLE HEART OF THE *RATIO ENTIS*

The fruits of the metaphysical application of the *duplex operatio intellectus* should be folded back into the *ratio entis*. The cognitively existing items employed in the application do not deflect the mind’s attention to another commonality. The *ratio entis* also embraces these cognitively existing items. Though real things were the initial analogates for the grasp of the analogon, cognitively existing items further acquaint us with being. Now one realizes that to be actual does not necessarily mean to be real. Hence the analysis of the instances has taken place precisely as they fall under the *ratio*, precisely as they are understood as analogates of this analogon. That is why the fruits of the analysis lead to a better understanding of the *ratio*. In the wake of the *duplex operatio*, each existing thing stands forth as a thing with its *actus essendi*. This fact is what is reflected intelligibly in Aquinas’ understanding of the *ratio entis* in terms of *habens esse*. The compositeness of the analogon reflects the compositeness of the

instances. The *habens* portion of the *ratio entis* is itself an analogon that runs in and through the very differences of various substances and their subsequent and posterior accidents.<sup>49</sup> Aquinas refers to this analogous portion of the *ratio entis* as “essence: *essentia*.”<sup>50</sup> As with any analogous commonality, we intellect essence as having a certain splendor and brilliance. Given its status as a dimension of the *ratio entis*, essence conveys the transcendental splendor and brilliance of *ens*.

But we now know that essence derives this brilliance. Essence owes it to the *esse* dimension of the *ratio entis* understood as *habens esse*. Whatever perfections belong to a substance must be intelligibly read back into the *esse* of the substance that renders the substance more than nothing. A substance with the perfections it has would not blossom around the *esse* unless the *esse* pre-contained all that perfection. Yet each *esse* of each substance is itself an analogate of the *esse* dimension of the *ratio entis* understood as *habens esse*. Hence, the *esse* dimension comes to present itself as the intelligible heart of the *ratio entis*.

In the texts, reference to this dimension takes the forms of *esse formale*, *esse commune*, *perfectio essendi*, and *ratio essendi*. In the C.G. II, 26, and while discussing the *esse formale* of all things, Aquinas explains how things differ from one another despite their agreement in having *esse*.<sup>51</sup> This issue leads him to discuss the

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<sup>49</sup> In his *Opusculum De Ente et Essentia*, ch. 7, p. 19, Aquinas says an accident has a *secundum esse* distinct from the *esse* of its subject. Since the latter is a distinct act of the subject, then just on the textual evidence alone the *esse secundum* should be a distinct act of the accident. Also, *De Ver.* 21, 5c. For further texts and a discussion of apparently contrary texts, see Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 160–61, nn. 5–6. Apparently, once the philosopher recognizes the real difference between substance and accident, the accident can be noted to exist both really and cognitively and so be treated to a metaphysical application of the intellect’s *duplex operatio*.

<sup>50</sup> “Rather, ‘an essence’ is derived from ‘a being’ in the first meaning of the term [being as divided by the ten categories].” Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, trans. Maurer, 30.

<sup>51</sup> “Furthermore, things are not distinguished from one another in having being [*esse*], for in this they agree. If, then, things differ from one another, either their being [*esse*] must be specified through certain added differences, so that diverse things have a diverse being [*esse*] according to their species, or things must differ in that the being [*esse*] itself is appropriate to natures that are diverse in species. The first of these alternatives is impossible, since, as we have said [chap. 25], no addition can be made to being [*enti*] in the manner in which a difference is added to a genus.

diversification of *esse formale*. The diversification does not occur in and through additions from the outside, as happens when a difference is added to a genus. The stated reason for this impossibility is that this phenomenon fails to apply to *ens*. Aquinas' previous chapter expresses the failure's root: nothing is outside what is understood by being (*praeter id quod intelligitur per ens*). Hence, things differ in that the *esse* itself is appropriate to the natures diverse in species. In other words, *esse formale* provides for its own diversification. In doing so, *esse formale* presents itself as the source of all perfection and as possessing an unsurpassed intelligible richness.

Worth noting is how in this argument, Aquinas freely goes from what he knows about *ens* to what he wants to say about *esse formale*. He thinks that since there is nothing outside *ens*, then *esse* is not diversified by an addition in the manner of a genus by a difference. This remark certainly bespeaks a connection between *ens* and *esse* in which *esse* is the intelligible heart of *ens*. Aquinas can take what he knows about *ens* and bring it to bear on *esse* because *esse* is the constitutive note of *ens*. The mind can go from effect to cause.

In the *De Potentia Dei* and under the rubric of *esse commune*, Aquinas covers the same topic of how *esse* is diversified.<sup>52</sup> He excludes diversification through an addition that determines *esse* as an act would determine a potency. Nothing is able to be added to *esse* that is extraneous from it, since apart from *esse* nothing is extraneous except non-being (*non-ens*). Again, note the implied constitutive role *esse* plays for being (*ens*). Aquinas concludes that *esse* is diversified as an act by a potency. He compares *esse* with the diversification of forms that have their proper matter included within their definition.

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It remains, then, that things differ because they have diverse natures, to which being [*esse*] accrues in a diverse way." Aquinas, *C.G.* I, 26, *Item*.

<sup>52</sup> For the expression *esse commune*, see Aquinas, *De Pot.* 7, 2, ad 6m. The text that I go on to analyze is from the body of the article: "Nor may we think that being [*esse*], in this sense, can have anything added to it that is more formal and determines it as act determines potentiality: because being [*esse*] in this latter sense is essentially distinct from that to which it is added and whereby it is determined. But nothing that is outside the range of being can be added to being: for nothing is outside its range except non-being [*non-ens*], which can be neither form nor matter. Hence being [*esse*] is not determined by something else as potentiality by act but rather as act by potentiality: since in defining a form we include its proper matter instead of the difference: thus we define a soul as the act of an organic physical body. Accordingly this being [*esse*] is distinct from that being [*esse*] inasmuch as it is the being of this or that nature." Shapcote, trans., *On the Power of God*, vol. 3, 12–13.

Hence, *esse* will be diversified by being the *esse* of this or that nature. In other words, *esse* will diversify itself in the light of the potency that it will actuate. Does this not imply an unsurpassed richness to what Aquinas calls *esse*? *Esse* is not drawing upon something else to diversify, but it is drawing upon its own resources. Aquinas' own conclusion in the *De Potentia* article is that what he calls *esse* is the most perfect among all (*inter omnis perfectissimum*), and it is the actuality of all acts and the perfection of all perfections (*actualitas omnium actuum et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum*).

Finally, in the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas gives the same treatment to the "most common" *esse*. Since no thing has actuality except so far as it exists, *esse* is the actuality of all things and is compared to other things as received is to receiver.<sup>53</sup> In the body of the next article, the same thinking leads Aquinas to characterize the *perfectio* (or *ratio*) *essendi* as that to which pertains the perfections of all things. Likewise, in a third reply of this following article, Aquinas explains that as reason distinguishes them, *esse* is more perfect than life and wisdom. Yet a being need not include in itself life and wisdom, "because it is not necessary that what participates *esse* participate it according to every mode of being [*secundum omnem modum essendi*]."

Here in the *Summa*, Aquinas' thinking illustrates a rich and full understanding of *ipsum esse*, or the *perfectio essendi*. Without withdrawing the point that *ipsum esse* is *communissimum* and *recipiens omnium additiones*, Aquinas refuses to concede that *esse* is *imperfectissimum*. Rather than understanding it as most empty, he conceives it as most full. The *ratio essendi* is so intelligibly rich that Aquinas here, at *S.T.* I, 4, 2c, thinks that it is an appropriate *ratio* to know the all-inclusive perfection of God who is *Ipsum Esse per se subsistens*.

These three texts show Aquinas funneling the previously described analogical richness of the *ratio entis* into his newly discovered dimension of *actus essendi*. I cannot sufficiently emphasize that a reader should take analogically Aquinas' key philosophical terms of *ens*, *forma*, *essentia*, and *esse*. Each is an analogon that we intellectually

<sup>53</sup> For this characterization of *ipsum esse* as *communissimum, et recipiens omnium additiones*, see Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 4, 1, 3 obj. Without withdrawing these characterizations, Aquinas says in the response to the objection: "for nothing has actuality [*actualitatem*] except so far as it is. Hence being [*ipsum esse*] is the actuality of all things, even of forms themselves." Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 38.

perceive within the very differences of their appropriate analogates. For example, within the differing determinations of various things, the intellect grasps determinateness itself, or essence. The intellect comes to the realization that something can be determinate as a substance or as an accident. What marks a substance, specifically, existence in itself, is as much a determination as what marks an accident, that is, existence in and of a substrate. These two ways of being are themselves two ways of being determinate.

So Thomistic talk about essence and existence should never be regarded as talk about mental blanks to be filled in with the essence and existence of this thing or that. Far from being like empty frames, their more appropriate image is a teeming pond on which has surfaced only a mere indication of what lies beneath. As dimensions of the *ratio entis*, essence and existence continue the original analogical appreciation of *ens*. It is supremely ironic that in the abstraction of these notions the intellect comes in touch with more, not less, than was up front in the data. The horror that some Thomists have with abstraction has no place in the analogical abstraction of the *ratio entis* and its various dimensions of *forma*, *essentia*, and *esse*.<sup>54</sup>

With the definition of the *ratio entis* as *habens esse*, the Thomist has discovered the intelligible heart of reality. Thanks to the *ratio essendi* releasing as its analogates the various *esses* that actuate those things, the myriad of things intelligibly streams from the *ratio entis*. The philosopher's dream of looking on the *ratio entis* pure and simple now becomes the dream of an unimpeded look at the *ratio essendi*. Is the dream more than a fantasy? Yes, because an intoxicating possibility opens up before the contemplator of being. Prior to the discovery of the *ratio essendi* dimension of *ens*, the philosopher reduced the richness of being to a dimension of formal determination. The philosopher understood *ens* in terms of *habens forma*, not *habens esse*. The philosopher understood the perfections of things as forms, accidental and substantial, and form itself expressed the analogical sameness in all. But like number itself, understood as what all numbers share, which can be realized only as some particular number, so too form itself can only be realized in terms of some specific form. No analogate of form could ever be the analogon itself. For

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<sup>54</sup> For a critique of abstractions, see Rousselot, *The Intellectualism of Saint Thomas*, 3–9.

example, no great baseball player could ever present “great baseball player” itself.

The result is that the philosopher can understand the analogical richness of *ens* only by keeping the eye of his intellect trained on the varied parade of the analogates of *ens*. The philosopher has no other place to encounter being. Yet with the discovery of *actus essendi*, a crack widens in the philosophical cage. *Esse* is the act of all form without itself being a form. The *esse formale* texts bring this out. How could *esse* be the act even of form itself and still be a form? *Esse* may be called *formale*, but it is never called *forma*. Rather, what Aquinas calls *forma* he says is always made actual by *esse*. The original intellectual grasp of *esse* by judgment underwrites this description of *esse* as an act but not a form. If *esse* were itself a form, it would be existence-neutral, and so judgment would always be chasing after reality. That judgment “bottoms out” indicates that the terminating *esse* is, for all of its being an act, not a form.

The result of this is that the analogon of *ratio essendi* does not express determinateness. Hence it is not under the restriction of having analogates that are always finite and determinate instances and never the analogon itself. As act that is not itself *forma*, the *ratio essendi* admits the possibility of an analogate that is the analogon. If that analogon exists, then the possibility of a vision of the transcendental analogical richness of the *ratio entis* exists. Is there any way to determine if this possibility is a fact? I now turn to another fascinating aspect of the *ratio entis*, understood as *habens esse*. Causal considerations pertain to the *actus essendi* dimension. Those considerations will lead the mind to a first cause in which *esse* is not possessed or had (*habens*) but is subsistent (*subsistens*). This analogate of *esse* will realize the analogon of *ipsum esse*.

## *Esse Subsistens*

THROUGHOUT HIS THEOLOGICAL CAREER, Aquinas attached causal considerations to a thing's real existence, or *esse*, as that real existence was grasped by judgment. In the commentary on Lombard's *Sentences* (1252–56), Aquinas remarks: “The natures of things themselves are not this *esse* itself that they have: otherwise the *esse* would be of the notion of every quiddity, which is false, since the quiddity of every thing is able to be understood also not understanding concerning the thing whether it exists. Hence, it is necessary that from another, they have *esse*, and it is necessary to come to something of which the nature is its *esse* itself; otherwise one proceeds to infinity, and this is what gives *esse* to all.”<sup>1</sup> In the *De Potentia Dei* (1265–66) he insists: “[A]lthough the first cause, which is God, does not enter the essence of created things; nevertheless, *esse*, which is in created things, is not able to be understood unless as derived from divine *esse*; just as no proper effect is able to be understood except as derived from a proper cause.”<sup>2</sup> Also, as noted, at *S.T.* I, 44, 2c, Aquinas depicts philosophers progressively formulating more and more fundamental understandings of *ens*. At a third stage, philosophers bottom out with the discovery of the *esse* of material substances. From this discovery, philosophers rise to a most universal cause that Aquinas

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<sup>1</sup> Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, Solut. Also, “Quaedam enim natura est de cuius intellectu non est suum esse, quod patet ex hoc quod intelligi potest esse cum hoc quod ignoretur an sit, sicut phaenicem, vel eclipsim, vel aliquid huiusmodi . . . et quia omne quod non habet aliquid ex se, sed recipit illud ab alio, est possibile vel in potentia respectu ejus, ideo ipsa quidditas est sicut potentia, et suum esse acquisitum est sicut actus; et ita per consequens est ibi compositio ex actu et potentia.” *In II Sent.*, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, Solut; Mandonnet, ed., *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 2, 87–88.

<sup>2</sup> Aquinas, *De Pot.* 3, 5, ad 1m. Interestingly Aquinas' comment apparently excludes an approach to God from created essence. *Esse*, not *essentia*, is not able to be understood except as deduced from the divine *esse*. The Aristotelian march to separate substance from formal determination in sensible things would not evidently reach God. Aquinas' excluding a knowledge of God from natural philosophy reiterates this point. See *supra*, Chap. 2, sect. 5.

nas identifies with his creator God. And later in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (1269–72), Aquinas says that God is the cause *omnia in quantum sunt entia* because God is *agens per modum dantis esse*.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter I want to explore two issues. First I will investigate how the *esse* of a thing, that is, judgmentally grasped existence, gives way to an appreciation of God as First Cause of *esse*. Second, I want to show how Aquinas “thinks” this conclusion by employing the analogical richness of the *ratio entis* appropriately modified by negative judgment.

### 1. A FRAMEWORK FOR KNOWLEDGE OF CAUSALITY

In other texts, Aquinas does seem to lay out an argument for God from the *esse* of things. The most famous of these is from his early work, *De Ente et Essentia*.<sup>4</sup> The text occurs in a chapter devoted to how essence is found in substances separate from matter. Here is a translation of it (I have added the numbers for reference during the discussion that follows):

[1] Whatever belongs to a thing is caused [2] either by the principles of its nature (as the capacity for laughter in man) or comes to it from an extrinsic principle (as light in the air from the influence of the sun). [3 and 4] Now being itself [*ipsum esse*] cannot be [5] caused by the form or quiddity of a thing (by “caused” I mean by an efficient cause), because that thing would then be its own cause and it would bring itself into being, which is impossible. It follows that everything whose being is distinct from its nature [*aliud a natura sua*] must have being from another. [7] And because everything that exists through another is reduced to that which exists through itself as to its first cause, there must be a reality that is the cause of being for all other things, because it is pure being [*esse tantum*]. [6] If this were not so, we would go on to infinity in causes, for everything that is not pure being has a cause of its being, as has been said. It is evident, then, that an intelligence is

<sup>3</sup> Aquinas, *In VI Meta.*, *lectio* 3, n. 1215.

<sup>4</sup> Other instances of the reasoning are Aquinas, *C.G.* I, 22, *Amplius. Si* and *S.T.* I, 3, 4c.

form and being, and that it holds its being from the first being, which is being in all its purity; and this is the first cause, or God.<sup>5</sup>

As I analyze it, the text has seven points falling into two major divisions. The first major division creates a general framework into which fall points one and two. The second major division applies the general framework to *esse*. There we find points three to seven.

The first point is that what belongs to a thing is caused. What does this mean? Given the mentioned examples of the capacity of laughter and light in the air, it is clear that Aquinas is talking about the “accidents” of a thing. Along with the capacity to laugh and the illumination of the air, my present posture, size, complexion, motion are other accidents. Here *accident* means a modification or characteristic of a thing rather than an unfortunate chance event. This technical sense of *accident* comes from Aristotle’s *Categories*.<sup>6</sup> Aristotle presents them as essentially dependent items. Accidents exist only by being in and of a subject. For example, my tanned complexion cannot exist apart from me. If it exists, it exists as in and of me, though I can be apart from it.

Accidents, however, are not completely dependent upon their subjects precisely as subjects. A subject as subject possesses an accident in and of it only insofar as the subject is open to or lacking the accident. The technical expression is that the subject of an accident, precisely as subject, is a passive potency for the accident. To take on the accident, the subject must lack it. Hence, as a passive potency to an accident, no subject as subject can completely account for the accident within it. The complete account of the accident’s dependency will involve a reference to something else.

What is the something else? The answer to this question brings us to the second point of the *De Ente* reasoning. The something else will be either the subject in another respect than subject, or it will be another subject. Hence, Aquinas says that what belongs to a thing is

<sup>5</sup> Aquinas, trans. Maurer, *On Being and Essence*, 56–57.

<sup>6</sup> “Everything except primary substance is either predicable of a primary substance or present in a primary substance. This becomes evident by reference to particular instances which occur. . . . Again, colour is present in body, therefore in individual bodies, for if there were no individual body in which it was present, it could not be present in body at all.” Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 5, 2a 34–2b 6; McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, 9 (trans. E. M. Edghill).

caused either by the essence of the thing as the ability to laugh is caused in us by our essence, rational animal, or by something else as illumination in the air is caused by the sun. An accident caused in the first way is called a “proper accident” or “property.”<sup>7</sup> It is in and of a subject because the essence of the subject determines it to be there. So, for example, from my rationality I can spy incongruity; and from my animality I have a disposition of vocal organs; and from both I have the ability to express the grasp of incongruity by utterance of laughter. Rationality and animality belong to my essence, but upon both of them the ability to laugh follows as an accident. My continuance as a man despite the loss of the ability to laugh (for example, through a lesion of my vocal organs) indicates the accidental status of the ability. Other accidental properties include my vital activity and my abilities to speak and to move.

An accident caused in the second way is a predicamental one.<sup>8</sup> For some reason or other, the presence of a predicamental accident in and of a subject cannot be explained by the subject in another respect. This insight swings the full explanation of the accident to another subject that causes the accident to be in and of the original subject. Consider how the accident of my tan is brought about in me through the action of the sun. Given that my descent is from the northern European country of Lithuania, I lack the genetic makeup to be darkly complected. My being darkly complected must be explained, then, through reference to something else.

## 2. DAVID HUME'S CRITIQUE

These two steps complete the general framework into which Aquinas will place the *esse* of the thing. Like the *duplex operatio intellectus*,

<sup>7</sup> “[T]here are three genera of accidents. For some are caused from the principles of the species and are called proper accidents [*propria*], just as risible for man. . . . The powers of the soul are accidents as properties [*proprietates*].” Aquinas, *Quaestio Disputatae de Anima*, I, 12, ad 7m. The three kinds of accidents mentioned here fail to include accidents caused by something extrinsic to their subject. Vd. *infra*, n. 8.

<sup>8</sup> For that terminology, see Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 71. Aquinas contrasts this second kind with accidents following upon the principles of the species or of the individual and with those caused violently. Concerning the second kind mentioned in the *De Ente*, Aquinas elsewhere remarks: “Yet there are certain accidents that are caused by something extrinsic, not repugnant to the principles of the subject but more perfecting it, just as light in the air.” Aquinas, *In I Sent.* d. 17, a. 1, a. 2c.

this framework for reasoning to causes of accidents is borrowed from Aristotle. Aristotle employed it extensively to the imperfect act of motion in order to trace motion to an unmoved mover. What is unique to Aquinas is his extrapolation of Aristotle's thinking to cover something Aristotle never knew, the thing's *actus essendi*. But before moving to Aquinas' metaphysical application of the framework, I want to note how the framework is impervious to David Hume's classic critique of the ability to know causality in the external world. I will understand Hume's remarks to hold even within the context of an immediate realism for sensation. As far as I can tell, the remarks are logically independent of Hume's subjectivist understanding of sense impressions.<sup>9</sup> What this eighteenth-century British Empiricist attacks is the idea that what happens has a cause.<sup>10</sup> In *An Enquiry on Human Understanding*, Hume explains how this idea escapes him. First, a direct experience of causality is lacking. All that direct experience provides is one event following another in time.<sup>11</sup> For example, all that I see is the flame following in time the striking of the match. My observation fails to give me the striking "causing" the flame.

<sup>9</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 2, n. 6.

<sup>10</sup> "To begin with the first question concerning the necessity of a cause: 'Tis a general maxim in philosophy, that *whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence*. This is commonly taken for granted in all reasonings, without any proof given or demanded." David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, pt. 3, sect. 3, from Green and Grose, eds., *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 1, 380. Also, "The true state of the question is, whether every object which begins to exist, must owe its existence to a cause; and this I assert neither to be intuitively nor demonstratively certain," 383. For a summary of twentieth-century Thomist discussion of our knowledge of causality, see Joseph Owens, "The Causal Proposition: Principle or Conclusion?" *The Modern Schoolman* 32 (1955): 159–71.

<sup>11</sup> "It must certainly be allowed, that nature has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets, and has afforded us only the knowledge of a few superficial qualities of objects; while she conceals from us those powers and principles on which the influence of those objects entirely depends. Our senses inform us of the color, weight, and consistence of bread; but neither senses nor reason can ever inform us of those qualities which fit it for the nourishment and support of a human body. Sight or feeling conveys an idea of the actual motion of bodies; but as to that wonderful force or power, which would carry on a moving body for ever in a continued change of place, and which bodies never lose but by communicating it to others; of this we cannot form the most distant conception." Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sect. 4, pt. 2, from Green and Grose, eds., *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 4, 129. Also, "Since the particular powers, by which all natural operations are performed, never appear to the senses." Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sect. 4, pt. 1, from Green and Grose, eds., *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 4, 36.

Second, coupling direct experience with reasoning cannot give a knowledge of causality. All that reasoning can appeal to is past constant conjunction of events. For example, the flame has always followed the striking of the match. But this fact of constant conjunction is no sure basis to conclude that the striking causes the flame. Hume hesitates. If the experience is only that of temporal conjunction, why should multiplying the experience ever produce anything than more temporal conjunction?<sup>12</sup> Additionally, he wonders what could be the force of past experience in the light of possible future experience.<sup>13</sup> From past experience, can one exclude the possibility of the striking preceding a thunderclap or the fragrance of roses in lieu of the flame? It would seem not. But then what becomes of our basis for concluding that the striking caused the flame?

Finally, no *a priori* knowledge of a thing will tell us whether it is a cause or an effect. For example, even uncorrupted Adam could not have known from his first experience of water that it would suffocate him.<sup>14</sup> Neither does pure reasoning, that is, reasoning simply involving concepts and not experience, succeed in attaining a knowledge of causality. Some, such as John Locke, say that if what happens is not caused by something, then it is caused by nothing, and that is absurd. Hence what happens is caused by something. Hume's problem with the argument is that it presupposes that what happens is caused and goes on to prove that the cause cannot be nothing. But Hume questions the presupposition. Why cannot happenings just happen? Why must they be understood as caused at all?<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "Now where is that process of reasoning which, from one instance, draws a conclusion, so different from that which it infers from a hundred instances that are nowise different from that single one?" Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sect. 4, pt. 2, from Green and Grose, eds., *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 4, 32.

<sup>13</sup> "If there be any suspicion that the course of nature may change, and that the past may be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion." Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sect. 4, pt. 2, from Green and Grose, eds., *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 4, 33.

<sup>14</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sect. 4, pt. 1, from Green and Grose, eds., *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 4, 25.

<sup>15</sup> "If every thing must have a cause, it follows, that upon the exclusion of other causes we must accept of the object itself or of nothing as causes. But 'tis the very point in question, whether every thing must have a cause or not; and therefore, according to all just reasoning, it ought never to be taken for granted." Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, sect. 4, pt. 3, from Green and Grose, eds., *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 1, 383.

In my opinion, Hume is correct to note that in respect to our direct awareness of the external world, we lack an acquaintance with causality. We experience simply one thing following another in time, not as the effect of another thing as cause.<sup>16</sup> Also, Hume correctly notes that the argument from pure reasoning presupposes the causality it claims to prove. But I disagree that causality is not proved from experience. Both Aristotle and Aquinas did it. But their basis was the accidental, not constant conjunction.<sup>17</sup> Experience leads us to understand something like a motion as dependent. In the stationary chalk versus the rolling chalk, we find data sufficient to make a distinction between the chalk and the rolling. Moreover, the rolling is not the equal of the chalk, for if it were the equal, then the rolling would be separate from the chalk and the chalk would be unmoved; only the rolling would be moved. For the chalk to be genuinely moving, the rolling must be understood as something that exists in and of the chalk.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Another question is whether internal experience furnishes us with an acquaintance of our own causality over limbs and the operations of our minds. In the *Enquiry*, Hume addresses this issue and resolves it negatively. The basic problem for Hume is that knowledge of the fact must be tied up with knowledge of *how* the fact occurs: "But if by consciousness we perceived any power or energy in the will, we must know this power; we must know its connection with the effect; we must know the secret union of soul and body, and the nature of both these substances; by which the one is able to operate, in so many instances, upon the other." Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sect. 7, pt. 1, from Green and Grose, eds., *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 4, 54. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1959), vol. 5, 286–87, correctly points out that knowledge of the fact is often independent of how the fact is occurring. A native out of the jungles of New Guinea would know that a car is going down the street while being perfectly ignorant of how that is occurring. Hence Owens insists that internal experience provides an acquaintance with causality, though its extension to happenings in the external world remains a project for human reasoning: "Except in your own internal acts of cognition and appetite, you do not experience the efficient causality. In other instances you see only the temporal succession. You do not see that they receive their being. You may see them begin, but you do not see their dependence on a cause." Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 78. Also, Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence*, 81–83.

<sup>17</sup> Hume admits the possibility of another source for our knowledge of causality: "Even though we examine all the sources of our knowledge, and conclude them unfit for such a subject, there may still remain a suspicion, that the enumeration is not complete, or the examination not accurate." Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sect. 4, pt. 2, from Green and Grose, eds., *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 4, 34.

<sup>18</sup> The reasoning here is taken from Connell, *Substance and Modern Science*, 21–22, who asks concerning the motion of a billiard ball: "Furthermore, if the motion is

The undeniable accidental character of the rolling indicates that it is at least dependent upon the chalk as something to be in and of. Reflection upon experience definitely leads us to an acknowledgement of “material” causality. That the rolling has an efficient cause is now the object of argument. The argument is as follows: The rolling cannot be totally dependent upon the chalk, since as having the motion in it and of it, the chalk is in potency to the motion and so cannot completely explain it. A complete explanation demands something else, and this is the cause. The cause is responsible for the accident being in and of some thing.

Wherever a thing plus its accident is found, the above reasoning works. The accident must have a cause. The discernment of an accident gets the idea of dependency going. The accident is dependent at least on its subject, just as a formal cause is dependent upon its material cause.<sup>19</sup> But the thinking here must go further to the conclusion of an efficient cause, for as having the accident in it, the subject must be understood as in potency to it. Precisely in that respect the subject cannot account for the accident; something else must do the accounting. This conclusion is the knowledge of causality that Hume said that we could not acquire. In other words, the dependence of the accident on its subject is not the knowledge of causality at issue here. The former is an assertion of material causality. What we want to know is efficient causality. Knowledge of material causality is a step in the proof for knowledge of efficient causality.

Hume is shut off from this approach to knowledge of causality because of an odd notion of experience. For Hume, all objects of

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independent of the magnitude and its shape, then what happens when the ball moves? Does the individual motion pull the individual-shape and the individual-magnitude along like appendages? If so, then the shape and the magnitude move too, and there is not one motion but three; or rather, the number of motions is one plus another number equal to the number of quality-substances. Obviously, too, every motion but the first will reside in other qualities and will be properties of them. On the other hand, if the motion does not pull the shape and magnitude along, then the shape and magnitude on one hand and the motion on the other must become constantly more separated; thus the ball as a whole could hardly be said to move. But though the absurdity of both of these alternatives is obvious, both of them follow from the supposition that in reality qualities do not inhere in a subject and are independent entities.”

<sup>19</sup> “Nevertheless, it must be known that to all accidents, speaking commonly, the subject is a cause in a certain way, namely inasmuch as the accidents subsist [*substantificantur*] in the existence of the subject, yet not so that from the principles of the subject every accident is educed.” Aquinas, *In I Sent.* d. 17, q. 1, a. 2c.

experience have an equal status. For example, for Hume, I do not experience a shaped and colored expanse in motion. Rather, I experience shape *and* color *and* extension *and* motion. Each is equal and separate, like beads on a string or hats on a rack. In a word, each is like a substance. Historians of philosophy call Hume's view "perceptual atomism."<sup>20</sup> It clearly excludes any possibility of knowing the accidental. Hence the idea of dependency cannot get off the ground, and the argument for a cause cannot proceed.

What both Aristotle and Aquinas fundamentally assert is not that what happens has a cause, but that what is accidental has a cause. In fact, the latter can be used to underwrite the former. If a happening is understood in terms of the acquiring of an accident, then causal considerations can commence.

### 3. APPLICATION TO *ESSE*

At point three of the *De Ente* reasoning, Aquinas initiates an application of the above framework to *esse*. Given material from my Chapter 6, this application is not shocking. We saw there that a thing can have both real existence and cognitional existence, while the real existence is nowhere apart from the thing. These facts peg the thing as a subject, and the judgmentally grasped real existence, or *esse*, as an accident of that subject. Elsewhere in his *Quodlibetum* questions, Aquinas says that in a "wide sense" *esse* is an accident.<sup>21</sup> In a wide sense, anything in the thing outside the thing's essence is an accident of the thing.

Characterized as accidental, *esse* is *ipso facto* recognized as dependent. This is the fourth point of the text. As accidental, *esse* is at least dependent upon the thing of which it is an accident. But as we know

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<sup>20</sup> On this Humean atomism, see W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy: Hobbes to Hume* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969), 301. Also, Hume himself: "My conclusion from both is, that since all our perceptions are different from each other, and from every thing else in the universe, they are also distinct and separable, and may be consider'd as separately existent, and may exist separately, as the definition explains a substance." From the *Treatise of Human Nature* as quoted by Connell, *Substance in Modern Science*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> "I say that everything that is not a part of the essence is liberally called [*dicatur large*] an accident; and so is the *esse* in created things, because in God alone is *esse* his essence." Aquinas, *Quodl.*, XII, 5, 1c.

from the general framework, any accident harbors a twofold dependency. Because the subject in and of which the accident exists is in potency to the accident, the subject lacks the wherewithal to fully explain the presence of the accident. To complete the explanation, one must appeal either to the subject in some other respect, or to another subject.

What is the full story with the accident of *esse*? Point five opts for the second alternative, specifically, dependence of *esse* upon another subject, simply by remarking that the thing cannot be the efficient cause of its own *esse*. The point is unelaborated. But reflection upon what we know of *esse* gives us the reason. At this time we must recall that in respect to being in reality, the thing is an absolute, or total, potency to its *esse*. Apart from its *esse* there is no respect in which the thing is somehow real. Such is not the case with other accidents. For instance, even though I am in potency to a tan or a size or a posture, I am already in act as a man. In respect to these other accidents, I am a relative potency, a potency in a particular respect. But *vis-à-vis* my *esse* I am nothing in reality. This uniqueness of *esse* is also expressed by its mentioned priority and fundamentality to the thing. *Esse* is *prius*, *profundius*, and *magis intimum*. In contrast, other accidents are subsequent and posterior to their subjects. Sometimes Aquinas uses this priority of *esse* to deny that it is an accident. In these cases, by “accident” he is thinking of Aristotelian accidents that fall subsequent to the thing.

Yet if the thing is a total potency to its *esse*, then in no other respect does the thing possess actuality to function as the completing cause for the dependent *esse*. The completing cause for dependent *esse* must be another subject.

What is this other subject? Point six eliminates any combination of accidental *esse* for the identity. For example, the other subject cannot be another thing with accidental *esse*, for that would be to explain the unexplained by more of the unexplained. Neither will stringing the “something else” into an infinite regress of such things bring us any closer to completing our explanation of dependent *esse*. Since each thing in the regress is asking for a cause that no other thing in the regress can be, then again we see that we are trying to explain the unexplained by more of the same.

We are now at the final point of the text. The identity of the other subject must be a thing in which *esse* is not an accident. In other

words, in the First Cause of accidental *esse*, *esse* must be coincident with the subject. The First Cause of accidental *esse* will be a thing that is pure *esse* or *esse* alone. Only *esse* in a subsistent configuration can meet the needs of explanation for accidental *esse*.

The above is how for Aquinas the metaphysician goes from the *esse* dimension of *ens* to a First Cause of that dimension. Exigencies contained within *esse* dimension itself cogently drive the mind beyond the *actus essendi* had by things to a transcendent First Cause. Is this First Cause identifiable with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Or does this metaphysical conclusion fall victim to Pascal's complaint that he wants not the God of the philosophers but the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?<sup>22</sup> In my opinion, Aquinas would dispute Pascal's complaint for two reasons. First, Aquinas regards Scripture itself as identifying God with the first philosophical principle understood as *esse subsistens*, *esse tantum*, *esse purum*. As we read Aquinas to say in *C.G.* I, 22: "This sublime truth Moses was taught by our Lord. When Moses asked our Lord: 'If the children of Israel say to me: what is His Name: What shall I say to them?' The Lord replied: 'I AM WHO AM . . . Thou shalt say to the children of Israel: HE WHO IS hath sent me to you' (Exod. 3:13, 14). Now, names have been devised to signify the natures or essence of things. It remains, then, that the divine being is God's essence or nature."<sup>23</sup>

Aquinas' metaphysical reading of this Exodus passage would be disputed by today's exegetes. In his *Does God Exist?*<sup>9</sup> Hans Küng says that exegetes admit the possibility of Aquinas' metaphysical interpretation of Exodus 3:14.<sup>24</sup> Yet in all probability the author did not intend this sense. Rather, the intended sense is God's dynamic presence in history: "I am present as I am present." Aquinas could reply, however, that this metaphysical interpretation makes the intimacy interpretation intelligible. In his *S.T.* I, 8, 1c, Aquinas explains that because subsistent existence is the cause of *esse*, which is deepest and most intimate in the thing—*profundius et magis intimum*—then subsistent existence is intimately present to the thing. So Aquinas' metaphysical interpretation of the Exodus quote accommodates the intimacy interpretation. Yet it is difficult to understand how the inti-

<sup>22</sup> Pascal, *Pensées*, VIII, n. 555, 153–54.

<sup>23</sup> Pegis, trans., *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 1, 121.

<sup>24</sup> Hans Küng, *Does God Exist?*<sup>9</sup> (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 621.

macy interpretation opens to Aquinas'. Hence the Thomistic position is fuller and more integral. It safeguards Scripture's wealth of meaning. In *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*, Etienne Gilson notes that Aquinas' attitude toward the meaning of Scripture was determined by his belief that the Holy Spirit inspires it.<sup>25</sup> Hence, "All truth which, respecting the terms of the letter, can be fitted to Holy Scripture, is its meaning" (*De Pot.* 4, 1).

Second, the Catholic Church, whose deposit of Revelation includes both the Old and New Testaments, authoritatively describes God in the following terms from Vatican I's "Dogmatic Constitution Concerning the Catholic Faith":

[The one, living, and true God and His distinction from all things.] The holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one, true, living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, omnipotent, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intellect and will, and in every perfection; who, although he is one, singular, altogether simple and unchangeable spiritual substance, must be proclaimed distinct in reality and essence from the world; most blessed in Himself and of Himself, and ineffably most high above all things which are or can be conceived outside Himself.<sup>26</sup>

Can any reader of the *Contra Gentiles*, a *locus classicus* for Aquinas' philosophy of God, fail to recognize this God in the conclusions of Aquinas' many arguments? Does not a reader find Aquinas arguing for a first principle that is one, simple, unchangeable, creator, eternal, infinite in intellect and will, supreme, distinct from the world? If Aquinas is not arguing for the God of his Catholic belief, then what is he doing? In this second fashion, then, one understands how he would take exception to Pascal.

#### 4. ETIENNE GILSON AND THE *DE ENTE* PROOF

But no less than Etienne Gilson, one of my Neo-Thomist heroes, appears to oppose my cited *De Ente* text as a proof for God. Repeat-

<sup>25</sup> Gilson, *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 125.

<sup>26</sup> Heinrich Denzinger, *The Sources of the Catholic Faith*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), 443.

edly over many years, Gilson explained the reasons for his hesitancy.<sup>27</sup> Yet it will be my contention that an analysis of Gilson's reasons shows that his dismissal of the text is more nuanced than supposed. A reader of Gilson can discern that his dismissal does not obliterate, even from Gilson's own mind, understanding the text to be a metaphysical proof.

For openers, Gilson always observes that when the reasoning of the *De Ente* occurs in Aquinas' texts, Aquinas never presents it as a proof for God. For instance, it occurs at *C.G.* I, 22, and *S.T.* I, 3, 4c. In both cases the issue is not God's existence, but God's simplicity. In particular, no composition of essence and *esse* exists in God. Second, in the *Contra Gentiles*, the *Summa*, and the *Compendium Theologiae*, when Aquinas is deliberately presenting proofs for God, the *De Ente* reasoning is not to be found. Gilson underlines the point by remarking that Aquinas' key notion of *esse* is not invoked in any of the *quinque viae*, especially the third.<sup>28</sup> So if the *De Ente* reasoning is a theistic proof, how does one explain its absence from this array of discussions of God's existence?

With the fact seemingly established, Gilson ventures what he thinks is the reason for the fact. Essential to a Thomistic *via* is that it begin from sense experience. But the Thomistic understanding of the essence-existence distinction in which existence is not the fact of the thing but an act (*actus essendi*) of the thing is not available to sensation, "even taken in the wide sense of the term."<sup>29</sup> Why not? These lines of *Le Thomisme*, fifth edition, explain: "Now, to the best of our knowledge, Thomas Aquinas has never attempted such a demonstration [that is, a metaphysical one from sense experience]. Nor does one see how the thing could be done. The distinction of essence and existence presupposes the very notion of the pure act of being which its alleged demonstrations are supposed to justify."<sup>30</sup> In other words, the essence-*actus essendi* proof cannot be grounded in sense experi-

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<sup>27</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 82; Etienne Gilson, "La Preuve du *De Ente et Essentia*," *Doctor Communis* 3 (1950): 257-60; "Trois leçons sur le problème de l'existence de Dieu," *Divinitas* 1 (1961): 6-8; *Le Thomisme: Introduction à la philosophie de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, 6th ed. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1972), 97.

<sup>28</sup> Gilson, "La Preuve du *De Ente et Essentia*," 258.

<sup>29</sup> "[M]ême au sens large du terme." Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, 97, n. 85.

<sup>30</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 82.

ence, because it involves a reference to an extra-sensory item—the notion of the pure act of being.

What Gilson is talking about becomes clear, in my opinion, from a discussion in *The Elements of Christian Philosophy* (1960), which falls in the middle of the tail end of his remarks on the *De Ente* text. Back in my Introduction I quoted Gilson on the debate, even among Thomists, about whether the existence of a thing is a state or an act. He notes that Aquinas favored the “act view.” Nevertheless, he concedes: “No such disagreement would take place if the presence, in things themselves of an act in virtue of which they can be called ‘being’ were a conclusion susceptible of demonstration.” Gilson then offers this suggestion: “The impasse is an invitation to us to give up the philosophical way—from creatures to God—and try the theological way—from God to creatures. Thomas Aquinas may well have first conceived the notion of an act of being (*esse*) in connection with God and then, starting from God made use of it in his analysis of the metaphysical structure of composite substances.”<sup>31</sup>

How does a theological reference to God lead to the *actus* notion of a thing’s existence? Accepting the *Ego sum qui sum* revelation of Exodus III, 14, at its face value, Aquinas understands the text to say that God is pure *esse*. This conception of God produces an understanding of the existence of things as God’s proper effect. Gilson explains: “It is one and the same thing to conceive God as pure *Esse* and to conceive things, so far as they *are*, as including in their metaphysical structure a participated image of the pure Act of Being.”<sup>32</sup> In sum, the *De Ente* text is not a proof for God, because its argument for a First Cause that is a pure act of being presupposes an acquaintance with the act view of a thing’s existence. But that act view itself is tied up with a revealed understanding of God as *ipsum esse*. So because of its theological suppositions, the text is not a God proof. But if this is in fact what Gilson is saying, has he not thrown the baby out with the bath water? The price of “theologizing” the *De Ente* reasoning is to theologize the grasp of *actus essendi* in things. But *actus essendi* is the heart of the understanding of being that is the subject of Thomistic metaphysics. Hence, not just the *De Ente* text but the philosophical character of the whole of Thomistic metaphysics hangs in the balance.

<sup>31</sup> Gilson, *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 131.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

As a matter of fact, it is the impression of a number of Thomists that Gilson theologizes Thomistic metaphysics.<sup>33</sup> Yet surely it is not as simple as that. Concurrent with Gilson's remarks on the *De Ente* reasoning are his remarks on judgment as natural reason's access to *actus essendi*. In the sixth edition of *Le Thomisme* (1965), Gilson says, "These two distinct operations both see the real, but they do not penetrate it to the same depth: intellection attains the essence, which the definition formulates, judgment attains the very act of existing [*le jugement atteint l'acte même d'exister*]." <sup>34</sup> Judgment is an act of the human intellect, an intellect common to believer and unbeliever. Furthermore, in *Le Thomisme* Gilson squarely rests Aquinas' metaphysics upon the resources of judgment: "A metaphysics of being, insofar as being consignifies existence, does not signify existence unless it precisely uses the second operation of the understanding and employs all the resources of judgment. The feeling, so just in itself, that the universal concept of being is the contrary of an empty notion, finds justification here. Its richness consists, first, of all the judgments of existence it virtually comprises and connotes."<sup>35</sup> In this passage, Gilson is clearly not a theologizer of Thomistic metaphysics. The metaphysical viewpoint is set up thanks to the judgments that reveal various things in the light of their *esses*.

But it is unlikely that *Le Thomisme* signals a change of Gilson's mind from *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*. For the latter reiterates the same doctrine of judgment. "The second operation, which is the composition or division of concepts—that is, the judgment—attains the thing in its very act of being. . . . This conclusion, so

<sup>33</sup> These Thomists include Thomas C. O'Brien, John M. Quinn, and John Wippel. For their reasons, see my "Does Gilson Theologize Thomistic Metaphysics?" 3–6.

<sup>34</sup> Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, 184. Gilson insists that only judgment can attain *esse*: "[L]e jugement seul peut atteindre l'existence. . . . l'acte de juger peut seul atteindre le réel dans sa racine," 185. Incidentally, the last paragraph of p. 183 enables one to see that Gilson is unopposed to a conceptualizing of existence. Once existence is grasped by judgment, the intellect does go on to conceptualize this object. This is the entire point in Gilson's citing Aquinas' *habens esse* understanding of *ens*. What Gilson opposes is conceptualization as the original grasp of *esse*. Judgment is the original intellectual grasp. Vd. also "But surely to maintain that existence is originally grasped through judgment is a far cry from the stand that existence is not conceptualizable!" Joseph Owens, "The Range of Existence," *Proceedings of the Seventh Inter-American Congress of Philosophy* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1967), vol. 1, 55. For the claim that Gilson is opposed to all conceptualizing of existence, see Quinn, *The Thomism of Etienne Gilson*, 54–59.

<sup>35</sup> Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, 188.

firmly asserted by Thomas Aquinas, has often been overlooked or intentionally rejected by many among his successors. And no wonder, since it is tied up with the Thomistic notion of the composition of essence and the act of being in created substances.”<sup>36</sup> Gilson even insists that the judgmental grasp of *esse* is a “natural” operation of the human intellect.<sup>37</sup> It is very improbable that our purported theologizing text means to rule out a philosophical approach to Aquinas’ understanding of existence as *actus essendi*.

What, then, does our text mean? According to Joseph Owens, Gilson is surmising how revelation led Aquinas to a conception of existence that he then went on to elaborate in straight philosophical fashion.

The tenet that the being of a thing is originally grasped through judgment and not through conceptualization seems introduced in the theological method of St. Thomas as the necessary epistemological support for an already accepted notion of God. If such be the case, it is entirely possible that St. Thomas was led to his metaphysical starting point by meditating on a scriptural notion of God, interpreted against a Neoplatonic background. It may be the case, likewise, that to appreciate the philosophical force and understand the full metaphysical significance of this tenet, the easiest way—perhaps, one might insist, the psychologically indicated way—is to retrace the steps by which it emerged out of its original historic setting at a definite epoch of Christian theology. It also may be possible to take the stand that other thinkers have missed this apparently obvious starting point because they did not use the theological approach. But with all this stated and weighed, the simple fact remains that the tenet is presented by St. Thomas as something immediately observable. Not the slightest indication is given that it is meant as a conclusion from other premises, or that any religious authority is being appealed to for its acceptance.<sup>38</sup>

I find Owens’ interpretation quite plausible. Indeed, Gilson is speaking not of the only way to acknowledge *esse*. His professed intent is to explain how Aquinas “first” came by the notion. As he also re-

<sup>36</sup> Gilson, *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 232.

<sup>37</sup> “The human intellect thus reaches, even in its most natural operations, a layer of being more deeply seated than essences.” Gilson, *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 232.

<sup>38</sup> Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence*, 132. In a footnote, Owens’ quote refers to Gilson’s *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 131–33.

marks: "The problem under discussion now is: how did Thomas Aquinas achieve the awareness of the very possibility of this notion."<sup>39</sup>

It is no objection to Owens' interpretation to recall Gilson's above-cited claim: "No such disagreement would take place if the presence, in things themselves, of an act in virtue of which they can be called 'being' were a conclusion susceptible of demonstration." The pages previous to this remark show that the open-ended demonstration that Gilson has in mind is the Avicennian argumentation reiterated by Aquinas in his *De Ente et Essentia*. "Whatever does not belong to the notion of an essence or quiddity comes from without and enters into composition with the essence, for no essence is intelligible without its parts. Now, every essence or quiddity can be understood without anything being known of its existing. I can know what a man or a phoenix is and still be ignorant whether it exists in reality. From this it is clear that the act of existing is other than essence or quiddity."<sup>40</sup> Gilson's comment on this argument is that it fails to prove the distinction between essence and existence in concrete substances. Why? Gilson explains: "The argument proves only that, in a created universe, existence must come to essences from outside and, therefore, be superadded to them. Any metaphysics or theology that recognizes the notion of creation necessarily agrees on this point. All Christian theologies in particular expressly teach that no finite being is the cause of its own existence, but this does not imply that existence is created in the finite substance as a distinct 'act of being' (*esse*) added by God to its essence and composing the substance with it."<sup>41</sup>

In other words, the reasoning is open-ended because the word *existence* can be taken either in the *fact* sense or the Thomistic *act* sense. Consequently, the conclusion could mean either that the fact of existing is other than the essence, or that the act of existing is other than the essence. Instead of demonstrating the Thomistic sense of existence, the reasoning presupposes it. Used as an approach to Thomistic *esse*, it understandably leads to the stalemate that Gilson describes a few pages later in our purported theologizing text.

In sum, Gilson's insistence that the Thomistic notion of *esse* is not susceptible to demonstration concerns the above Avicennian-Tho-

<sup>39</sup> Gilson, *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 131.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted by Gilson, *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 127.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

mistic text. That seems to be all Gilson is talking about. He is not making any absolute claim, specifically, that *actus essendi* is philosophically unknowable. Rather, Gilson's words leave the way open for the presentation of judgment as the original philosophical apprehension of *esse*.

So, if one accepts Owens' interpretation of Gilson, and I see no reason not to, in Exodus III, 14, the Christian philosopher has a theological prompt to regard the existence of a thing as a distinct act of the thing, all of which the Christian philosopher can philosophically elaborate *via* the *secunda operatio intellectus*. Now since the *De Ente* text employs *esse* in the *actus essendi* sense, then the text should be philosophically working out the implications of judgmentally grasped *esse*. Gilson's disavowal of the text as a metaphysical proof of God would not be *de jure*, or in principle. Given Gilson's remarks on natural reason's access to *actus essendi*, Gilson could not be saying that. Rather, the root of Gilson's disavowal lies in his exaggerated view of Exodus III, 14 as a psychological prerequisite for interpreting a thing's existence as a unique act of the thing. Gilson is perfectly within his rights to weigh the theological prompt so heavily. As I think is evident from my last chapter, setting up judgment so that it *respicit esse rei* requires some finesse. After all, Aristotle was cognizant of the *duplex operatio intellectus* but was incognizant of *esse*. Hence Gilson is also perfectly within his rights to let his weighing impact on his understanding of the *De Ente* text.

Understood as a psychological prerequisite for metaphysics, theology is still a requirement. And the required psychological reference to theology could lead one, as it did Gilson, to say that the essence-existence distinction is not given in sensation "even in a wide sense." Consequently, the distinction could not be used in a Thomistic *via*. Weighing so heavily the psychological reference to theology could also lead one to say, "Now, to the best of our knowledge, Thomas Aquinas has never attempted [a metaphysical] demonstration. Nor does one see how it could be done."<sup>42</sup> The same would make sense of this statement: "Le *De ente et essentia* ne contient aucune preuve de l'existence de Dieu."<sup>43</sup>

Gilson is within his rights to interpret Aquinas in the same fashion.

<sup>42</sup> Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 82.

<sup>43</sup> Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, 97, n. 85.

Hence for Gilson, Aquinas could have felt that his work in theology never permitted him to present the philosophical case for *esse*. Because of commitments to theological tasks, Aquinas left the philosophical elaboration of the judgmental grasp of *esse* in abeyance. That omission would render the *De Ente* text inconclusive, practically speaking. The lack of conclusive standing would also explain Gilson's observations of the text's absence in Thomistic contexts devoted to proving God.

Yet others can feel free to disagree. Psychological requirements can become unnecessary. The detective who solves a case on the basis of a hunch ends up with a body of evidence that has a life of its own, so that in court the evidence will convince others who never shared the hunch of the detective. Why cannot this dynamic also be true of the development of Aquinas' metaphysical ideas? The burden will be to see if judgment's grasp of *actus essendi* can be provided sufficient philosophical luster to so stand on its own that even those philosophers of goodwill but who do not share the theological prompt can be made to understand the thesis. Because of what I said in Chapter 6, I am obviously of this opinion, and I also am of the opinion that such was Aquinas' mind.

##### 5. ARMAND MAURER AND THE *DE ENTE* PROOF

That last remark brings me into confrontation with Gilson's opening observations on the *De Ente* text. First, the text and its parallel passages never occur in a context of proving God's existence. It is difficult to understand why Gilson found this observation so persuasive, since in *Elements* Gilson himself admits that utilization of proofs for God in varied contexts is not foreign to the works of Aquinas.<sup>44</sup> Hence, absent the use of other reasons, Gilson's first observation is interesting but indecisive. Second, Gilson notes that when Aquinas *ex professo* sets out to prove God, he never includes the *De Ente*

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<sup>44</sup> "Lastly, what serves as proof of the existence of God in one of Aquinas' works can very well become a proof of one of His attributes in another one. To quote only one striking instance, the admirable Disputed Question *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, establishes that there can be nothing that is not created by God. Obviously, to prove such a conclusion is tantamount to proving that there is a God." Gilson, *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 56.

reasoning. Yet, again absent other reasons, the possibility remains that the *De Ente* thinking is present implicitly in the *viae*.

I have noted elsewhere that the *viae* are open to interpretation by the *De Ente* text.<sup>45</sup> Nothing in the wording of the *viae* excludes the *De Ente* reasoning. Further, as I have noted, Aquinas has definite views about where and when the philosopher proves God. The philosopher does this in metaphysics. Also, Aquinas has definite views about metaphysics. It is a *scientia* with an intelligible subject matter containing causal implications. The key note in Aquinas' understanding of the subject matter is *esse*. Should not Aquinas' views on how and where God falls in philosophy have some bearing on how to understand Aquinas' God proofs? Is it plausible to think that when Aquinas sets out to show how natural reason proves God, he sets aside these other positions? I do not think so. And so not only can the reader of Aquinas interpret the *viae* according to the *De Ente* text, but the reader ought to do so.<sup>46</sup>

Gilson's opening observations should not have so troubled him that he was compelled to somehow construe the *De Ente* reasoning as nonprobative, at least practically speaking. In sum, my interpretation of Gilson on the *De Ente* is that since *esse* is naturally grasped through judgment, then the reasoning is essentially philosophical. Yet since the existential interpretation of judgment is psychologically so heavily dependent upon a theological prompt, an understandable reservation exists about the probity of the argument with unbelievers. That background explains Aquinas' apparent reluctance to give the *De Ente* reasoning as a God proof and to offer it when he is giving God proofs.

If I understand him, Armand Maurer, well-known protégé of Gilson, sees Gilson's position more starkly. Throughout the various editions of his translation of the *De Ente*, Maurer continues Gilson's opinion that the *De Ente* text is not a God proof. Maurer reiterates the reasons of Gilson that I have already considered. Unfortunately,

<sup>45</sup> Vd. my *Preface to Thomistic Metaphysics*, chap. 7.

<sup>46</sup> On metaphysics as the division that proves God, vd. my "Thomistic Existentialism and the Proofs," 591–605. For the thesis that in Aquinas' mind, the *De Ente* reasoning is not so implicit in the *quinque viae* as to contradict his expressed intention to avoid confusion in the "beginners in theology [*incipientes*]," see also my "Thomistic Existentialism and the Silence of the *Quinque Viae*," *The Modern Schoolman* 63 (1986): 157–77.

Maurer makes no mention of Gilson's insistence that judgment is natural reason's access to *actus essendi*. That omission leaves the reader with the definite impression that Gilson has theologized not only the *De Ente* text but also Thomistic metaphysics. The Exodus III, 14, revelation is the logical, rather than the psychological, *sine qua non* of Thomistic philosophy. As Maurer tells the tale, minus the judgmental grasp of *esse*, the reader is genuinely at a loss regarding the philosophical development of Aquinas' metaphysics.

Recently Maurer has further elaborated his interpretation of Gilson's rejection of the *De Ente* text.<sup>47</sup> Maurer notes that Gilson labels the proofs of the essence–*actus essendi* distinction “dialectical.” Gilson's remarks occur in his *Introduction à la philosophie chrétienne* (1960). By “dialectical” Gilson appears to mean: to begin with “nominal definitions.”<sup>48</sup> This short book is significant for its relentless consideration of *actus essendi*, and Maurer has my esteem for making it available to English-speaking readers. The work does not mention judgment. But the book does occur between other works by Gilson that do continue to mention judgment and its grasp of *actus essendi*. In fact, in his introduction translator Maurer mentions that *Christian Philosophy* is “*Elements* in tabloids.”<sup>49</sup>

It is true that Gilson asks how Aquinas justifies the essence–*actus essendi* distinction and answers his questions with “No reply is forthcoming.”<sup>50</sup> But it is plain here that the issue is one of providing a demonstration or proof. Just as the phoenix argument is not a proof because *esse* could be taken either as fact or act, other “arguments” are affected by a similar ambiguity. To dispel that ambiguity in Aquinas' texts, the notion of pure being (*ipsum purum esse*) must be taken for granted and this is “only because, for the theologian, it is the proper name of God. To think pure *esse* is to think God.”<sup>51</sup> We have already heard Gilson make this point in *Elements*, in which, I would

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<sup>47</sup> Armand Maurer, “Dialectic in the *De Ente et Essentia* of St. Thomas Aquinas,” in J. Hamesse, ed., *Mélanges offerts au Père L. E. Boyle à l'occasion de son 75e anniversaire* (Louvain-le-Neuve: Fidem Publications, 1998), 573–83.

<sup>48</sup> “The facility enjoyed by the dialectician is his greatest danger. It is always possible to begin with nominal definitions of being, substance, and cause in order to deduce their consequences with the help of the first principle.” Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 68.

<sup>49</sup> Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, xi.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

remind my reader, he affirms natural reason's access to *esse* through judgment. Hence, in my opinion, when Gilson calls the reasoning "dialectical," he is not meaning to preempt the essentially philosophical character of the reasoning. The reasoning is essentially philosophical because it relies on the resources of judgment. But it is in fact dialectical, because the judgmental grasp of *esse* relies so heavily on a theological prompt. Absent that prompt, Aquinas' definition of *esse* as *actus essendi* would strike a philosopher as a "nominal" definition.

But Maurer presents Gilson as understanding the phoenix argument to be dialectical *essentially*. If I understand Maurer, he gives three reasons for this claim. First: "Thomas's purpose in explaining what the terms being and essence mean, how they are found in the different orders of things, and how they are related to logical notions, can be achieved without considering beings in their real existence. The reasoning to the distinction between essence and existence and to the existence of God can be understood as dialectical, subserving the stated purpose of the treatise."<sup>52</sup> For Maurer, Aquinas' *De Ente* describes just mental landscape. It describes how the notions of being and essence break down in the mind. But since the mental breakdown could be different from the real breakdown, everything is dialectical, or provisional. Aquinas could not be making claims to know with certainty the truth of things.

Second, turning to the phoenix argument, Maurer remarks:

The reasoning in chapter 4 is likewise dialectical, beginning with the premise: "Now every essence or quiddity can be understood without knowing anything about its existence." This is derived from the Aristotelian logical dictum that knowing what a thing is is different from knowing that it is; that the answer to the question what a thing is differs from the answer to the question that it is. On this logical dictum depends Thomas's whole argumentation for the distinction between essence and existence in creatures and for the existence of God as pure *esse*; and it ensures that the whole argument is dialectical.<sup>53</sup>

In other words, again, just because the mind asks particular questions is no guarantee that there is a corresponding distinction in reality. Third, jumping to chapter 5, Maurer cites a text that he claims presents a dialectical argument for the distinction between essence and

<sup>52</sup> Maurer, "Dialectic in the *De Ente*," 581.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 582–83.

existence. Here is Maurer's translation of the text: "Everything in a genus must have a quiddity that is other than existence. This is because the quiddity or nature of a genus or species does not differ, as regards the notion of the nature, in the individuals in the genus or species, whereas different individuals have difference [*sic*] existences."<sup>54</sup> Maurer's comment is: "The argument is dialectical, for it is based on the logical notions of genus and species—a common source of dialectical reasoning."<sup>55</sup>

None of these reasons withstand scrutiny. First, by the very first words of the introduction, a reader knows that Aquinas' purpose is more than just explaining the meaning of terms. His opening remark that a small error in the beginning is a large one in the end makes clear that Aquinas is preoccupied with truth. Any subsequent descriptions of meanings must be taken as descriptions of *true* meanings. Moreover, in his *Sentences* commentary Aquinas is already on record with a definite idea of truth. Truth is the adequation of the intellect to the thing. More particularly, truth is achieved by the intellect conforming itself to the *esse* of the thing, and so lies in the intellect's second operation.<sup>56</sup> Hence, with the maintaining of the intellect in truth as Aquinas' purpose in the *De Ente*, I would not say, as Maurer was quoted above in his first reason, that Aquinas could achieve his purpose "without considering things in their real existence."

Also, dialectical reasoning begins from only probable premises. This is because the dialectician deals with beings of reason that are extrinsic to reality.<sup>57</sup> In contrast, the philosopher deals with things and his demonstrations achieve certitude. How then could Aquinas be expressly intending to avoid even a slight initial error and also be proceeding dialectically? Initiating the *De Ente* with something only probably true does not accord with the author's purpose of avoiding a slight error so as to avoid a larger one in the end.

What of Maurer's second observation that the phoenix argument

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 582, n. 26.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 583.

<sup>56</sup> For Aquinas' truth texts in his commentary on Lombard's *Sentences*, see my "Transcendental Thomism and *De Veritate* 1, 9," 229–50.

<sup>57</sup> "But the dialectician proceeds to consider [the common accidents of real being] from the conceptions of reason, which are extrinsic to reality [*extranea a natura rerum*]." Aquinas, *In IV Meta.*, *lectio* 4, n. 574; trans. Rowan, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, 212.

is based on the logical dictum that knowing what a thing is is different from knowing that it is, “thus ensuring that the whole argument is dialectical”? Maurer’s observation comes too fast. Before flying to the logical works, should not one first try to interpret the remark that one can know what a phoenix is and not know that a phoenix exists within its own context of the *De Ente*? I think such a move is only fair. When a reader does study the remark’s larger context, the reader is brought back to the intellect’s absolute consideration of essence that *abstrahit ad quodlibet esse*. Such a consideration initially takes in not only the nature’s *esse in anima*, but also the nature’s *esse in singularibus*. Further, as abstracting from all *esse*, the absolutely considered nature is not yet even an *ens rationis*, or a second intention. Hence neither in its beginning nor in its end is absolute consideration dialectical. Rather, the intellect’s apprehension of the cold, hard facts drives the implications. In my opinion, within the ambit of the *De Ente*, the phoenix argument makes no appeal to what may be only the idiosyncratic questioning of the mind. Rather, it makes better interpretive sense to regard the argument as appealing to the previous delineation of absolute consideration with its presumption of Aquinas’ realist epistemology.

Finally, is Maurer’s cited text from *De Ente*, Ch. 5, “based on the logical notions of genus and species—a common source of dialectical reasoning”? A rereading of the text as cited above by Maurer fails to confirm a basis in logic. The given reason for the assertion of the first line is that “the quiddity or nature of a genus or species does not differ, as regards the notion of the nature.” In other words, the basis is not logical intentions, specifically, the genus as genus or a species as species. By mentioning “the nature of a genus” Aquinas is not talking about what a genus is. Rather, he is referring to the absolutely considered nature that when given an *esse in anima* can be either a genus or a species. This “notion of the nature” is what is the same in individuals that are in the genus or species. Aquinas’ description of absolute consideration of a nature has the nature existing not only in the soul but also *in singularibus*. Though Maurer’s cited text is talking about something in logic, specifically, things in a genus or species, the text is not speaking about these things based on “logical” terms.

## 6. THE METAPHYSICIAN’S “THINKING” OF *ESSE SUBSISTENS*

So Aquinas asserts that God is simple and subsisting *esse*. But Aquinas’ thinking about God is more than assertions. He attempts to craft

a mental representation of the meaning of the assertions. The ability to “think” the metaphysical conclusion of subsistent existence guarantees concepts sufficiently analogous to reason from creatures to creator. Absent that ability, the metaphysician is like someone who tries to reason about Koufax simply from familiarity with *great baseball player* in the great hitters of Williams and DiMaggio. In this case, the data are still too impoverished to release the analogon. It is still too tied up with great hitting. Hence reasoning on the basis of this appreciation of the analogon results in error. For example, having been told that Koufax is a great player, one would conclude that in some different way Koufax is a great hitter also. Koufax, however, does not hit at all. Koufax is great *qua* pitcher. This shortcoming in analogous reasoning can be eliminated by increasing the data pool with great players that are not hitters. One might introduce Mays as a great outfielder. Along with Williams and DiMaggio, the presentation of Mays would lead the mind to a less inclusive, hence more accurate understanding of *great baseball player*. Rather than being defined in terms of hitting, the analogon would be defined in terms of skills, for example, visual acuity, limberness, quickness of good judgment, that are realized in the differences of hitting, fielding, and so on. Hence, knowledge of Koufax as great would produce only the conclusion that he instantiates these skills in another still different way.

The trouble with reasoning on the basis of creatures is that they give us the nature of *esse* in only one way, as a concept or an *abstractum*. The end of my Chapter 6 saw Aquinas presenting the *perfectio essendi* or *esse commune* or *esse formale* that way. Hence, just as a great player as discerned in great hitters is insufficiently analogous to conclude that Koufax is anything more than a hitter, so too *ipsum esse* picked out in creatures is insufficiently analogous to conclude that something that is *ipsum esse* is more than a concept. One needs to break the identity and to realize that a concept is just one difference in which *ipsum esse* is found. How does one do that? It does no good to say that after proving *esse subsistens*, we can say that *esse* is more than a concept, that *esse* is also a reality. If one cannot picture the meaning, one will be making just noise. Note that *great player* was released from the mode of *hitter* when Williams and Mays were juxtaposed to Koufax. Something similar is required for freeing *ipsum esse* from *esse commune*.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This inability to “picture” the conclusion of Aquinas’ proof appears to be at the

A “picturing” of *esse subsistens* is anathema to many Thomists.<sup>59</sup> They cite Aquinas’ oft-made remark that “our intellect regards [God and angels] as the eye of an owl does the light of the sun.”<sup>60</sup> Later he emphasizes that “in the present life it is absolutely impossible to know the essence of immaterial substances, not only by natural knowledge but also by revelation.”<sup>61</sup> Hence Aquinas restricts our intellect to knowing that God is and denies us a knowledge of what God is. Yet other Thomists disagree. To Aquinas’ comment that to us God’s nature is wholly unknown (*penitus ignotum*), Maritain remarks: “To render . . . ‘de Deo quid sit penitus manet ignotum’ (*Cont. Gent.*, lib. III, c. 49) by translating ‘We do not know God in any way, in any thing, in any degree,’ is to expose the reader to serious misconceptions.”<sup>62</sup>

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root of Dorothy Mary Emmet’s objections to the *analogia entis*. She remarks: “[O]ur difficulty remains in principle that of taking any definition of cause which is drawn from a relation between intramundane events, and extending it to the world as a whole.” Dorothy Mary Emmet, *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking* (London: Macmillan, 1946), 181, n. 1. Likewise, Frederick Ferré admits that analogically calling God a “cause” “depends upon bridging the prima facie logical gulf between finite, conditioned, and contingent relations of cause and effect—however they are analyzed—and the wholly unique links of ‘creation from nothing’ and of ‘unconditioned and necessary’ ontological support alleged to hold between God and everything else.” Frederick Ferré, “Analogy in Theology,” in Paul Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), vol. 1, 96.

<sup>59</sup> “To say that *quid est Deus* is something *omnino ignotum* for man in this life, is to affirm that all knowledge, perfect or imperfect, of the essence of God is radically inaccessible here below. To every interpretation of St. Thomas to the contrary, the deservedly famous text of the *Contra Gentiles* presents an insuperable obstacle: ‘We cannot grasp what God is, but what He is not, and the relation other things have with Him.’” Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 107. Focusing upon C.G. III, 49, para. 9, Anton Pegis says, “Now the purpose of the present paragraph is to characterize the most perfect knowledge of God that we have in this life, and the point is precisely that we do not know what this eminent and transcendent God is. Hence the further point about Moses is not his ignorance of any sublime knowledge, but the sublimity of the ignorance itself.” Anton Pegis, “Penitus Manet Ignotum,” *Mediaeval Studies* 27 (1965), n. 3. “Accordingly the divine *existence*, though a quiddity, remains utterly unknown to the human intellect in quidditative terms. Solely in terms of existential act, as a conclusion from the existential act attained in sensible thing through judgment, is it reached by the human intellect. Correspondingly, the divine essence is utterly unknown in its own manner, that is, in the manner of essence.” Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 353. Also, from Owens’ “Aquinas: ‘Darkness of Ignorance’ in the Most Refined Notion of God,” *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 5 (1974): 93–110.

<sup>60</sup> Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 3c; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 44.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>62</sup> Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 425.

Likewise, John Wippel insists that Aquinas is denying simply a knowledge of the divine essence in itself: “[O]ne should define quidditative knowledge or knowledge of what God is very strictly, even as Thomas himself has done. He has made it clear, for instance, in the *De Potentia* and in the First Part of the *Summa Theologiae*, that when he agrees with John Damascene that we cannot know what God is, what he is thereby excluding is comprehensive and defining knowledge of God.”<sup>63</sup> In a work that reiterates that we know only that God is and not what God is, Maritain and Wippel spotlight ameliorating passages. In the *De Trinitate* commentary, Aquinas insists that “we cannot know *that* a thing is without knowing in some way what it is either perfectly or at least confusedly [*cognitio confusa*].” Hence, “we cannot know that God and other immaterial substances exist unless we know somehow, in some confused way [*sub quadam confusione*], what they are.”<sup>64</sup> Evidently, the analogy of the human intellect to the eye of the owl means to deny a perfect knowledge of what God or a separate substance is. Room exists for a confused knowledge. Finally, one could add Aquinas’ remark that the beatitude that we naturally desire provides a general and confused knowledge of God and a certain likeness of the divine goodness.<sup>65</sup>

The *De Trinitate* commentary goes on to explain that this *cognitio confusa* is attained “by negations; for example by understanding that they are immaterial, incorporeal, without shapes, and so on.”<sup>66</sup> Earlier, negating is identified with separating: “Nevertheless, we reach a knowledge of [God and separate substances] . . . by way of negation (as when we separate from such beings whatever sense or imagination apprehends).”<sup>67</sup> Finally, separation is explained as another capacity of the intellect’s second act.<sup>68</sup> Not only can the second act compose, as I

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<sup>63</sup> John Wippel, “Quidditative Knowledge of God According to Thomas Aquinas,” in Lloyd P. Gerson, ed., *Graceful Reason: Essays Presented to Joseph Owens* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983), 298.

<sup>64</sup> Aquinas, *In de Trin.*, VI, 3c; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 76–77.

<sup>65</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 2, nn. 44 and 45.

<sup>66</sup> Aquinas, *In de Trin.* VI, 3c; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 78.

<sup>67</sup> Aquinas, *In de Trin.* VI, 2c; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 70.

<sup>68</sup> “[A]nd another [intellectual operation] by which it joins and divides, that is to say, by forming affirmative and negative statements.” Aquinas, *In de Trin.* V, 3c; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 28.

explained in Chapter 6, but it can divide or separate in the sense of negating.

Aquinas' words in the *In de Trinitate* raise two questions that I believe he answers by drawing upon the *ratio entis* fundamentally understood as *habens esse*. If I am correct, one will observe Aquinas continuing to philosophize relentlessly in terms of being. First, what is the subject upon which the negating is exercised? Second, how does the negating result in a *cognitio confusa* of the divine essence? The answer to the first question is crucial, and the *De Trinitate* commentary is none too helpful. Yet in an earlier parallel passage, Aquinas makes a revealing comment. He is replying to an objection that we can have no knowledge of God, since knowledge of anything proceeds through a knowledge of its essence, and we do not know what God is. Here is Aquinas' reply: "When something is not known through its form but through its effect, the form of the effect takes the place of the form of the thing itself, for from the effect itself it is known that the cause exists."<sup>69</sup>

As I have explained in this chapter, the Thomistic effect by which the human intellect reaches God is the judgmentally grasped *esse* of a sensible thing. But Aquinas does more than judge this *esse*. Along with all other instances of it, he conceptualizes it. He intellects something the same in the existential data and folds the result into his understanding of the *ratio entis*. In Chapter 6 I noted that Aquinas calls this object of conceptualization *esse commune*, *esse formale*, and the *perfectio essendi*. It appears, then, that Aquinas is using what he knows of the nature of *esse* from its judgmentally grasped instances to think God as *esse subsistens*. This conclusion places the *ratio entis*, fundamentally described as *habens esse*, as the matter upon which the operation of negating comes to bear. By negating the non-*esse* features of this analogon, the human intellect would craft a representation of *esse subsistens*. Again, Aquinas insists: "The form of the effect takes the place of the form of the thing itself."

Interestingly in the chapter following the *De Ente* proof, Aquinas

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<sup>69</sup> Aquinas, *In de Trin.* I, 2, ad 5m; trans. Armand Maurer, *Faith, Reason, and Theology: Questions I–IV of the Commentary on Boethius' De Trinitate* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987), 24. Cf. "Every effect of God is analogous to its cause. The concept which we form of this effect cannot at all be transformed for us into the concept of God which we lack." Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 108.

takes pains to distinguish *esse subsistens* from “that universal being by which everything formally exists.” The divine being prescind from addition, but *esse commune* does not. At the end of Chapter 6, I described how *esse commune* suffers addition. My present point is that Aquinas’ immediate need to differentiate the two indicates some *prima facie* similarity. Apparently, if the capacity to suffer addition could be removed from *esse commune*, Aquinas would use it to think *esse subsistens*. In fact, in the chapter Aquinas goes on to argue God’s absolute perfection in virtue of God’s being pure *esse*. Evidently Aquinas sees enough of *esse* as such to make this conclusion. Does this not suggest that for all of its non-identity with *esse subsistens*, *esse commune* is playing some role in thinking about God?

That suspicion is confirmed by the analysis of an argument for God’s perfection at *S.T.* I, 4, 2c. “Since therefore God is subsisting being [*esse subsistens*], nothing of the perfection of being [*de perfectione essendi*] can be wanting to Him. Now all perfections of all things pertain to the perfection of being [*Omnium perfectiones pertinent ad perfectionem essendi*]; for things are perfect precisely so far as they have being [*esse*] after some fashion [*aliquo modo*].”<sup>70</sup> We know something about the perfection of God, understood as *esse subsistens*, because we know something about the perfection of *esse*, the *perfectio essendi*. What do we know about the latter? We know that its perfection is total, for perfection is in things only insofar as they have *esse* after some fashion. Our look at the judgmental grasp of *esse* underwrites this remark. Without *esse* there is no perfection in things, because there are no things. Before composition with *esse*, things are of themselves existence-neutral. They exist in no way at all. The *perfectio essendi* or *esse* appears to be a summary viewpoint on a multiplicity of individual *actus essendi*. Presumably presented to the intellect by various acts of judgment, the *esses* manifest a sameness to the intellect’s conceptual capacity. This sameness is what the text is calling the *perfectio essendi*. Individual *esses* are the *perfectio essendi* after some fashion (*aliquo modo*). Through the mediacy of individual *esses* realizing various perfections, the intellect reduces all perfection into the *perfectio essendi*.

As I mentioned, Aquinas has a doctrine of *esse commune*. He describes *esse commune* as an abstraction, a product of the workings of the human intellect. At *C.G.* I, 22, he says:

<sup>70</sup> Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 4, 2c; from Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 39.

[T]hat which is common to many is not outside the many except by the reason alone. Thus, *animal* is not something outside Socrates and Plato and the other animals except in the intellect that apprehends the form of animal stripped of all its individuating and specifying characteristics. For man is that which truly is animal; otherwise, it would follow that in Socrates and Plato there are several animals, namely *common animal* itself, *common man* and *Plato* himself. Much less, then, is common being [*esse commune*] itself something outside all existing things, save only for being in the intellect.<sup>71</sup>

Is *esse commune* the same as the *perfectio essendi*? Aquinas talks as if they are the same. At *De Pot.* 7, 2, ad 6m, written just before the *prima pars*, Aquinas again mentions *esse commune*.<sup>72</sup> He distinguishes *esse commune* from the divine *esse*. *Esse commune* does not preclude addition, while the divine *esse* does. The mention of addition is a reference to the article's *responsio*. The *responsio* explains how *esse* suffers addition. The important point now is that in the *responsio*, Aquinas defines *esse* as the actuality of all acts and the perfection of all perfections [*actualitas omnium actuum, perfectio omnium perfectionum*]. This terminology connects with the terminology about *perfectio essendi*. The *perfectio essendi* is, then, the same notion as *esse commune*. Hence, the *perfectio essendi* is accurately interpreted as an object of the intellect's conceptualizing capacity.

Returning to *S.T.* I, 4, 2c, since individual *esses* that make various things more than nothing are intelligibly taken up into the *perfectio essendi*, then the latter has an all-encompassing intelligible wealth and plenitude. All perfections are present in it. In other words, since any thing with its perfections needs an *esse* to be real, but any *esse* is the *perfectio essendi aliquo modo*, then the mind discerns an intelligible flow of all perfections back into the *perfectio essendi*. Aquinas concludes his argument by transferring the intelligible wealth and plenitude of the *perfectio essendi* to God. Since God is *esse subsistens*, the transfer is legitimate. So by using what he knows of *esse commune* to think the divine perfection, Aquinas reveals the subject upon which bears the negating capacity of the second intellectual operation. As mentioned, in the *De Trinitate* commentary negation

<sup>71</sup> Pegis, trans., *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 1, 129–30.

<sup>72</sup> “[S]ed *esse* divinum est *esse* cui non fit additio, et de eius ratione est ut ei additio fieri non possit; unde divinum *esse* non est *esse commune*.” Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, ed. Spiazzi, vol. 2, 192.

is crucial for our thinking about God. Aquinas will be thinking about God through *esse commune* insofar as negation has been brought to bear upon it. How is the negation exercised?

*Esse commune* is the key portion of the *ratio entis*. The texts reflect this assertion when they reveal Aquinas going so easily from what he knows of the *ratio entis* to what he knows of *esse commune*. Philosophically, those texts makes sense. *Esse commune* is not initially grasped separately. It is a summary viewpoint on individual *esses* grasped by various acts of judgment. But in a judgment individual *esse* is always grasped as actuating some thing. Though *esse* is distinctly grasped in judgment, *esse* is not the sole and total object of judgment. The object of judgment is something-actuated-by-its-*esse*. A series of judgments will produce a multiplicity of composites. The parts of these composites will be various things and their *esses*. When *esse commune* is grasped from this multiplicity, it will be grasped as a part of a larger commonality. This commonality Aquinas calls *ens*. Its meaning is *habens esse*. A haver of *esse* is the commonality that the intellect perceives from a judgmentally constituted multiplicity.

So negation would be wielded upon the *ratio entis*. What would be negated are the non-*esse* factors. This exercise of negation would leave the intellect looking just at the analogon of *esse*. It is this suitably modified notion of *actus essendi* that would stand as Aquinas' representation of the divine nature, understood as *esse subsistens*. Important to understand is that the negating would separate in the sense of blotting out or covering over. The negating separates out *esse* as such by covering over the non-*esse* factors in the *ratio entis*. The negating would not separate by erasing or eliminating these factors. The *esse* we are talking about is judgmentally grasped *esse*. That *esse* is presented as the act of a thing. Hence, to erase the thing would be to erase the *esse*. The best the negating can achieve is a separation in the sense of a blotting out of the non-*esse* factors.

This play of negating permits one to understand how the capacity for addition is precluded from *esse commune*. The capacity for addition was a crucial observation leading Aquinas to distinguish *esse commune* from *esse subsistens*. *Esse* is determined to its instances as act is determined by potency. What does this mean? *Esse commune* admits of addition into this or that *esse* insofar as it is the act of a *habens* that can be specified as this or that nature. To remove the capacity to suffer addition, one must remove *esse commune* from the

*habens* dimension with which it is joined in the notion of *ens*. This removal would be effected by the intellect's second operation in its negating capacity. By occluding the *habens* portion of the *ratio entis*, one prohibits a reference to that by which *esse* would be specified into the *esse* of this or of that. Hence when Aquinas denies that *esse subsistens* is *esse commune*, he is thinking of *esse commune* as it is still part of *ens*. On the other hand, when he thinks *esse subsistens* through *esse commune*, as he does at *S.T.* I, 4, 2c, Aquinas is thinking of *esse commune* as negatively separated from the notion of *ens*.

Finally, the play of negation also "removes" from *esse commune* its abstractive status. As I recorded in Chapter 2, to be taken from data is characteristic of an abstraction. Hence, to remove the abstractive status from an object, the data must in some sense be removed while the object remains. Negation performs this apparently oxymoronic transformation for *esse commune*. By blotting out the non-*esse* portions of the *ratio entis*, the mind's negating capacity removes from *esse commune* its capacity for addition in individual *esses*. In a sense, the *esses* are dumbed down. This situation in which the data are in a sense removed should allow *ipsum esse* to stand forth now less as an *abstractum* and more as a thing itself. The play of negation allows *ipsum esse* to remain an object without the appearance of an abstraction. This result is simultaneous with the above-described removal of addition from our contemplation of *esse commune*.

## 7. ANALOGY AND *COGNITIO CONFUSA*

The second question was: How does the negating result in a *cognitio confusa* of the divine essence? One sees the answer if one appreciates *esse commune* as an analogous notion. First of all, *esse commune* is analogous. *Esse commune* is the key dimension of the *ratio entis*, and the latter is an analogous commonality. This location means that *esse commune* is itself analogous. Also, *De Pot.* 7, 2c, describes the differentiation of an analogous commonality into its analogates. For what else could it be? If *esse* does not itself provide its instances, then one returns to differentiation through something extrinsic. Such differentiation is absurd for *esse*. Hence *esse* provides its own differences and should be a sameness within difference—an analogous commonality. Furthermore, at *De Ver.* 1, 1c, Aquinas explains that the concept of

*ens* is not differentiated into its special modes of substance and accident by the addition of something extrinsic. But elsewhere he affirms that as *ens* spans substance and accident, it is an analogical commonality.<sup>73</sup> Hence the mention of differentiation of act through potency is Aquinas' way of expressing an analogical commonality in the context of *De Pot.* 7, 2c.

Now, it is easy to understand why our knowledge of the divine nature, *esse subsistens*, is a *cognitio confusa*. Because an analogon is a sameness grasped in the differences of its instances, it is dimly perceived. The imperfect and confused knowledge of God at *In de Trin.* VI, 3c, makes sense when one realizes that Aquinas is representing what God is by *esse commune*. The imperfect and confused knowledge is a case of the imperfection and confusion found in analogical conceptualization. As separated from the *ratio entis* by the blotting effect of negation, *esse* is still a dimly perceived analogon in various *esses*. Negative separation still provides only a confused knowledge of God. The intellectual temptation is to force the analogon apart from its instances. But the attempt is self-defeating. Gerald Phelan classically expresses the problem: "Those who, in spite of all, have tried to look upon being naked and unadorned have been struck by intellectual blindness. And those who have attempted to express it in clear and distinct ideas have sinned against the intelligence."<sup>74</sup> Since an analogon is a sameness in difference, the differ-

<sup>73</sup> "Yet the community of analogy is able to be twofold. Either because others participate something one according to prior and subsequent, just as potency and act participate in the notion of being [*rationem entis*], and similarly substance and accident. . ." Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, prol. q. 1, a. 2, ad 2m. "[J]ust as being [*ens*] is said concerning substance and accident; and concerning such things it is necessary that the common nature [*natura communis*] have some being [*esse*] in each of these things concerning which it is said, but differing according to the notion of more or less perfection." Aquinas, *In I Sent.* d. 19, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1m. "In another way, the analogy can obtain according as the order or reference of two things is not to something else but to one of them. Thus, being [*ens*] is said of substance and accident." Aquinas, *C.G.* I, 34, *Alio*; trans. Pegis, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 1, 147.

<sup>74</sup> Phelan, "St. Thomas and Analogy," 100. Cf., "Ad ultimum autem etiam hoc ipsum esse, secundum quod est in creaturis, ab ipso removemus; et tunc remanet in quadam tenebra ignorantiae, secundum quam ignorantiam, quantum ad statum viae pertinet, optime Deo jungimur, ut dicit Dionysius, et haec etsi quaedam caligo, in qua Deus habitare dicitur." Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, d. 8, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4m; Mandonnet, ed., *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 1, 196–97. My approach to this *ignorantia* and *caligo* differs from that of Joseph Owens. In his "Aquinas: 'Darkness of Ignorance,'" 107, Owens remarks that at the above last (*ultimum*) stage, "even the synthesizing type of being is removed from the notion 'he who is.'" In other words,

ences carry the sameness. To attempt to go beyond the differences amounts to losing the analogon.

Our thinking of the divine quiddity through the analogous notion of *esse commune* is not a completely satisfying experience. It contains all the shortcomings that accompany analogical conception. Yet it explains Aquinas' references to a knowledge of God that is confused and imperfect.

## 8. ANALOGOUS MIDDLE TERMS IN TALK ABOUT GOD

Negation is the way Aquinas rids metaphysical language about God of debilitating modes of signification. Given that our language expresses thoughts formed by reality as encountered in sensible experience, language signifies what exists as if it were something composite, and it signifies something simple as that by which something exists.<sup>75</sup> Condemned to operate with these ways of signifying, our language about

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our subject of negation is *ens*, and the *esse* component is negated. Owens (p. 96) rests his interpretation on Aquinas' reply to the third objection: "[E]sse creaturae imperfecte repraesentet divinum esse, et hoc nomen 'qui est' imperfecte significat ipsum, quia significat per modum cuiusdam concretionis et compositionis." *Qui est* imperfectly signifies the divine *esse* because it signifies through created *esse*, which consists in a composition and a concretion. But this text is open to Aquinas' understanding of how *esse* is limited in and through the various things *esse* actuates (Vd. C.G. I, 28, *Omnis* and *De Pot.* 7, 2c.). In that case, created *esse* would imperfectly represent the divine *esse* because it is only an analogate of the analogon. Such is how I take the text. My warrant is above analysis of sections 6 and 7 of this chapter. The ignorance and darkness of which Aquinas speaks in the fourth reply of the *Sentences'* text would result from trying to pry the analogon of *esse* apart from the analogates of creaturely *esse*. That attempt results in the intellectual blindness of which Phelan speaks.

<sup>75</sup> "For as to the mode of signification, every name is defective. For by means of a name we express things in the way in which the intellect conceives them. For our intellect, taking the origin of its knowledge from the senses, does not transcend the mode which is found in sensible things, in which the form and the subject of the form are not identical owing to the composition of form and matter. Now, a simple form is indeed found among such things, but one that is imperfect because it is not subsisting; on the other hand, though a subsisting subject of a form is found among sensible things, it is not simple but rather concreated. Whatever our intellect signifies as subsisting, therefore, it signifies in concretion; but what it signifies as simple, it signifies, not as *that which is*, but as *that by which something is*. As a result with reference to the mode of signification there is in every name that we use an imperfection, which does not befit God." Aquinas, C.G. I, 30, *Dico*; trans. Pegis, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 1, 140–41. Also Aquinas, S.T. I, 13, 1, ad 2m and 3c.

a simple subsistent such as God would always be off the mark. But negation enables us to “picture” the simple as an existent and not an abstraction, and negation also enables us to picture the existent as simple. Negation accomplishes both when it extricates a representation of *esse subsistens* from the *ratio entis*.

In the light of that picture, our thinking can grasp middle terms useful for cogent reasoning from creatures to creator. For example, we intellect that the concept of *esse commune* is just one difference in which *ipsum esse* is found. The First Cause of existence is another instance. Hence, as noted, Aquinas can transfer the infinity of *esse commune* to *esse subsistens* without implying that like *esse commune*, *esse subsistens* in some different fashion can undergo addition. Being is not simply a mysterious intelligibility, it is now a mysterious reality. In the First Cause, the richness of being has a locus in reality. Also, the picturing of *esse subsistens* enables the philosopher to catch sight of another similarity. *Esse subsistens* is like subsistent form. Aquinas has already acknowledged a similarity between form and judgmentally grasped *esse*.<sup>76</sup> In different ways both actuate their respective subjects. Form actuates by adding determination; *esse* by realizing determination. Aquinas’ representing of *esse subsistens* enables the grasp of a likeness to continue to the subsistent level. Hence, what the philosopher understands about subsistent form will apply to subsistent *esse*. That understanding includes knowledge to the intellectual degree,<sup>77</sup> as well as tendency in the mode of volition.<sup>78</sup> As Aquinas contemplates being, it becomes not only a real locus of infinity but also something personal with whom communication is possible. In *esse subsistens*, being has voice. The philosopher should be astonished by this conclusion. I will return to this possibility in Chapter 9.

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<sup>76</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 6, sect. 9.

<sup>77</sup> Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 14, 1c.

<sup>78</sup> *Infra*, Chap. 8, n. 15.

## The *Ratio Boni* and Natural Law Ethics

AS MY INTRODUCTION NOTED, *Fides et Ratio* not only recommends a philosophy of being based on the act of being. For purposes of moral theology, the encyclical also recommends a philosophical ethics that presupposes a philosophical anthropology and a metaphysics of the good. I commented that it would certainly be strange that subsequent to recommending Aquinas' metaphysics of *actus essendi*, the Pope was shifting to a non-Thomistic anthropology and metaphysics of the good. Here I want to follow up on this hint of an ethically important connection between a metaphysics of *actus essendi* and a philosophical anthropology and a metaphysics of the good. If one steps back and observes the human in whom has occurred the previously mentioned Neo-Thomist ideas, one confronts an object unlike any other. As I will try to show in this chapter, both as an intellector of being and as a willer of being as the good, the human is unique among analogates of the *ratio entis*. Human intellection and volition engender and presuppose an especially intense presence of the analogon. Thanks to these two activities, the human possesses the *ratio entis* in heightened fashion. In the human intellector and willer the analogon burns more brightly than in granite, a cow, daisy, or pine tree. A realization of this anthropology invests the human with a demand for respect and solicitude and so initiates ethics. In elaboration I offer a sustained analysis of a famous text in Aquinas' natural law ethics—94, 2c—of the *prima secundae*.

### 1. OBLIGATION, OR MORAL NECESSITY, AND THE WILLER OF THE GOOD

Since Aquinas' ethics is concerned with what we "ought" to do, with what we "should" do, I want to speak about how or from where the

idea of obligation or moral necessity arises. The idea of obligation is a curious one. It contains aspects both of freedom and constraint. What we ought to do is something we well know we are free not to do. For instance, the promises of confidentiality that we make are things that we can choose to violate. But if we do so choose, we so choose with the awareness of doing something that should not be done. This awareness is absent when contemplating a choice to paint my house white, green, or blue. For example, if I choose green, I so choose with no awareness that I should choose white. Choosing to violate a promise is not like that. It is a more complex phenomenon. The choice is accompanied by a sense of constraint, by a kind of necessity, that is deliberately being ignored. I see both that I *can* violate the promise and that I *should* not do so. With the freedom is a necessity. This constraint or necessity is obligation, and I would like to explore Aquinas' account of it. As the above example of painting my house shows, my consciousness does not always present this idea. Moreover, as indicated in earlier chapters, for Aquinas ideas have an *a posteriori* source, ideas come from experience. For Aquinas, no ideas exist in us from birth. What we possess from birth are the powers to form ideas from experience. So from what experiential data does the intellect take the idea of obligation or moral necessity? Aquinas' philosophical answer to this question is the target of my reflection.

A *locus classicus* for this topic is from the *Summa Theologiae*. In the *Prima Secundae*, 94, 2c, a text for which, surprisingly, no parallel passages are listed, Aquinas discusses the issue of whether the natural law contains one or many precepts. In the course of the article, he speaks of the first principle of practical reason. Practical reason is human reason as it is directive and ordering of human acts. It instructs as to what one should choose or should not choose. Now, reasoning is a process of going from premises to conclusion. Moreover, not all premises themselves can be demonstrated, or subjected to reasoning. Hence Aquinas presents the following proposition as the first principle of practical reasoning: "*bonum est faciendum et prosequendum, et malum vitandum*; the good must be done and promoted and evil must be avoided." The English term *must*, as it translates the Latin gerundive, expresses the idea of obligation.<sup>1</sup> All other

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<sup>1</sup> For some Thomistic reasons to regard the predicate in the synderesis rule as

precepts of natural law are based upon this. Among these other precepts, 94, 2, goes on to mention those enjoining us to respect ourselves, to marry, to know God, and to live in society. Later I will discuss these other precepts. Now the issue is the mentioned first principle. How do we grasp it? What is practical reasoning seeing, at what is it looking, to come to utter this imperative proposition?

At 94, 2, Aquinas presents the proposition as a self-evident one. He describes self-evident propositions as ones whose predicates are contained in the meaning of their subjects. For example, if you know what the term *bachelors* means, then you will grasp as self-evidently true the propositions “bachelors are unmarried” and “bachelors are male.”<sup>2</sup> With the first principle of practical reason, the practical intellect grasps “oughtness” as contained in the meaning of the *ratio boni*, the proposition’s subject. So oughtness first appears in human awareness by practical reason’s consideration of the *ratio boni*.

But Thomistic scholars raise a standard difficulty. When Aquinas previously discussed the idea or notion of the good, only two things seemed to follow, neither of which is the moral necessity expressed in the first principle. The first thing is a necessary and automatic desire in the will for the good.<sup>3</sup> This desire is the initial eruption of volition consequent upon the intellect’s presentation of the *ratio boni* to the will. There is no moral necessity here because there is no freedom. The will acts automatically. I will consider the dynamic later. A second implication of the *ratio boni* is the indeterminate disposing of the will before any individual thing that is only *a* good, not the good itself.<sup>4</sup> Now the will is free; but is any moral constraint present in our awareness? It seems not. What is present is an awareness of being equally and indifferently disposed to all finite goods.

I will, at this point, assume that Aquinas has not erred in connecting the *ratio boni* with the subject of the first principle of practical reason. Hence I can only conclude that Aquinas is transforming the

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expressing moral/ethical necessity, vd. Vernon Bourke, “The Synderesis Rule and Right Reason,” *The Monist* 66 (1983): 74–75. For a discussion of Germain Grisez’ many reasons to the contrary, see *infra*, sect. 6.

<sup>2</sup> For a comparison of Thomistic *per se nota* propositions with analytic propositions, see Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 304–7. Bradley remarks: “[P]er se nota principles have a necessary meaning that is dependent on and derived from the meaning that is inherent in being,” 306.

<sup>3</sup> *Infra*, n. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Infra*, n. 17.

idea of the good so that somehow the idea functions in a practical precept, a precept that lays down an obligation before our freedom, lays down an expression of a direction in which we ought go. In other words, the *ratio boni* is not transported pure and simple into the first principle of practical reason. The idea of the good is there in the proposition's subject, but somehow modified so that moral necessity is engendered in the predicate. How does one consider the idea of the good, the *ratio boni*, so that there follows neither automatic willing nor simple freedom but obligation?

If one combs the preceding lines of the article, one discovers some hint of the answer.<sup>5</sup> In those lines Aquinas parallels what is the case in speculative reasoning with what is the case in practical reasoning. In speculative reasoning the issue is simply to know what is, the truth, while in practical reasoning the issue is to know what ought to be done. With that difference acknowledged, Aquinas begins to make parallels. There is a first idea in our intellectual apprehension. It is the *ratio entis*, the notion of being. The idea is first because all other ideas are included within it. But our apprehension of the *ratio entis* founds our apprehension of the first indemonstrable principle: "*quod non est simul affirmare et negare*; one is not to affirm and deny [something] at the same time."

I want to note that this principle does not express what one sees by contemplating only the *ratio entis*. The principle is talking about the *ratio* as participated by various instances. The steadfastness of the *ratio entis* insofar as it excludes non-being is communicated to the instances, and it is about them that first principle speaks. Of no

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<sup>5</sup> "Now a certain order is to be found in those things that are apprehended by men. For that which first falls under apprehension is *being [ens]*, the understanding of which is included in all things whatsoever a man apprehends. Therefore the first indemonstrable principle is that *the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time*, which is based on the notion of *being [supra rationem entis]* and *not-being*; and on this principle all others are based, as is stated in *Metaph.* iv. Now as *being [ens]* is the first thing that falls under the apprehension absolutely, so *good [bonum]* is the first thing that falls under the the apprehension of the practical reason, which is directed to action (since every agent acts for an end, which has the nature of good [*rationem boni*]). Consequently, the first principle in the practical reason is one founded on the nature of good [*rationem boni*], viz., that *good is that which all things seek after*. Hence this is the first precept of law, that *good is to be done and promoted, and evil is to be avoided*. All other precepts of the natural law are based upon this." Aquinas, *S.T.* I-II, 94, 2c; from *The Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Pegis, vol. 2, 774.

one of the instances can we at the same time both affirm and deny. Assuming the parallel in the practical domain, the subject of the first practical principle should not be the *ratio boni* pure and simple, but the *ratio boni* as participated by some instances. What are the instances that participate the *ratio boni*?<sup>6</sup> So far we can say that it is not all the instances, because some instances obviously do not evoke any moral obligation. It is good that my house is blue, it is good that my house is green, but no one of these goods evokes moral necessity. The instances of the *ratio boni* that produce an awareness of obligation are specific ones. What are they?

Where are we to turn for help? Methodologically, the desideratum is to solve questions of textual interpretation intrinsically, specifically, by staying within the boundaries of the text. If that fails, then one proceeds to most proximate previous relevant texts. Despite the wisdom of the methodology, an over-scrupulosity should be avoided. From reflection upon the prologue to the *Summa Theologiae*, one can understand that the *Summa* was not intended by Aquinas to be read alone by the beginners in theology, the *incipientes*. Rather, Aquinas' intention was that the *Summa* be presented to students through a teacher, a *magister*. Moreover, the *magister* was not to be just any teacher but a teacher conversant with Aquinas' other writings.<sup>6</sup> So if interpretive concerns require it, reference to earlier works, and even post-*Summa* works, are methodologically appropriate. Now my issue is how practical reason presents the will with obligation.

Earlier in the *Prima Secundae* in questions 8, 9, 10, Aquinas discusses: the object of the will, what moves the will, and the manner of the will's movement. One of the articles in question 10 is strikingly similar to 94, 2. In article 1 Aquinas asks if the will is naturally moved to anything. He reiterates that intellectual knowledge is from naturally known principles, and that the willer tends naturally to knowledge of truth and to existence. What interests me is that the will naturally tends not only to its object, *bonum in communi* (also called the *ratio boni*); the will also naturally tends to "all those things which belong to the one willing according to his nature. For it is not only things pertaining to the will that the will desires, but also that which

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<sup>6</sup> For an explanation of this characterization of the *magister*, see my *Preface to Thomistic Metaphysics*, 126–29.

pertains to each power, and to the entire man. Therefore man wills naturally not only the object of the will, but also other things that are appropriate to the other powers, such as the knowledge of truth, which befits the intellect, and to be and to live and other like things which regard his natural well-being, all of which are included in the object of the will as so many particular goods.”<sup>7</sup>

What I find fascinating is the connection between man as a willer of the good and man as a willer of his entire good. Back in the *Prima Pars*, Aquinas insisted that under the *ratio veritatis* the intellect grasps the will, its act, and its object. Evidently from his above remarks at 10, 1, this object stands out among other objects of the intellect. To see the man as a willer of the *ratio boni* is to engender a regard for the total man himself. A willer of the *ratio boni* has a special status among things. And a modicum of reflection reveals why. No other thing in our experience so directly and intimately relates to the *ratio boni*. Only man has the good as the proper object of his appetitive power. Other things have appetitive powers that bear only on particular goods. Consequently these other things relate to the *ratio boni* from a distance. Man has the good itself as the proper object of his will, and to understand this fact is for one to realize that one should treat oneself and others in a special way.

What does this point mean for understanding the subject of the first principle of practical reason? To what sense of “the good” is practical reason looking when it utters this injunction to the will? Evidently, practical reason is looking at the *ratio boni* when it is intended by the human will as its proper object. As noted, for Aquinas the human intellect possesses the circumspection to understand the power of the will, its act, and its object. To pick out one’s self as a willer of the *ratio boni* is to pick out a special and unique finite instance of the good. In that instance the *ratio boni* burns especially bright and engenders a respect for the instance.

Yet for two reasons one might still be insensitive to the bite of the “ought” when confronted by the human understood as a willer of the good. On the one hand, a willer of the good could appear as insignificant because the good is thought of in a most vague and indeterminate manner. The *ratio boni* is hardly an object in itself. It is just a summary way of describing the fact that whatever we will is some-

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<sup>7</sup> Cited from Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 2, 260.

thing good. To this way of thinking, the good would serve to differentiate humans but certainly not serve to distinguish them. The good would not construe humans as obligatory objects of respectful pursuit. On the other hand, even if the *ratio boni* were thought in an intrinsically rich fashion, why should its high rank reverberate to the willer? Is not the object of will distant and distinct from the willer? Does not the object's being willed indicate that the object is out of reach? There seems to be some disconnect between willer and object willed. Hence, how can one carry over to the willer characteristics of the willed? Does excellence of the object mean a coordinating excellence for the one willing? A student of Aquinas could raise this issue also. More fleshing out of Aquinas' position is required if we are to understand his claim that for the will to have the good as its proper object is also for the will to will the good of the whole man. I have organized my remarks on 94, 2, around the above two questions.

## 2. THE *RATIO ENTIS* AS THE *RATIO BONI*

What is special about the *ratio boni* such that a willer of it engenders a respect for the whole man? What does Aquinas mean by the *ratio boni*? Is it something pale and insipid, empty and formal? Earlier remarks from the *Summa Theologiae* make evident that the *ratio boni* is really one and the same with the *ratio entis*. Hence, far from being empty and formal, the *ratio boni* should possess all the previously described richness of the *ratio entis*. As I have noted in previous chapters, for Aquinas the *ratio entis* is a most universal, or transcendental, commonality that is analogical in nature and that harbors the composition of *habens* and *esse*. The intelligible root of this composite commonality appears to be the *esse* dimension. This means that the mentioned richness of the *ratio entis* should be read back into its *esse* dimension. Already we are obtaining some idea of how Aquinas could identify in reality the *ratio boni* with the *ratio entis*. What do you call something that has everything? Do you not call it the perfect; and what is the perfect if not the good?

In texts from the *Prima Pars*, Aquinas himself expresses this identification. At 5, 1c, he connects what he means by the *ratio entis* and the *ratio boni*. His argument is as follows. Being is also the good, because being is the locus of completion and perfection. It is this

locus in virtue of the *esse*, or *actus essendi*, that a thing must have in order to be a being, an *ens*. For “being [*esse*] is the actuality of every thing, as is clear from the foregoing.” The earlier reference is a reply to the comment that “being itself [*ipsum esse*] seems most imperfect, since it is the most universal and receptive of modification.”<sup>8</sup> In his reply Aquinas insists that, on the contrary, *esse* itself is the most perfect of all things because it is compared to all as that which is act. Hence, furthermore, *esse* is like received to receiver, not like receiver to received as is pictured in the comment.<sup>9</sup> These remarks clearly indicate that the *ratio essendi* is unique among commonalities. It contains an unsurpassed richness, for it does not take on addition from without, but conveys perfection to its receiver. This richness is what is imported into Aquinas’ argument at 5, 1c.

A reader might object that goodness means not simply existing, but having all that a being should have. For example, an existing but lame horse is not a good horse. Rather, a good horse is an existing horse that can run. But Aquinas insists at 5, 1, ad 1m,<sup>10</sup> that this observation about the idea of goodness has really not left the parameters or neighborhood of the *ratio entis*. Each completing actuality that we can think of, for example, running for the horse, seeing for the eye, flying for the bird, is a being in some way (*quodammodo ens*). Anything that is good for something else is just an analogate of the analogon of being. When an existing substance acquires these perfections, the substance does not exit the *ratio entis*. The substance just goes to further instances of the *ratio entis*.

In sum, the good is being seeking being, *ens* seeking itself. Again in 5, 2, ad 4m, Aquinas says it but this time with reference to *esse*: “Life, wisdom, and the like are desirable only in so far as they are actual. Hence in each one of them some sort of being (*esse*) is de-

<sup>8</sup> “Sed ipsum esse videtur esse imperfectissimum, cum sit communissimum, et recipiens omnium additiones.” Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 4, 1, 3 obj.; ed. Ottawa, 23b.

<sup>9</sup> “Dicendum quod ipsum esse est perfectissimum omnium; comparatur enim ad omnia ut actus. Nihil enim habet actualitatem, nisi in quantum est; unde ipsum esse est actualitas omnium rerum, et etiam ipsarum formarum. Unde non comparatur ad alia sicut recipiens ad receptum, sed magis sicut receptum ad recipiens.” Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 4, 1, ad 3m; ed. Ottawa, 24a.

<sup>10</sup> “Because, regarded in its first actuality, a thing is a being absolutely: and regarded in its complete actuality, it is good absolutely, though even in its first actuality, it is in some way good [*quodammodo bonum*], and even in its complete actuality, it is in some way being [*quodammodo ens*].” Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 43.

sired. And thus nothing is desirable except being (*ens*) and consequently nothing is good except being (*ens*).<sup>11</sup>

Others might raise a second objection. We see that *esse* actuates not only good things but bad things as well. Hence it appears arbitrary to read back into *ipsum esse* just the good and not also the bad. But then the *ratio entis* could never be the *ratio boni*. The objector fails to see that evil arises from being only indirectly. Directly speaking, only integral and whole analogates arise from being. Evil occurs later, when these integral analogates accidentally clash. For example, a tiger is an analogate of being, and a human is an analogate of being. In their differences, both arise integrally from the analogon. Trouble occurs when the human accidentally crosses the path of the tiger and has an arm ripped off. Evil is directly reduced only to the level of the analogates, not to the level of the analogon.<sup>12</sup>

Aquinas employs the same model to explain moral evil among the analogates of being. Our sensitive nature, with its appetites, and our intellectual nature can be understood as analogates that integrally proceed from being. However, sometimes there can be a rush of sense appetite for what one intellectually knows is bad. For example, the wonderful aroma of a freshly baked pastry evokes a desire that in turn invests the pastry with at least the appearance of good. Yet one still intellectually remembers that one should be dieting, and so the pastry is understood as bad. Because of the clash of sense appetite with my understanding, one has a dual awareness of the pastry. It “appears” as good, though it is understood or known as bad. This engendered state of consciousness suffices for one to possibly choose the pastry and to do something bad.<sup>13</sup>

An order also exists between the *ratio entis* and the *ratio boni* such that the intellect generates its idea of the good from its idea of being. As mentioned, Aquinas is an aposteriorist. Ideas come to exist in the intellect in and through the intellectual powers abstracting the ideas from the real things presented by the senses. Since our understanding is fundamentally passive and receptive, it is first affected by something actual, in short by something that is a being. Hence the notion of being is what first impacts the intellect. For the intellect to appreciate being as the good is a more complex affair.

<sup>11</sup> Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 45.

<sup>12</sup> See Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 49, 1c, on the good as a cause of evil accidentally.

<sup>13</sup> Vd. Aquinas, *De Ver.* 24, 8c; and *In III de An.*, *lectio* 15, n. 829.

Some actual being must be related to something else as completing and perfecting. Only in that light does a perception of being as the good follow. Aquinas asserts this unfolding of the *ratio boni* from the *ratio entis* when he remarks at *S.T.* I, 16, 4, ad 2m: “A thing is prior logically [*prius ratione*] in so far as it is prior in the apprehension of the intellect. Now the intellect first apprehends being itself [*ens*]; secondly, it apprehends that it understands being [*ens*]; and thirdly, it apprehends that it desires being [*se appetere ens*]. Hence, the notion of being [*ratio entis*] is first, that of truth second, and the notion of good [*ratio boni*] third, even though the good is in things.”<sup>14</sup>

How do these thoughts on the connection between the *ratio entis* and the *ratio boni* answer my first question? They should suffice to realize that for Aquinas, the *ratio boni* is not pale and insipid, it is not an empty frame, it is not a mere rule. The *ratio boni* is the intelligible concrescence of everything real, actual—and possible. The *ratio boni* is the *ratio entis* in the wake of the realization that as a transcendental, the *ratio entis* contains anything that one might desire. If you have ever wanted anything, why not also want the *ratio entis*, since in it is contained what you want and whatever else you may want? The *ratio entis* is not simply good, it is simply *the* good.

Little wonder that the intellectual presentation of the *ratio boni* to the will ignites a firestorm in the will. According to Aquinas, the will automatically desires its proper object. At I, 82, 1c, Aquinas insists that natural necessity (*necessitas naturalis*) is not repugnant to the will. For just as the intellect of necessity adheres to first principles, so too the will necessarily adheres to the last end, which is happiness (*ultimo fini, qui est beatitudo*). But “happiness” here is the *ratio boni*, for elsewhere the last end is the object of the will (*rationem finis, est obiectum voluntatis*, I-II, 9, 1), and the object of the will is the *ratio boni* (*ratio boni, quod est obiectum potentiae*, I-II, 8, 2c). Aquinas reiterates the point by saying that the will “tends naturally” (*naturaliter tendit*, I-II, 10, 1) to the *bonum in communi* which is its object and last end, just as the intellect knows naturally the first principles of demonstration. No empty or merely formal sense of the *ratio boni* could play these roles of igniting desire. Rather, it is the *ratio entis* that is playing the role of the *ratio boni*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 173.

<sup>15</sup> That the *ratio entis* understood as the *ratio boni* engenders willing is also expressed in this Thomistic argument for will in God: “From the fact that God is

As Aquinas remarks at I-II, 10, 2, ad 3m: “The last end moves the will necessarily, because it is the perfect good [*bonum perfectum*].” Finally, recall the texts in which Aquinas says that we naturally desire God insofar as we naturally desire beatitude, which is a certain likeness of the divine goodness.<sup>16</sup> But as Chapter 6 explained, God has the perfections of all things because God is *esse subsistens*. Is one out of line to insist that Aquinas understands naturally desired beatitude in terms of his metaphysical conception of the *ratio entis*? Where else but within that creaturely abstraction do we have a representation, vague and confused as it may be, of the divine quiddity, *esse subsistens*?

The intellect’s presentation of the good to the will is the wellspring of all human desire. It creates the heart’s deepest longing. And even though the above thoughts leading to our present point have been explicitly metaphysical, it would be wrong to think that one would have to learn metaphysics before the will could begin desiring. For Aquinas, the *ratio entis* is such an automatic abstraction of the intellect that it can go unnoticed and lurk in the depths of our conscious life. Its implicit presence would certainly go a long way to explain why no one seriously doubts the proposition: “A thing cannot be and not be at the same time and in the same respect.” The proposition is talking about a certain necessity that accompanies being, specifically, being excludes non-being. And it is difficult to understand why so many would assent to the proposition unless they already had a general sense of being. But as lurking in the depths of our consciousness, being can also fire up the will. Evidence of this engendered volitional dynamism is found in the sense of dissatisfaction with particular things that invariably breaks upon us. What we thought would satisfy us leaves us wanting for more. What was the apple of our eye shrivels to one good among others. Do not these experiences indicate that fundamental to human consciousness is a grasp of perfect good

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endowed with intellect it follows that He is endowed with will. For, since the understood good is the proper object of the will, the understood good is, as such, willed. Now that which is understood is by reference to one who understands. Hence, he who grasps the good by his intellect is, as such, endowed with will. But God grasps the good by His intellect. For, since the activity of His intellect is perfect, as appears from what has been said, He understands being together with the qualification of the good [*ens simul cum ratione boni*]. He is, therefore, endowed with will.” Aquinas, *C.G. I*, 72, *Ex hoc*; Pegis, trans., *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 1, 239–40.

<sup>16</sup> *Supra*, Chap. 2, nn. 46 and 47.

against which things eventually proportion themselves as only particular goods?

Parenthetically, I should note that none of the above renders us robots, or automata, of the real. On the contrary, this necessary volition about which Aquinas has been speaking is the necessary basis for human freedom. At I-II, 10, 2c,<sup>17</sup> he explains that since the will necessarily tends to the universal and perfect good, then in the face of any particular or finite good the will does not necessarily tend. The will can either set aside or approve these particular goods. This conclusion makes sense in terms of the *ratio boni* as the *ratio entis*. If things profile themselves as individual beings before the *ratio entis*, then they should also profile themselves as individual goods if the *ratio entis* is also the *ratio boni*. Poised before beings seen in the light of the *ratio boni*, the will is indeterminate or free. As individual goods, the will can go for beings, but as *individual* goods, the will need not go for them. This freedom is known and understood as real and non-illusory because it has been built up from the *ratio entis*, whose objectivity is assured by its abstraction from the real beings given in sensation. Aquinas' direct realist epistemology regarding sensation has a crucial and basic role to play here.

### 3. THE WILL'S CONTACT WITH THE *RATIO BONI*

What of the second question? If the willer is at some distance from the willed, how can one carry over any characteristics of the willed to the willer? Hence, even if the *ratio boni* is enriched through thinking about the *ratio entis*, how does a respect for the *ratio boni* extend to the willer? Aquinas can reply in two ways. First, if one momentarily

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<sup>17</sup> “[S]o good is the object of the will. Therefore if the will be offered an object which is good universally and from every point of view, the will tends to it of necessity, if it wills anything at all; since it cannot will the opposite. If, on the other hand, the will is offered an object that is not good from every point of view, it will not tend to it of necessity. And since the lack of any good whatever is a non-good, consequently, that good alone which is perfect and lacking in nothing is such a good that the will cannot not-will it; and this is happiness. But any other particular goods, in so far as they are lacking in some good, can be regarded as non-goods; and, from this point of view, they can be set aside or approved by the will, which can tend to one and the same thing from various points of view.” Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 2, 262.

concedes that the willer is distinct from the willed, Aquinas still insists that one cannot will what one does not know. Wanting is a response to apprehending something as good. But knowing or apprehending follows a kind of becoming of the thing known. At I, 59, while discussing will in the angels on the basis of an understanding of will in ourselves, Aquinas says that the inclination to good characteristic of the will is with a knowledge of the nature of goodness (*ipsam boni rationem*).<sup>18</sup> This knowledge pertains to the intellect. But later Aquinas asserts that knowledge comes about because the thing known is in the knower.<sup>19</sup> Hence the intellect extends itself to what is outside, insofar as what is outside is naturally capable of being somehow within the intellect. These thoughts presuppose an entire epistemology that cannot be laid bare here. But they suffice for answering the present question. For Aquinas, the willer of the good is not a simple phenomenon. The willer of the good is also the intellector of the good. At least cognitively speaking, if not volitionally speaking, the willer has the good present. In that respect, the willer of the good commands some of the respect owing to the good itself. Even granting that as willed the good is distant, the good would not be willed if it were not cognitively immanent. The willer is not simply a willer but also a knower, with all the implications of that.

Secondly, Aquinas does not concede that the willer is simply distant from the thing willed. That is true, but it is not the entire story. Aquinas has a more nuanced concept of willing. At I, 59, 2,<sup>20</sup> he says

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<sup>18</sup> “Other things, again, have an inclination towards good, but with a knowledge whereby they perceive the nature of goodness [*ipsam boni rationem*]. This belongs to the intellect. Things so inclined are most perfectly inclined towards what is good; not, indeed, as if they were guided only by another towards the good, like things devoid of knowledge, not as if they were guided towards some particular good only, as things which have only sensitive knowledge, but as inclined towards the universal good [*universale bonum*] itself. Such inclination is termed will [*voluntas*]. Accordingly, since the angels by their intellect know the universal nature of goodness [*ipsam universalem rationem boni*], it is manifest that there is will in them.” Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 550.

<sup>19</sup> “For knowledge comes about because the thing known is in the knower. Consequently the intellect extends itself to what is outside it [*se extendit eius intellectus in id quod est extra se*], according as what is essentially outside it is naturally capable of being somehow within it.” *S.T.* I, 59, 2c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 552. Also, “knowledge is effected by the presence of the known within the knower.” *S.T.* I, 59, 3, ad 2m; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 553.

<sup>20</sup> “[T]he will goes out to what is beyond it [*se extendit in id quod extra est*], according as by a kind of inclination it tends somehow to what is outside it.” *S.T.* I, 59, 2c; Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 1, 552.

that like knowing, willing *extends itself* to what is outside itself. But unlike knowing, willing extends to what is outside in a more intimate fashion. Willing extends itself to what is outside simply. In contrast, since knowing is consequent upon the known being in some way in the knower, knowing extends itself to what is outside *only insofar as what is outside is inside*. Willing escapes this limitation because it goes to what is outside simply by inclination, not by assimilation. The introspective facts compel this analysis. Though we do not will a thing that we do not know, we do will more than we know of that thing. For instance, we can will to know something better, and we can will to overcome ignorance. How can this be true if willing is in strict proportion to knowing?

Though knowledge of the good prompts the will, this prompting does not entail any further round of assimilation. Simply by its own inclination, the will goes for the thing itself. These thoughts explain why Aquinas insists at I, 82, 3c that in this life love of God is better than knowledge of God. The intellect can form in itself only an imperfect likeness of God, and so the intellect's extension to God is imperfect. The will can take up where the intellect leaves off and extend itself to God as he is simply in himself. So in a way, willing does capture its prey. It does in a way unite itself with its object. Because of this, the willer of the good, *just as a willer*, should command some of the respect owing to the good.

#### 4. THE APPEARANCE OF OBLIGATION AND THE REMAINDER OF 94, 2

One should now understand how having the *ratio boni* as the proper object of the will translates into the will willing the good of the entire human, as mentioned at *S.T.* I-II, 10, 1c. The translation is from a natural necessity to a moral necessity. Because the human is only a particular good, we cannot have the same necessary relation to the human as to the good. But we do not have an unrestricted freedom either. We are cognizant of a necessity or constraint of a sort. Because the *ratio boni* that the human necessarily wills is both cognitively and volitionally present to the human, the human is a special particular instance of the good. In the human instance, the *ratio boni* burns more brightly than it does in other instances such as animals, plants,

and minerals. Can that fact leave us unconstrained? Does it not issue to our freedom a command of respect and solicitude?

Hence, from a previous understanding of the human as willer of the *ratio boni*, Aquinas launches the first principle of practical reason. The good that we self-evidently ought to do is the *ratio boni* as in the human willer of it. The subject of the first practical principle is not the *ratio boni* pure and simple, just as the subject of the first speculative principle is not the *ratio entis* pure and simple. The former subject is the *ratio boni* as specifically in the human instance, just as the latter subject is the *ratio entis* as in some thing. Though all beings express the *ratio boni*, only the human expresses it in a sufficiently heightened way that confronts the freedom of the will with an obligation, a moral necessity. To see the good is to ignite volition; to see the good as in the human willer of it is to ignite obligation.

The remainder of 94, 2,<sup>21</sup> can be read in this light. The *responsio* speaks of human natural inclinations around which form the basic precepts of natural law. Working with a merely formal sense of the first practical principle, most Thomists understand the natural inclinations as pointing out the particular goods that add content to the principle.<sup>22</sup> Only at this point do we begin to consult human nature.

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<sup>21</sup> "Since, however, good has the nature of an end, and evil, the nature of the contrary, hence it is that all those things to which man has a natural inclination are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance. Therefore, the order of the precepts of the natural law is according to the order of natural inclinations. For there is in man, first of all, an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances, inasmuch, namely, as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its nature; and by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law. Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals; and in virtue of this inclination those things are said to belong to the natural law which nature has taught to all animals, such as sexual intercourse, the education of offspring and so forth. Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to good according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him. Thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society; and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to natural law: e.g., to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination." Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 2, 774–75.

<sup>22</sup> First, Jacques Maritain, "This [principle: we must do good and avoid evil] is the preamble and the principle of natural law," *Man and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971), 90. For Maritain, we discover the regulations of natural law itself

But in an interpretation according to which the good of the first practical principle is the *ratio boni* as considered in the human willer, the mentioned natural inclinations should not mark an initial consideration of human nature. A consideration of human nature has been going on extensively already. Rather, the mentioned natural inclina-

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“through the guidance of the *inclinations* of human nature,” 91. These inclinations are not apprehended conceptually: “It is obscure, unsystematic, vital knowledge by connaturality or congeniality, in which the intellect, in order to bear judgment consults and listens to the inner melody that the vibrating strings of abiding tendencies make present in the subject,” 91–92. For me, the inclinations correspond to further discoveries, dim as they may be, of epiphanies of the *ratio boni*. Elsewhere (vd. my n. 31) Maritain seems to say something very close to my interpretation. Next, Eric D’Arcy, “Now the principle, ‘Good should be done and evil avoided,’ will not serve as the major of a syllogism. It is analytic and necessary, telling us nothing about the facts. . . . It seems to be a purely formal principle, providing the rule that governs all our moral reasoning, rather than its universal premiss,” *Conscience and Its Right to Freedom* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 51–52. Hence, “In St. Thomas’ theory, the clue to the evidence of the ethical ‘axioms’ lies in *natural inclination*. . . . one sees that ‘x is good and to be pursued’ only if one sees first that x represents the satisfaction of a natural human inclination,” 60–61. For me, “Good should be done” at the least expresses the fact that the human is a willer of the *ratio boni* and in that respect can function as a major premise. Also, the natural inclinations do not determine goods but are responses to various epiphanies of the just-mentioned fact. Next, Germain Grisez: “In forming this first precept practical reason performs its most basic task, for it simply determines that whatever it shall think about must at least be set on the way to something—as it must be if reason is to be able to think of it practically. Any other precept will add to this first one; other precepts determine precisely what the direction is and what the starting point must be if that direction is to be followed out. The first principle of practical reason thus gives us a way of interpreting experience,” “The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa Theologiae*, 1–2, Question 94, Article 2,” in Anthony Kenny, ed., *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969), 355. Grisez also describes the first practical principle as something distinct from the consideration of human experience: “The primary precept provides a point of view from which experience is considered. . . . This principle provides us with an instrument for making another kind of sense of our experience,” 356–57. For me, practical reason does not “simply determine” the principle but “discovers” it as a general articulation of the obligation engendered by a confrontation with an epiphany of being. On an apparent Kantian transcendentalism in Grisez, see my text, *infra*, sect. 6. Next, despite disagreements with Grisez, Ralph McInerny also considers the subject of the first practical principle as something to be “filled in.” In *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 47, McInerny mentions that the other goods mentioned at 94, 2, are “constituents” and “articulations” of the human good. This characterization makes sense in light of McInerny’s “filling in” understanding of the analogy of being that I discussed in my Chap. 5. In contrast to these philosophers, I regard the subject of the first practical principle at 94, 2c, as “the good as present in the willer of it.” This understanding of the subject is not something to be “filled in.”

tions correspond to further confrontations of practical reason with humans as willers of the *ratio boni*. Human experience involves various epiphanies of this object. Around these epiphanies form injunctions of practical reason. These injunctions incline us. Hence when Aquinas remarks that “those things to which man has a natural inclination are naturally apprehended by reason as being good and so as objects of pursuit,” he does not mean that the natural inclinations invest these things with the appearance of being good. Rather it is because things are first apprehended as good that one has natural inclinations to them. In other words, the inclinations form in the wake of the apprehension of goods; the apprehension of goods does not form in the wake of the natural inclinations. Apparently because of a very formalistic or empty, hence uninspiring, notion of the good of the first principle, most Thomists do think that the apprehension of goods forms in the wake of knowing the inclinations.

And so Aquinas says that the first inclination is to the preservation of one’s own being. This is easily seen to follow an understanding of ourselves as willers of the *ratio boni*. As mentioned, for Aquinas a willer of the *ratio boni* is a special instance of the good. Unlike other things, a willer has the *ratio boni* present in a heightened fashion. Hence we see that in a real way, to strike at ourselves is to strike unseemly at the good. The heightened presence of the good in us in virtue of our willing of it produces an injunction to cherish oneself.

Another epiphany of the good is sexual intercourse. If not always in fact, nevertheless always in nature or essence, the sexual embrace is both a union of persons and a union through which runs a procreative teleology. But again, persons are willers of the good. So both in one’s partner and also in the procreative teleology, one sees that sexual embrace is a decisive encounter with the good and should be

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Because of the convertibility of *bonum* with *ens*, the subject is already full and rich. It is not something to be filled in, but something to be acknowledged respectfully in all the places it is found. It is difficult to understand how a merely “formal” understanding of the first practical principle leaves it intact as a “first principle” of human action. As formal, the principle becomes so empty that it loses any capacity to inspire action. Where is its final causality? Finally, though, Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 315–16, denies that the first practical principle is metaethical, he insists that the subject of the principle stands for the things that the practical intellect conceptualizes as certain goods inasmuch as it is impelled and directed by natural inclinations (295; also 300–301). For the reasons mentioned, I read the second half of 94, 2c, in opposite fashion. The desires do not determine the end, but the end determines the desires.

entered into with all due respect.<sup>23</sup> Hence Aquinas says that sexual intercourse and the education of offspring belong to natural law.

Finally, human reasoning also confronts us with other morally compelling instances of the good. As explained in Chapter 7, at its peak in metaphysics, reasoning concludes to a First Cause of the *actus essendi* of sensible things. In this First Cause, *esse* is not possessed by the thing. And Aquinas refers to the First Cause of *actus essendi* had by sensible things as *esse subsistens*, *esse purum*, and *esse tantum*. This understanding of the First Cause means that the nature of *esse* is embodied in the First Cause; the *ratio essendi* is discovered there. Since the *ratio essendi* is the intelligible heart of the *ratio entis*, then the First Cause is a striking instance of the *ratio boni*. To understand this conclusion is to discover another bearing upon which to set our moral compass. Hence Aquinas speaks of a natural inclination to the truth concerning God.

In my metaphysical interpretation of 94, 2, no incongruity exists between divine truth as one of four human goods and divine truth as the primary component in the essence of imperfect happiness, as presented in I-II, 3, 5c.<sup>24</sup> Among the differences in which being is found is a difference of degree. We already noted the respective ways that being is found in an intellectual substance and in a non-intellectual substance. Realization according to degree permits a ranking of the various analogates. Among all the good things that parade before us, the good that is the human being is the beacon by which we orient

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<sup>23</sup> F. C. Copleston, *Aquinas* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), 223, seems to miss this profound connection between the first practical principle and the exclusivity of the sexual embrace: "Aquinas did not think that we can deduce the proposition that to have sexual intercourse with someone else's wife is wrong from the precept that good is to be pursued and evil avoided simply by contemplating, as it were, this latter precept." Because the sexual embrace by its nature is unitive of the persons involved, one realizes that adultery disrespects the good that one has been given in marriage. By contemplating the instantiation of the first practical principle in the sexual embrace, one does deduce that adultery is wrong.

<sup>24</sup> "Therefore, the last and perfect happiness [*ultima et perfecta beatitudo*], which we await in the life to come, consists entirely in contemplation. But imperfect happiness [*beatitudo imperfecta*], such as can be had here, consists first and principally in contemplation, but secondarily, in the operation of the practical intellect directing human actions and passions." Aquinas, *S.T. I-II*, 3, 5c. See also, "Man's happiness is twofold. One is the imperfect happiness found in this life, of which the Philosopher speaks; and this consists in contemplating the separate substances through the habit of wisdom." Aquinas, *In de Trin.*, VI, 4, ad 3m; trans. Maurer, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 84.

ourselves to the good itself. The path to the good, the object of our heart's deepest longing, begins and leads through persons.<sup>25</sup> What is a speechless object of abstraction is given voice by us and our fellows. But among the analogates that are epiphanies of being, God is pre-eminent. As *esse subsistens*, God is the analogate that is the analogon. Everything that I have just remarked of humans now holds preeminently of the creator. Hence, if the context in which Aquinas is working calls for a ranking of human goods or for precision in the description of human happiness, can Aquinas be held guilty of incongruity to single out the divine epiphany of the *ratio boni*?<sup>26</sup>

But the formulation of a metaphysics requires all the time and leisure that a well-functioning society allows. In his *C.G.* III, 37,<sup>27</sup> Aquinas points out that rightly considered, all things serve the contemplation of truth. The products of art provide for soundness of body; the moral virtues provide for freedom from the passions; and the whole program of government provides for freedom from external disorders. Who can fail to see that Aquinas is describing a perfect society here? In sum, the lamp of metaphysical reasoning burns only in a social context. Hence the inclination to the former is an inclination to the latter. Consequently, Aquinas finishes 94, 2 with the injunction to live in society.

Though this injunction to live in society is mentioned last, it has ramifications for what went before. Our social status tempers the previous precepts. As a true, but not mere, part of society, one is

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<sup>25</sup> Vd. *S.T.* I-II, 100, 3, ad 1m, in which Aquinas asserts that love of God and neighbor are the first principles of natural law. Cf., "[Other common or general *per se nota* precepts of practical reason] are first-order principles inasmuch as they are immediate specifications of what it is to love God and neighbor." Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 320.

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of the one end versus many ends debate in Aquinas with a resolution in the vein of Grisez' interpretation of natural law, see John Finnis, "Human Good(s) and Practical Reasoning," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 58 (1984): 23-36.

<sup>27</sup> "In fact, all other human operations seem to be ordered to this one, as to an end. For, there is needed for the perfection of contemplation a soundness of body, to which all the products of art that are necessary for life are directed. Also required are freedom from the disturbances of the passions—this is achieved through the moral virtues and prudence—and freedom from external disorders, to which the whole program of government in civil life is directed. And so, if they are rightly considered, all human functions may be seen to subserve the contemplation of truth." Aquinas, *C.G.*, III, 37, *Ad hanc etiam*; trans. Vernon J. Bourke, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), vol. 3.1, 124.

obliged to pursue the other precepts with a deference to the social whole. For example, the existence that one should cherish and preserve is the existence of a true part of the social whole. Hence, one should not preserve one's life by measures ruinous to society. Neither should one marry and be fecund or study metaphysics all to the same ruinous extent. In other words, for its good society cannot ask one to intend to kill oneself; that would be to treat the human as a mere part of the social whole. But society can ask, and even demand, that one cherish one's existence not to any and all extents. For example, the men on the Titanic who gave up their seats on the lifeboats to women and children were not intending to kill themselves, but they were tempering for the good of the whole their right to life.

All the mentioned natural inclinations can be construed as responses of practical reason before various instances that present the *ratio boni* in a heightened fashion. Before such instances, practical reason sees that we are not just free, but also morally obliged. Out of these realizations, practical reason issues to the will the marching orders that mark the natural law precepts.

## 5. OBLIGATION AND THE INTELLECTOR OF BEING

A text from the *Contra Gentiles* further verifies this rendering of I-II, 94, 2. At Book III, chapter 112, Aquinas is discussing God's providence over rational creatures. Aquinas wants to make the point that in his governance, God provides for rational creatures for their own sake and not for the sake of something else. Providence for the sake of something else characterizes God's governance of plants and animals. Plants are for the sake of animals, and animals are for the sake of humans. In chapter 112 Aquinas offers many arguments for God's governing humans for their own sake. One argument is striking for the connection made between a metaphysical understanding of the human and obligation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "Furthermore, it is evident that all parts are ordered to the perfection of the whole, since a whole does not exist for the sake of its parts, but, rather, the parts are for the whole. Now, intellectual natures have a closer relationship to a whole than do other natures; indeed, each intellectual substance is, in a way, all things. For it may comprehend the entirety of being [*totius entis comprehensiva*] through its intellect; on the other hand, every other substance has only a particular share in being. Therefore, other substances may fittingly be providentially cared for by God for the sake of intellectual substances." Aquinas, *C.G.* III, 112, *Praeterea*; trans. Bourke, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 3.1, 116–17.

Aquinas starts by noting that parts are for the sake of their wholes. But an intellectual substance is more like a whole than a part thereof, because the intellectual substance knows the whole of being (*totius entis*). Hence, in his governance, God provides for the sake of intellectors themselves. Notice Aquinas' deduction of obligation from a very metaphysical basis. God must or should treat the intellector in a particular way. In this case the reason for the obligation is not the understanding of the intellectual substance as a willer of the good, but the understanding of it as an intellector of being. But the intellector-of-being conception is closely related to the willer-of-the-good conception because being is not just any whole, or entirety, but the entirety of perfection. In short, being is the good. Hence, would not an intellector of being command respect just as a willer of the good? The intellector of being is the same as the intellector of the good, and so should be another epiphany of the *ratio boni*.

So C.G. III, 112, catches Aquinas doing with the intellecting of being what S.T. I-II, 94, 2, shows him doing with the willing of the good.<sup>29</sup> Properly understood, both instances engender moral necessity or obligation. With such instances in mind, "the good ought to be done" is self-evident. I have been presenting the "metaphysical" basis of Aquinas' natural law ethics. The rationale is the insight that the *ratio boni* of 94, 2, is in fact the *ratio entis* of the *Prima Pars*. Only by seeing the *ratio boni* in this light can one understand it as amply rich to ignite the will and to cause obligation when appearing in ourselves and others understood as willers of it. Again, the meaning of the subject in the first practical principle is not the *ratio boni* pure and simple, but the *ratio boni* as present in human beings in and through their willing of it. No other finite analogate of the good presents the analogon in as intense a fashion.

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<sup>29</sup> My interpretation could also enlist a text quoted by Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 284: "Although good is convertible with being, it is discovered in a special mode in things that are ensouled and have choice. . . . The reason for this is that 'good' is designated under the aspect of 'end.' Therefore, although [good] is discovered in everything in which there is an end, it is more particularly discovered in those things which appoint an end for themselves and which know the concept of the end." Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2m; trans. Bradley. In its admission that the transcendental good is found in a special way in rational beings, the text appears to express the integration of the transcendental good with the moral good for which I have been arguing. Bradley misses this reading and quotes the text for purposes of distinguishing between the transcendental and moral good.

As mentioned, most commentators on 94, 2, regard the *ratio boni* as just a formal notion with empty or minimal content. That is why they regard the first practical principle as not telling us much. They complain, “Every one agrees that the good ought to be done, but disagrees on what the good is.” In the minds of these complainers, the real stuff of ethics lies over and beyond whatever the first principle could supply. They miss the reduction of the *ratio boni* to the *ratio entis* that has already occurred. Hence they miss the richness by which Aquinas currently understands the *ratio boni*. That richness is what makes willers of the *ratio boni* so precious in the eyes of Aquinas. I wanted to show that the integration of these two *ratios* is well worth pondering.

The *ratios* and their integration escaped David Hume, who in his *Treatise of Human Nature* claimed: “Take an action allow’d to be vicious: Willful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call *vice*. In whichever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case.”<sup>30</sup> Of course for Aquinas, another matter of fact in the case

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<sup>30</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, bk. III, 1; see Green and Grose, eds., *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 2, 245. I have been using Aquinas to show how an obligation arises to treat the human with respect and solicitude. The basis for the appearance of this obligation is the awareness that the human is a willer of the good and an intellector of being. Like Aquinas, Immanuel Kant also investigates the sources of the appearance of moral necessity, or obligation. His analysis is interesting and merits study in its own terms. In a somewhat telescoped way, I summarize it as follows.

In his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (trans. Mary Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Kant begins with the “good will.” The good will is the will that acts for the sake of the law alone, not for any benefit following from obeying the law (13–14). But what does fidelity to the law mean? It means fidelity to what characterizes law. And what is that? It is “universality.” A law makes universal claims: no one, no where can do such and such (14–15). Next, this fidelity to universality is articulated in terms of the categorical imperative: Do only what you are able to universalize (44). Somewhat similarly we say in Christianity: Love your neighbor as yourself. But Kant pushes the analysis further. Why the categorical imperative?

For Kant the categorical imperative is grounded on the idea of a rational being as an end in itself (45). Think about what violating the imperative means. If I am willing to say that the proscription of lying is not universal, then I am saying that in some circumstances I can be lied to. Now for Kant there is something offensive with that thought. The offense is that I am being treated as a mere means to someone else’s end. To Kant that is a striking violation of our dignity. Our dignity, then, is that we are ends unto ourselves. But to be ends unto ourselves means to have an autonomous will (47). Such a will is absolutely free in that it takes no cues for its exercise from anything else. In other words, not even knowledge of the moral law precedes the

exists—the victim is a willer of the *ratio boni*. In light of that fact, the moral viciousness of the killing is patent. In striking at the person, the murderer is striking at the good.<sup>31</sup> Much more remains of Aquinas' natural law: the secondary precepts with their variability in rectitude and knowledge, the double effect principle, and the com-

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will. Such a reference for willing would encroach on the will's autonomy. For Kant, that we are ends means that we must regard ourselves as self-legislating (45).

If I have understood Kant correctly, his analysis saws off the very branch on which it is sitting. The analysis was supposed to explain the appearance of moral necessity or obligation. But the analysis concludes with a will so autonomous that it is really not bound by anything. For instance, you cannot even say that the very nature of freedom demands that you treat yourself as an end, for the appeal to nature here should mean that the will is beholding itself to something and so is not acting autonomously. In other words, the idea of a self-legislator is a contradiction in terms. How can a true creator of legislation be considered as genuinely bound by that legislation? This result seems to bring to an impasse the project of ethics, for insofar as obligation is explained only in a way that extinguishes obligation, then to preserve obligation we must leave obligation unexplained.

At one point Kant's analysis seems to commit a *non-sequitur*. Does the acknowledgment that I ought to be treated as an end strictly entail that I ought to be regarded as self-legislating? On the contrary, I think it suffices that I be thought of as self-determining. By self-determining I mean an agent that acts through its consent. Such an agent is also an end. For your capacity for self-determination forces me to respect you for yourself and so as an end. This idea of being self-determining will also explain the offense that one feels in being lied to. By the lie we are enlisted in a project for which we did not give our consent. If my freedom is understood in terms of self-determination rather than self-legislation, then I think that we can save the brunt of Kant's analysis without incurring its problems. It is simply not true that knowing cannot precede the freedom that gives us our dignity. Freedom in the sense of self-determination is sufficient for human dignity and must exist with prior knowledge. What then should we give our consent to? That is our *entrée* back to Aquinas' understanding of the human-as-willer-and-intellector-of-being as the good that ought to be done.

One finds Aquinas grounding human dignity upon human freedom in his *C.G.* III, 112. As noted, in this chapter he is concerned to prove that in his providence over rational creatures, God governs these creatures for their own sakes. Evidently Aquinas understands the rational creature to be such that even God cannot treat the rational creatures any way at all. Rather, one way is appropriate. The point, obviously, will have implications for human ethics. Aquinas provides many arguments for the point that the rational creature ought to be treated for its own sake. I discussed one argument from the rational creatures as an intellector of being. But Aquinas also proves the same from the fact that the rational creature is free, the master of his own act. Yet the freedom that he is talking about is not the self-legislating found in Kant's ethics. It is the freedom of self-determination set up by the intellection of being itself. Set up in this way, not only is freedom real, it is also instructed in how it ought to be exercised. And this instruction preserves and does not compromise the very freedom that it addresses. Again, without the intuition of being, you will never accomplish anything of substance in philosophy.

<sup>31</sup> Cf., "The precept: thou shalt do no murder, is a precept of natural law. Because

patibility of man's dignity with the licitness of capital punishment and killing in self-defense.<sup>32</sup> But in light of the whole picture, I cannot see how Aquinas in describing the obligatory good in terms of the human as a willer of the *ratio boni* is guilty of G. E. Moore's naturalistic fallacy. In his *Principia Ethica*, Moore critiques attempts to define

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a primordial and most general end of human nature is to preserve being—the being of that existent who is a person, and a universe unto himself.” Maritain, *Man and the State*, 88.

<sup>32</sup> Aquinas gives his judgment about capital punishment at *S.T.* II-II, 64, 2c. The argument has two main divisions. In the first division he introduces the ideas of the imperfect and the perfect and points out that the former exists for the latter. Aquinas then correlates part with imperfect and whole with perfect so that one can also say that the part is for the whole. In the second division, Aquinas characterizes all individual humans as parts of the social whole and concludes that when the individual through sin threatens the good of the social whole, the individual can be removed from society by execution. The standard criticism of this reasoning is that it proves too much. (Vd. the lengthy discussion of Germain Grisez, “Toward a Consistent Natural-Law Ethics of Killing,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 15 [1970]: 64–96.) If all humans are parts of the social whole, why are only sinners sacrificed for the good of the whole? But other texts such as the mentioned *C.G.* III, 112, *Praeterea* (vd. my n. 28) make clear that though individual humans are true parts of the social whole, they are not mere parts, only parts, of the social whole. As intellectors of being individual humans are also wholes unto themselves, with a consequent dignity that prohibits society from treating them as mere parts. Hence somehow sin alone causes a loss of dignity, with the result that only the sinner can be sacrificed for the good of the whole.

But how can sin do that? How can a human cease to be an intellector of being? It does seem odd. The *ratio entis* is naturally and automatically abstracted from any sensible multiplicity. Not any thing is a triangle and so does not always permit the abstraction of that commonality. But any thing is a being and so should always allow the abstraction of the *ratio entis*. If any thing to which the sinner turns is an analogate of being, how can the sinner turn away from being and lose dignity? Finding the answers to these questions requires remembering that the *ratio entis* is an analogon unequally present in its analogates. Being burns more brightly in some instances than others. For example, through intellection, being is more intensely present in a human than in a tree, though both are analogates of the *ratio*. Through this unequal presence of being in its analogates, one understands how for Aquinas the sinner through sin turns away from being. For example, through choosing pleasure, the adulterer shuns the *ratio entis* and *ratio bonum* present in the spouse as an intellector. Through love of money, a criminal can do the same and even strike at the *ratio entis* by using murder to reach and to keep the money that he loves. In a word, by acting against persons understood as intellectors of being, the sinner in a real way turns away from being, distances himself from being, with a consequent loss of dignity. The immoral free act of the will does wreak havoc with one's interior life, does effect a real change of status.

So the mechanics of sin theoretically provide the state with the possibility of capital punishment to deal with sinners. Two final points. Aquinas is not speaking of all sinners, but only those who through their sin are direct and immediate threats to the good of the state. Second, Aquinas is speaking only of the state's right to use

the morally valuable in terms of natural properties. Each attempted definition is dismissed by showing that it has problems. In my opinion, Aquinas' natural law ethics fully elaborated from a metaphysical basis is problem-free and passes the test of the naturalistic fallacy.

## 6. GERMAIN GRISEZ' INTERPRETATION

It would be a gross omission to leave this metaphysical interpretation of 94, 2, uncomparing to that of the famous current proponent of natural law ethics, Germain Grisez.<sup>33</sup> Grisez' analysis is not simply an exegetical exercise. The results of the exegesis are also philosophically probative. What are the results?

If I understand him, Grisez interprets the first half of 94, 2c, as follows. The human not only knows but acts. As an actor, the human follows practical reason. Practical reason is an active principle. Hence a key point in the operation of practical reason is action for an end. There is already some suggestion that practical reason is following an in-built program here. Grisez remarks, "direction to work is intrinsic to the mind in this [practical] capacity,"<sup>34</sup> and "Purpose in view, then, is a real aspect of the dynamic reality of practical reason, and a necessary condition of reason's being practical."<sup>35</sup> The haunting sound of a transcendental analysis continues in a passage that also connects end with good:

In its role as active principle the mind must think in terms of what can be an object of tendency. In other terms the mind can think, but then it will not set out to cause what it thinks. If the mind is to work toward unity with what it knows by conforming the known to itself rather than by conforming itself to the known, then the mind must think the known under the intelligibility of the good, for it is only as an object of tending and as a possible object of action that what is to be through

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capital punishment. This point abstracts from the issue of whether the state should exercise this right in this or these sets of circumstances.

<sup>33</sup> Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason" (full reference *supra*, n. 22). My interest here is simply with Grisez' handling of 94, 2. For a description and analysis of his entire natural law position, see Russell Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987).

<sup>34</sup> Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason," 350.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

practical reason has any reality at all. Thus it is that good first falls within the grasp of practical reason just as being first falls within the unrestricted grasp of the mind.<sup>36</sup>

Note that “the good” is not an object of abstraction. It does not come out of the real things that we sense. Rather, good arises out of a necessity of the mind—“as active principle the mind must think in terms of what can be an object of tendency.” Finally, in the last pages another passage strongly suggests an *a priori* and transcendental point of view for both practical and speculative reason. “To be practical is natural to human reason. Reason is doing its own work when it prescribes just as when it affirms or denies. The basic precepts of natural law are no less part of the mind’s original equipment than are the evident principles of theoretical knowledge. . . . One does not derive these principles from experience or from any previous understanding.”<sup>37</sup> Just as we have theoretical reason, so too we have practical reason, but along with these powers is content. For theoretical reason the content is the non-contradiction principle, for practical reason it is the basic precepts of natural law, for example, “Good is to be done and evil to be avoided.” Since, as noted, “good” is just another expression of “end,” then Grisez should be thinking that acting for an end is also part of the mind’s “original equipment.” In light of discussed Transcendental Thomist difficulties to underwrite the objectivity of the intellect’s innate and constitutive striving and dynamism, one wonders if Grisez has compromised from the start his entire ethical project.

Having spun the primary practical principle out of itself,<sup>38</sup> practical reason must now consult experience. This moment begins Grisez’ interpretation of the second half of 94, 2. Experience affords an acquaintance with human inclinations. Since ends are also goods, experience provides us with a more particular grasp of the goods that one ought to do. “The primary [practical] precept provides a point of view from which experience is considered. Within experience we have tendencies which make themselves felt; they point their way toward appropriate objects. These inclinations are part of ourselves, and so their objects are human goods.”<sup>39</sup> Also:

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 353. Also, does any one else hear an echo of Lonergan here, especially in the last line?

<sup>37</sup> Grisez, “The First Principle of Practical Reason,” 380.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.

This principle provides us with an instrument for making another kind of sense of our experience. The object of a tendency becomes an objective which is to be imposed by the mind as we try to make the best of what faces us by bringing it into conformity with practical truth. Practical reason is mind directed to direct and it directs as it can. But it can direct only toward that for which man can be brought to act, and that is either toward the objects of his natural inclinations or toward objectives that derive from these. If practical reason ignored what is given in experience, it would have no power to direct, for what-is-to-be cannot come from nothing. The direction of practical reason presupposes possibilities on which reason can get leverage, and such possibilities arise only in reflection upon experience. The leverage reason gets on these possibilities is expressed in the basic substantive principles of natural law.<sup>40</sup>

Having come this far, Grisez drives a wedge between the human goods indicated by the natural inclinations and the moral good. Choosing a human good is not *ipso facto* indicative of moral rightness. His list of reasons for this cleavage is long and complicated. Before attempting to summarize them, I want to note how Grisez thinks that the gap is bridged. He remarks:

The true understanding of the first principle of practical reason suggests on the contrary that the alternative to moral goodness is an arbitrary restriction upon the human goods which can be attained by reasonable direction of life. The first principle of practical reason directs toward ends which make human action possible; by virtue of the first principle are formed precepts that represent every aspect of human nature. Together these principles open to man all the fields in which he can act; rational direction insures that action will be fruitful and that life will be as productive and satisfying as possible. Whatever man may achieve, his action requires at least a remote basis in the tendencies that arise from human nature. Similarly, actual being does not eliminate unrealized possibilities by demanding that they be not only self-consistent but also consistent with what already is; rather, it is partly by this demand that actual being grounds possibility.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 372. See Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 50–64, on Grisez' later distinction between the first principle of practical reason vs. the first principle of morality. In his article, p. 369, Grisez admits that the first practical principle must be supplemented by other principles.

Moral goodness appears to consist in no arbitrary restriction of human goods attainable by rational direction. Rational direction, that is, morality, is intent upon achieving a life that realizes as many of the human goods as possible. Morality consists of a life that comprises the most inclusive choices possible. Evidently, since none of the precepts of 94, 2, speak of this proposition, the precepts are precepts of practical reason but not precepts of morality. It is not that the precepts of natural law lack force; they are precepts and so are prescriptive.<sup>42</sup> The point is that the precepts lack the force of the moral ought. As oxymoronic as it sounds, what I should do is not necessarily what I ought to do. The former becomes the latter when the former occurs in a rationally ordered life. Though he says that “the true understanding of the first principle of practical reason suggests” that moral goodness lies in inclusivity, Grisez’ article provides no elaboration of the source of this first moral injunction, as was done for the first practical injunction.<sup>43</sup>

By my count, Grisez provides six reasons for an unrestricted meaning of *good* in the first practical principle. In section 2 of Grisez’ article he gives three reasons under the rubric that as a principle of natural law, the end cannot be identified with moral goodness. First,<sup>44</sup> since morally good action is directed to ulterior goods, Aquinas denies that man’s ultimate end consists in morally good action. Hence, in their expression of ends, natural law precepts transcend moral goodness. Second,<sup>45</sup> moral good and evil are precisely the inner perfection or privation of human action. But as the ultimate end, God does not depend for realization on human action. Hence the end transcends morality and provides an extrinsic foundation for it. Third,<sup>46</sup> moral value by no means exhausts the human goods. For instance, human life is a human good, but the act that preserves life can be bad.

Section 3 of Grisez’ article adds three more reasons for absenting the “moral” good from practical reason’s first principle. Fourth,<sup>47</sup> if the first practical principle were about the moral good, it would be

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<sup>42</sup> See Grisez, “The First Principle of Practical Reason,” 373–75.

<sup>43</sup> For a discussion, see Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 52.

<sup>44</sup> Grisez, “The First Principle of Practical Reason,” 361.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 363.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

an imperative that filled natural law only with moral absolutes. But for Aquinas, natural law includes counsels as well as precepts. Fifth,<sup>48</sup> quoting Aquinas' "every judgment of practical reason proceeds from naturally known principles" (*S.T.* I-II, 100, 1c), Grisez observes that both the virtuous and the vicious make practical judgments. Indeed, practical judgment is necessary for human action as such. Hence, for evil judgments to fall under the first practical principle, the meaning of its subject must not be restricted to the moral good. Sixth,<sup>49</sup> again citing Aquinas, who remarks that law is a set of principles of practical reason related to actions themselves, just as principles of theoretical reason are related to conclusions (*S.T.* I-II, 90, 1, ad 2m), Grisez insists that the first practical principle is not merely a principle of imperative judgments, but "primarily" a principle of actions, good and bad.

## 7. COMMENTS ON GRISEZ

To compare what I understand Grisez to be saying of 94, 2, with what I understand to be the metaphysics of the article, I want to comment on his apparently *a priori* conception of practical reason and on his just-listed six reasons for vacating 94, 2, of the moral good.

For Grisez, practical reason of itself is interested in doing. Practical reason is not prompted to act for an end, but is already doing it. You might say that we are condemned to be actors. We are locked into this role by the mind itself and its "original equipment." But acting is for something; hence practical reason is concerned with acting for an end. And since "end" includes the intelligibility of good, then practical reason's first principle is "Good is to be done and pursued." With this interest, practical reason observes human experience and notes human tendencies as falling under its *a priori* concerns. The predisposition of practical reason invests the objects of human tendencies with the appearance of human goods. In sum, given that I am interested in acting, then I am interested in these objects.

But just as I asked the Transcendental Thomists how one knows that the intellect's dynamism to the infinite is more than a quirk of

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 367–70.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

the human mind, so too one can fairly ask of Grisez, How can I know that practical reason is more than what may be a quirk of the mind, a useless passion, a wild-goose chase? In other words, to the question Why should we pursue life? Grisez' answer is Because we are pursuers to which objects of pursuit are obviously relevant. But Grisez cannot elaborate why we are pursuers. We just are. Accordingly, someone could wonder if this fact is just a quirk of nature and so doubt, especially in the midst of sickness or depravation, if the appearance of life as a good is objective. In fact, if the skeptic is consistent, the skeptic's legitimate doubt about the objectivity of practical reason should shut down the entire operation. Because of the skeptic's doubt, the very appearance of goods is questioned. A fundamental investment of ourselves in anything seems thwarted.<sup>50</sup>

Just as the Transcendental Thomists cannot escape an *a posteriori* account of speculative reason, so too Grisez' position requires an *a posteriori* account of practical reason. Grisez needs to show how reality prompts practical reason. It is in an *a posteriori* vein that my metaphysical account labored. In sum, practical intellect discovers that the *ratio entis* abstracted from the real things given in sensation is also the *ratio boni*. This realization presents the will with its initial object and calls forth volition. In the wake of this dynamic, real things appear as finite goods before which the will is indeterminately inclined. Obligation is added to this picture by the further realization that the human analogate of the good presents the analogon in heightened fashion. The real and objective richness of being in this analogate leads to the real obligation to respect and cherish the human. The connection of the good with being connects ethics with Aquinas' *a posteriori* epistemology. Grisez' interpretation of 94, 2, lacks this basic dimension and appears to take an opposite tack.

A second difference is with Grisez' insistence that 94, 2, is only

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<sup>50</sup> Consider Henry Veatch's first reason why a transcendental turn will not do in ethics: "[W]hen it is a case of our moral obligations—obligations which in the very nature of the case often go counter to our desires and inclinations and place serious restrictions upon our choices—would we be willing to settle for any appearance of obligation (as contrasted with its reality), however persistent, pervasive, and ineluctable the appearance might be? In short, appearances may suffice well enough in the one case [knowledge of the natural world], but hardly in the other, where our very interests and desires and wills are at stake." Henry Veatch, *For An Ontology of Morals: A Critique of Contemporary Ethical Theory* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 93.

about human goods, not moral goods. Now, I did acknowledge that societal requirements can temper moral obligation. And so in some sense the last moral word is not in until proposed courses of action are coordinated with societal needs. Nevertheless, one should recognize that the process does not introduce moral obligation, but tempers a moral obligation that is already present. To appreciate oneself as an analogate of the *ratio boni* in which the analogon burns especially bright is not something that fails to catch one's moral attention. Likewise, to take onto oneself in the sexual embrace a fellow human understood in the same fashion cannot but strike one as a momentous event, entailing certain obligations of exclusive respect and solicitude. So prior to a consideration of ourselves as true parts of a social whole, our awareness is suffused with moral obligation. Indeed, that society can never ask us to transgress these goods but only ask us to delay their pursuit indicates that the goods already carry not just practical obligation but moral obligation.<sup>51</sup>

So what, then, of Grisez' six reasons for populating 94, 2, simply with human goods? In his first reason Grisez assumes that moral goodness attaches only to moral action, and since action is always for an end, then the end and the morally good are distinct. But this argument presupposes an overly facile distinction between the human goods of 94, 2, and moral actions. The human goods of 94, 2, are objects of choice and so already are within the sphere of human willing. Recall that we are in the vein of practical reason, and practical reason presents proposals for choice. At 94, 2, in its first principle, practical reason presents for a choice of respect and solicitude the human understood as a willer of the *ratio boni*. Various epiphanies of this object are then enumerated. So the human goods that are the ends of respective human inclinations are proposed as choices of respect and solicitude. In other words, the human ends of 94, 2, are precisely the items that Grisez calls moral.

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<sup>51</sup> Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 64, observes that Grisez' treatment of immorality of contraception proceeds without any appeal to Grisez' first principle of morality: "[W]e are urged by the system to move directly from a first practical principle (i.e., procreativity as a basic good) to the particular mode of responsibility, and thereby make a judgment; namely, I ought not to act against this good. The principle determining judgment rests not so much upon Grisez's notion of the ideality of the Fpm's directive to be open to integral fulfillment as upon his notions, first, that the basic goods are the *prima principia* of practical reason which cannot be abrogated without falling into volitional absurdity, and second, that these goods are irreducible and incommensurable."

In his second reason, Grisez again attaches moral goodness to human actions and then notes that as ultimate final cause, God is not something realizable through human action. Hence end and moral goodness are once more seen to be distinct. But at 94, 2, practical reason presents as a human good not God *simpliciter* but divine truth as able to be freely pursued. So understood God is an end, a human good, that can stay identical with the moral good. God in the sense of the choice for God is something morally obligatory to do.

In his third reason, we again find Grisez too facilely distinguishing between human life as a human good and the choice to preserve life as a moral good. I fail to recognize the distinction in 94, 2. The context of 94, 2, is practical reason, and practical reason makes proposals for choice. Hence human life is present not in itself, but as an object for respect and solicitude. In sum, no interpretative exigency exists in 94, 2, to distinguish human goods from moral goods, because *moral* attaches to human actions.

Fourth, Grisez observed that if in 94, 2, the human good is the moral good, then natural law would have no place for the non-obligatory good that it would be well to do. The ethical life would assume the form of a no-frills Puritanical lifestyle. Anything unrelated positively or negatively to the moral good would simply be of no interest. But Aquinas himself includes in natural law not only precepts but counsels. Hence at 94, 2, the human good is not the moral good.

Whatever may be the case with Suarez and the other interpreters of natural law on Grisez' mind, there is no application of this fourth criticism to my interpretation. I did not say that the *ratio boni* is in humans only. Rather, my claim is that among all the analogates of the good that parade before us, the *ratio boni* shines most brightly in the human. In other words, it is in its instances according to degrees of intensity. Hence, after one honors responsibilities to the human analogate, natural law itself discharges one to cultivate the manifestation of the good in its non-human, non-obligatory instances. In other words, if the larger and earlier context for the emergence of practical reason is recalled, there always remains a sensitivity to all the analogates of the good. For example, finery is not strictly demanded by human needs. But is its pursuit irrelevant in a situation in which human needs have been met and in which beautiful garments are also an analogate of the *ratio boni*? I do not believe so. Accordingly, natural law would issue the counsel to pursue fine and beautiful

things and manners with the proviso that one has first addressed the basic needs.

Quoting Aquinas, Grisez argued fifth that naturally known principles are the basis for every practical judgment, and since both the virtuous and the vicious make practical judgments, the “good” expressed in the principles cannot be the moral good. But Grisez misreads the text. At *S.T.* I-II, 100, 1c, what proceeds from naturally known principles is every judgment of “morally good” practical reason: “The moral precepts are distinct from the ceremonial and judicial precepts, for they are about things pertaining of their very nature to good morals. Now since human morals depend on their relation to reason, which is the proper principle of human acts, those morals are called good which accord with reason. And as every judgment of speculative reason proceeds from the natural knowledge of first principles, so every judgment of the practical reason proceeds from naturally known principles, as was stated above.”<sup>52</sup> Good morals accord with reason. But the mentioned practical judgments proceed from naturally known principles. They are, then, in accord with human reason, and so should be considered judgments of good morals. The text is not speaking generally both of the virtuous and the vicious, but only of the former. So, interestingly, *contra* Grisez’ usage, his citation implies that the 94, 2, discussion of first principles of practical reason is in the context of the moral good.

Even though Aquinas is speaking about morally good practical judgments both at I-II, 100, 1, and 94, 2, the metaphysical interpretation of the latter leaves understandable the actions of the vicious. As the interpretation has noted, practical reason occurs within the larger context of human freedom. That larger context situates particular beings over and against the *ratio entis* now also understood as the *ratio boni*. Over and against that object, particular beings also present themselves as particular goods before which we are indeterminately, or freely, disposed. So even after we know the good that we should do, specifically, to cherish the *ratio boni* in its human epiphany, we still are cognizant of the other goods that we can seek in violation of the good that we should choose. In other words, as I see it, Grisez is confusing the good presented by practical reason as the principle of free human willing with the good presented by practical reason as

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<sup>52</sup> Pegis, *Basic Writings*, vol. 2, 828.

the principle of free morally good human willing. The first is the *ratio boni simpliciter*, the transcendental; the second is the *ratio boni* appreciated as uniquely and intensely present in the human willer. While the actions of the vicious deviate from practical intellect in the second sense, they remain under practical intellect in the first sense. So one can understand the human goods of 94, 2, as moral goods without compromising any rational explanation of vicious action. Since rightly ordered reason occurs within the larger context of human freedom, it never obliterates the appearance of good in things that are in violation of the good that we ought to do.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, Grisez again cites Aquinas, but this time to the effect that law is a principle of human action as such. Since viciousness is a human action, it must come under law, and so law is not simply a principle of imperatives. In question 90, Aquinas is just beginning his treatment of law, described in the preface as the means by which God, the extrinsic principle moving to the morally good, instructs us. In my opinion, a fair reader would think that it is simply too early to know from *S.T.* I-II, 90, 1, ad 2m, whether the universal propositions of practical reason direct to operations as such or to operations as morally good. In article 1 the concern is to show simply that law pertains to reason. Later at 92, 1, Aquinas does connect law and moral goodness. The connection is so strong that a law not according to reason, for example, a tyrannical law, is not a law at all (ad 4m), and the “goodness” that such a law effects in things is not real, because the things are bad of themselves, as in the case of a robber who works in a way adapted to his end (*corpus*). At this point, still antecedent to 94, 2, the reader knows that for Aquinas, genuine law is not a principle of human action as such, but of morally good human action. That is the fair preconception for reading 94, 2.

## 8. METAPHYSICS AND ETHICS

Much more could be said of twentieth-century discussion of Aquinas’ natural law ethics. But for purposes of dealing with objections to a

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<sup>53</sup> Unlike Grisez, Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 315–18, regards the first practical principle as dealing with the moral good. Yet, unlike me, Bradley regards the moral good as still indeterminate. It includes under it the real moral good and the apparent moral good. In my opinion, Bradley fails to textually verify this distinction. Also, to the contrary, in texts cited above, I find Aquinas regarding the first moral principle as dealing with the real moral good.

Neo-Thomist revival, I have said enough. To make clear in the next chapter why that revival should occur, I have focused on a fundamental link between Aquinas' thinking about the *ratio entis* and his first practical principle: Good ought to be done. Metaphysics morphs into ethics. The *ratio entis* converts into the *ratio boni*, and to apprehend that conversion as it occurs in the human intellect is to be brought up short with an unparalleled instance among all the kinds of beings before us. Intellection and willing invest the human with an intensity of the analogon not found in other analogates of being. Aquinas' metaphysical elaborations of intellection and volition as operations of a rational or intellectual nature enable one to grasp profoundly why our dignity consists in being a rational animal. To be an intellector of the *ratio entis* has implications for volition, freedom, obligation, society, and religion. The range of dimensions of human subjectivity, so trumpeted since modern philosophy, finds a place in Aquinas' philosophy of being. It is the height of caricature to link a basically *a posteriori*, or "cosmological," interpretation of Aquinas with an insensitivity to subjectivity.<sup>54</sup>

It is futile to object that the phenomena of subjectivity are too pervasive to be understood by something as exotic and rare as Thomistic metaphysics. The *ratio entis* is such an automatic and natural abstraction from the self-manifestly real things presented by sensation that it can lie hidden in the human psyche but produce conscious effects. Everyone seems to possess at least a vague sense of their own dignity. And does that not flow from an experience with their own mental life? In that life we rise to heights from which we can look down upon the entire universe. We can render the universe an object. As Pascal noted, in terms of matter the universe swallows man, but in terms of mind, man swallows the universe. As youngsters, my friends and I played a game that began with saying that Boston was in Massachusetts. The game continued with locating Massachusetts in the United States, the United States in North America, North America in the Western Hemisphere, the Western Hemisphere on the planet Earth, the Earth in the solar system, the solar system in the Milky Way, the Milky Way in the universe, the universe in . . . ? Pascal's observation and the game make sense in terms of an inchoate

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<sup>54</sup> For the complaint of a "truncated" view of the subject, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *The Subject* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1968).

presence of what Aquinas called the *ratio entis*. And are not these feats behind the appreciation of our fellows? What we realize about ourselves, do we not extend to our fellows? In this fashion, one explains everyone's at least half-conscious realization that human relations run by special rules.

# A Philosophical Estimate of the Twentieth-Century Thomist Revival

AS NOTED, many philosophers would concede that in philosophy, the newest is not necessarily the truest. The *de facto* winning philosophy may logically be less true than the philosophy that it buries. No event in philosophy's history is exempt from a philosophical estimate. In the light of previous chapters, I want to attempt a philosophical estimate of the event of the twentieth-century Thomistic revival.

## 1. RETORSION AND REALISM

Chapter 1 sketched the revival's evolution and the perceived reasons for the evolution. Thomism began the century as an *a posteriori* philosophical stance, with sensation as the basic access to reality. But under the weight of philosophical and theological deficiencies, Thomism changed into an apriorism that focused on the implications of the natural and inborn intellectual dynamism to Infinite Being (Maréchal and Rahner) or to the notion of being (Lonergan). Thanks to the technique of retorsion, this dynamism replaced sensation as our primordial and basic contact with reality. In fact, the dynamism constituted the data of sensation as objective. Epistemology was done from the top down.

Because of the negative opinion of Chapter 4 about the efficacy of retorsion to establish the mind's contact with reality, I am constrained to regard the narrated evolution of twentieth-century Thomism as a tale of a journey into the abyss. Again, with good reason, retorsion will never convince the skeptic. The grinding of performative self-contradiction may quite well be a screeching of merely mental gears and not indicative of any manhandling of reality. Retorsion is what

you would expect if intellectual dynamism is a law of the mind only. In a word, the Transcendental Thomist fails to beat Kant at his own game. Since no one can confidently say that assertions express more than how the mind works, then Kant's strictures on classical metaphysics remain in place. And since whatever *Thomism* means, it means metaphysics, then Transcendental Thomism appears to have lost its Thomism.

Obviously, skepticism about the objectivity of intellectual dynamism blocks any use of Transcendental Thomism to underwrite a systematic pluralism that avoids relativism. The strategy was that since intellectual dynamism is objective, the conceptually distinct metaphysics that circle the dynamism could all be regarded as true but finite expressions of reality. Somewhat similarly, each great baseball player is a true but finite and limited expression of *great baseball player*. But inability to secure confidently the objectivity of the dynamism means that equally possible is that each conceptually irreducible metaphysics is a finite and limited expression of what is false. Now each metaphysics stands as neither true nor false. It falls on free choice to make of them what it wills. Relativism and arbitrariness are rampant.

## 2. TRANSCENDENTAL THOMISM AND THE THOMISTIC TEXTS

My philosophical judgment renders the proposed textual basis for Transcendental Thomism a crucial issue. If Transcendental Thomists have the texts correctly, then my philosophical criticism extends back to Aquinas himself. Fortunately, their textual claims are unverified. A list of Neo-Thomist counter-observations scattered in Chapters 2 and 4 is as follows. First, the defense of the non-contradiction principle at *In IV Meta., lectio 7*, is not a case of retorsion. The reason is simple. Aristotle, Aquinas, and their opponents are all realists. Everyone thinks that they know reality. Aristotle and Aquinas think that reality is consistent, while their opponents think that reality is contradictory. Aristotle and Aquinas' defense is to observe that the realism of their opponents should render their thinking contradictory and so reduce them to the level of plants. On the other hand, if the opponents want to keep their thinking consistent, then in light of their realism they should acknowledge that reality is consistent. No party

begins by claiming that the non-contradiction principle could be a law merely of the mind. Again, everyone is a realist.

Yet the skeptical opponents of retorsion do begin without realism. They assume that the principle could be just a law of the mind. Neither Aristotle nor Aquinas is addressing these opponents. Hence, it is far from clear that they would handle them by the self-validating methodology of retorsion. Rather, both in *lectio* 6 and in *Quaestiones de Anima* 5c, the notion of being and the first principle based upon it receive an abstractive validation. It is worth noting that the characterization of the first principle as *per se notum* never meant to preclude as a source of its concepts an acknowledgment of an abstraction from real sensible things. The denomination *per se notum* excluded a syllogistic validation of the first principle.

Second, Aquinas' talk at *S.T.* I, 12, 1c, and I-II, 3, 8c, about the natural desire for God is not about something innate to the intellect. Rather, it is an *a posteriori* occurrence. It "kicks in" once God's existence has been known from sensible things. The desire consists of the attempt to understand what God is after having proven that God exists. In other words, it is a particular application of the intellect's first operation, which tries to grasp the *quidditatis rei*, to a cause discovered from metaphysical reflection upon sensible things. Before that discovery, there is no actual intellectual desiring as Aquinas understands these words. Within this *a posteriori* context Aquinas understands Augustine's remark in the opening of his *Confessions*: "My heart is restless until it rests in You." Aquinas' *a posteriori* understanding of the natural desire will become clearer later in this chapter.

Third, Thomistic texts such as *De Ver.* 22, 2, ad 1m and *S.T.* I, 6, 1, ad 2m, that speak of an "implicit" desire for and knowledge of God also do not amount to anything like the Transcendental Thomist *a priori* intellectual dynamism. To desire God implicitly means to desire things made in God's likeness. And such a doctrine is subsequent to a proof of God as the all-perfect being in whose likeness everything is made. Likewise, cognitive beings implicitly know God in any object of knowledge, because every single thing has been made in the likeness of God. To know a thing is, then, to know God. Aquinas' doctrine of an implicit knowledge of God indicates nothing *a priori*. Rather, it is a gloss on *a posteriori* knowledge once the status of things as creatures has been discovered through *a posteriori* reasoning.

Fourth, Aquinas' agreement with the opening words of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, "All men by nature desire to know," also does not signal what Transcendental Thomists call the *a priori* and constitutive intellectual dynamism. Rather, in Aquinas' commentary the intellect's natural desire to know is simply its natural desire to know by abstraction. The knowing powers are "inclined" to receive, not to project. Transcendental Thomists assume that every inclination has to be an imposition of a tendency.

Fifth, neither does Aquinas' talk at *De Ver.* 10, 6, and *In IV Meta., lectio* 6, of the first principles as "naturally known" and "inborn" signal any *a priori* for the human intellect. In line with the contexts of these remarks, one should understand the natural and inborn knowledge of the first principles in terms of the inborn capacity of the agent intellect to abstract the principles immediately and with ease. Similarly, we say that someone is a natural born baseball player. This remark does not mean that the individual is born with the ability to throw a curve ball. Rather, we mean that the individual is born with the capacity to acquire the ability with ease.

In this way also the human intellect reflects to some extent the mode of divine knowledge by way of interiority. Rousselot argues that intellectual creatures, that is, angels and humans, must in some respect reflect the creator's way of knowing reality in and through knowing himself. Hence angels have innate species of things, and humans have innate knowledge of first principles.<sup>1</sup> But the texts admit the Neo-Thomist interpretation that the first principles are inborn because we are naturally disposed to abstract them so easily.

Sixth, nor does any need exist to appeal to intellectual dynamism to establish the subject matter of metaphysics—*ens commune*, appreciated as an intelligibility able to be realized in spirits as well as bodies. Supposedly, intellectual dynamism beyond the material order is the prompt for the judgment of separation that a being is not necessarily a body. But using Owens, a Neo-Thomist can regard this description of the subject of metaphysics as a reflection of a more mature understanding. Though no science proves its subject, other things about the subject matter are proven. For instance, the natural philosopher demonstrates matter and form as the intrinsic principles of *ens mobile*. Among these things proven of the subject matter, why

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<sup>1</sup> Rousselot, *The Intellectualism of Saint Thomas*, 21–24.

can one not include knowledge of the subject's extent? Discovering *ens qua ens* as the commonality in sensible things both really and cognitively existing, the metaphysician will go on to broaden that concept by proving immaterial realities such as the rational soul and possible separate substances. This activity is not accurately described as proving the subject of metaphysics. In truth, it is an establishing of the full extent of a subject matter that has already grounded metaphysics.

My sixth comment indicates that for Aquinas, not all objects are profiled up and against something larger, as claimed in Transcendental Thomism. The *ratio entis* is "objectified" from data, a multiplicity of real sensible things. Its broadening beyond the material order is also achieved by adding data to the multiplicity that originally suggested it. The additional data consist of the rational soul and separate substances as at least possible. Both are known by the metaphysician. Hence, though the metaphysician does not prove the subject matter of metaphysics but, like every other science, discovers it, the metaphysician does establish the extent of that subject matter. It is true that our appreciation of sensible things as finite and limited occurs up and against something larger. But this something larger can be being understood as a natural and spontaneous *abstractum*. Up and against the *ratio entis*, any thing as an analogate of that analogon will appear as finite and limited. Given that the thing shows the *ratio* only through the thing's difference, the thing will always appear as limited and finite against the intelligible backdrop of the *abstractum* of being. In sum, the mental phenomena so dear to Transcendental Thomists for its supposed indication of a dynamic intellectual *a priori* can be given a home in Neo-Thomism.

Finally, Aquinas' claim at *De Ver.* 1, 9c, that the intellect knows truth by a reflection upon itself also does not trumpet a reference to an intellectual dynamism whose objectivity is retortively achieved. In the context of earlier articles of question 1, Aquinas is referring to the intellect's own grasp of the conformity between its formulated propositions and what it apprehends in sensible things themselves. Consequently, the intellect understands that it is geared to conform itself to reality.

No doubt proponents of Transcendental Thomism will go on to cite new texts or to give new twists to old texts. Their reading of Aquinas is a genie out of the bottle, and so the interpretive game will

continue. Neo-Thomists must remain open to the further moves in the debate. But for the time being at least, the Neo-Thomist reply possesses sufficient inertia to be undisturbed by textual sniping. Only a response in kind, specifically, a substantial one, can effect the drift of the Neo-Thomist vessel.

Hence, Neo-Thomists were accurate to construe Aquinas as an *a posteriori* thinker whose basic contact with reality is sensation. This conclusion entails that for better or for worse, the aspiring Thomist must confront again the purported philosophical and theological weaknesses of Neo-Thomism listed in Chapter 1. The philosophical estimate of the Thomistic revival now turns to a philosophical estimate of these claimed deficiencies of Neo-Thomism.

### 3. NEO-THOMISM'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEBILITIES

Epistemological weaknesses were the first problem. Can Neo-Thomism philosophically defend its presumption of immediate realism from the dream and hallucination possibilities and the relativity in perception arguments? Transcendental Thomists believe that these problems cannot be solved just on their own terms. It concedes to modern philosophy that the data of sensation are not self-manifestly real. Rather, the data's apparent reality is a mediated phenomenon. The data of sensation appear as real thanks to immersion in the intellect's dynamism. Just as the precise length of an object appears when the object is brought in juxtaposition to a ruler, so too the fundamental realness of the data of sensation appears when the data are placed within intellectual dynamism. One is confident that this apparent fundamental reality of the data is not illusory, because by retorsion one is critically confident about the objectivity of intellectual dynamism. But given the sterility of retorsion to achieve objectivity, a Thomist should not concede to the moderns that the sensible data are not self-manifestly real. How can this be done in the wake of modern objections to the contrary?

By drawing upon the material of Chapter 3, a Neo-Thomist can articulate a defense of the immediate realist presumption. Again, imagine the tarantulas crawling up your back. For a second you are frightened, but then you regain your composure. You realize that you were only imagining. How did you make this transition from fright to

composure? Did you not come out of your fright thanks to an act of reflection that made apparent the cognitional device in and through which you were imagining the tarantulas crawling on your back? In other words, your reflection from what you were imagining did not immediately and directly go to yourself. It first crossed something in and through which the imagining was occurring. This cognitional device is called an image, and it is a fascinating item. It possesses an “intentional” charge, a capacity to bring your awareness to something else. Other states of human awareness involve similar cognitional devices. For example, remembering does. Here the cognitional device is called a memory, not an image. For purposes of discussion, let me follow the practice of Yves R. Simon and call all of these cognitional devices, these items with an “intentional” charge, ideas.

Now, it is my contention that both dreaming and hallucinating occur in and through ideas. Sometimes when on the border between sleeping and waking, we can catch sight of the dream ideas in and through which we were dreaming this or that. We then come out of a dream or hallucination by an act of reflection that uncovers the ideas in and through which we were dreaming or hallucinating. Sadly but truly, some people cannot reflect and uncover the ideas in and through which they are hallucinating. So how do I know that I am not dreaming or hallucinating right now? The answer is that my reflection upon my current awareness shows that no ideas are present. Reflection shows that my awareness right now is not an awareness of real things in and through ideas, as happens in dreams and hallucinations. Rather, reflection shows that my awareness right now is of real things directly and immediately. In other words, reflection upon my current sensory cognition shows that my object is self-manifestly real. Aquinas seems to say the same. As noted, he remarks that as one moves from the more interior senses to the exterior, one distinguishes between things and their images.

I have pointed out that many Neo-Thomists compromise this reply to the dream and hallucination possibilities by insisting that even sensation occurs in and through “ideas.” Just as there are ideas of imagination, remembering, dreaming, and hallucinating, so too for many Neo-Thomists there are ideas of sensation. This move resurrects all the doubts about sensing a real world, for we can never be certain that, like ideas of imagination, the ideas of sensation bring us to something not real. Fortunately the reflexively ascertainable truth is

that sensation does not include ideas. Finally, I will note in passing that correctly understood, Aquinas' doctrine of sensory cognitional likenesses, the "sensible impressed species," is not any reference to sensory "ideas." The sensible impressed species is the very form of the real thing as it is in the knower.

What about the relativity-in-perception critique of the immediate realist understanding of sensation? The relativity in perception is not sufficiently great to justify doubt about immediate realism. Note, both I and the color-blind person see real color, we just disagree on the exact shade. Also, when I hold up the paper, everyone in the class sees real shape. Students just disagree on the exact configuration. Even relativity theory fails to blunt knowledge of something really moving. While daydreaming at the window of my train I might for a moment think that the nearby truck has begun moving, when in fact I began moving as my train pulled slowly from the station. Was my perception of motion false, an illusion? No, the motion that I observed was real; I was not wrong about that. I was wrong only about the precise subject of the motion. For a moment, I thought that it was the truck. Note that in all these cases, sufficient immediate realism exists for the Neo-Thomist to initiate philosophizing. The Neo-Thomist does not have to know what is the exact shade of color of the poppies, the exact configuration of the paper, the exact subject of the motion. It is enough that sense cognition provides real color, shape, and motion.

It is worth mentioning that immediate realism never claimed that in directly knowing real things, we know them perfectly. Often real things come to be cognitively present at the end of long chains of physical causality, so that real things become directly present in cognition imperfectly. Yet in fairness, one should note that the physical causality can also achieve exactitude. As noted, our experience with TV cameras shows that sometimes physical causality gets it right. The pink shade of the dress of the woman in the studio is captured by the image on the screen. But again, for Neo-Thomism the fundamental point remains that perception presents something real—a real color, a real shape, and so on, even granting inexactitude in the perception.

But even apart from these classic philosophical challenges, immediate realism has to deal with a "freakishness" of its own making. A modicum of reflection leads to questions such as, If my hand is in the

oven, it feels the heat; if I am in your cognition, why do I not “feel” the cognition? And: If I am directly in your cognition, why is my aquiline nose fuzzy? Until one realizes that both questions presuppose that direct presence means physical presence, then one will succumb to the temptation to moderate an immediate realism. A picture, likeness, replica of the real thing will be in cognition, but not the real thing itself. What breaks the grip of the presumption is the reflexively ascertainable fact that sensation, that is, what I am doing now as I look this way and listen, directly bears upon something other than myself. This fact enables me to keep my cognitive balance and not so much deny the previous questions as transform them into “how-questions.” For example: If I am in your cognition as I evidently am, how come I do not feel the cognition? And: If I am directly in your cognition, how come my nose is not present as it actually is? Given that our reflection confirms the facts, these how-questions can be forever left unanswered. Ignorance of how something is so does not entail ignorance that it is so. A native out of the jungles of New Guinea knows that the car is moving down the street, but given his ignorance of automotive mechanics, the native has no understanding of how the car is moving down the street. Aquinas’ understanding of the sensor as possessing formal “amplitude” and “extension,” borrowed from Aristotle’s tweaking ofhylomorphism, is the way to explain how the above phenomena can occur within immediate realism.

In sum, the Neo-Thomist can articulate a defense of the self-manifestly real character of the data of sensation that is a presupposition in both Aristotelian Thomism and Existential Thomism. The Aristotelian Thomist has a direct cognition of real accidents from which to conclude to real substance that, as changeable, is hylomorphically composed. The Existential Thomist possesses the datum of something real cognitively existing from which to analyze out the thing’s real existence as a distinct act.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Despite these two points and Aquinas’ mantra-like claim that all our knowledge takes its origin from sensible things, Alasdair MacIntyre, while claiming to express Aquinas, contends that “there is no way of identifying, characterizing, or classifying that particular datum in a way relevant to the purposes of theoretical inquiry except in terms of some prior theoretical or doctrinal commitment,” *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1990), 17; also 111–12 on the data as “too meager and [they] underdetermine any characterization at the required level.” Likewise, in his *First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary Philo-*

## 4. FINITE TO INFINITE

The second philosophical criticism conceded a realist epistemology to Neo-Thomism but insisted that no simply *a posteriori* handling of the data of the real world conclusively gets the mind to the infinite all-perfect being that is the God of Christian belief. If real things are finite, then a finite cause will always logically suffice to account for them. This objection is decisive for the Aristotelian Neo-Thomists who define being in terms of possession of formal act. Formal act in itself is something limited and determinate. That is why even if formal act is conceived as not further limited by reception in some subject, in other words, if it is conceived as subsistent, formal act fails to reach the height of an all-perfect being. But Existential Neo-Thomists can dodge this bullet. For them being is basically understood in terms of possessing *esse*, or *actus essendi*. This is a further and different type of act than formal act. Its addition to a thing does not further determine the thing as accidents of complexion, height, and posture further determine a human being. In this respect, existential act is not a real predicate, and Kant correctly remarked that no difference exists between the possible and the actual.

For Aquinas, existential act does add to the thing, but it does not add a formal determination. Aquinas' denomination of *esse formale* should not confuse one on this point. *Esse* is a non-formal act whose purpose is to actuate the thing with all of its formal determinations. Because existential act is of itself non-formal, then even where it is admittedly limited by the things whose act it is, one still reasons to a subsistent instance of it that is recognized to be all-perfect. In other

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*sophical Issues* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1990), 8–9, MacIntyre enjoins Thomists to accept “antifoundational arguments.” In *Three Rival Versions*, 74, and evidently with *De Ver.* 1, 9 in mind, MacIntyre objects to Kleutgen's construal and then jumps to the conclusion that Aquinas is not at all involved in a work of epistemological justification. Obviously one can disagree with Kleutgen and yet still find *De Ver.* 1, 9, to be epistemological; vd. my “Transcendental Thomism and *De Veritate* 1, 9,” 229–52. MacIntyre wants to present an understanding of Thomism that is analogous to the practice of a craft; and just as the rationality of a craft is “inseparable” (MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions*, 65) from the tradition in which it was achieved, so too the rationality of Thomism and its starting points would be inseparable from the Christian tradition and the *telos* of that tradition. But what reasonably validates placing our confidence in that *telos*? Without foundationalism, the only way out seems to be some kind of transcendental reduction of the Thomistic *telos* to an ineluctable law of human consciousness. But then the problem becomes a loss of realism.

words, the second philosophical criticism of Neo-Thomism presumes that all *a posteriori* reasoning must begin from limited formal act. With that presupposition, pure or subsistent act will still be limited. But with the *esse* of things, *a posteriori* reasoning has a starting point described as limited non-formal act. A pure and subsistent act in this sense will be all-perfect.

Neo-Thomism, especially in its form of Existential Thomism, has the philosophical resources to defend itself. Its presumed immediate realism can be given a compelling philosophical articulation. Immediate realism need not be a blindly accepted dogma. Also, the *actus essendi* interpretation of a thing's existence is philosophically grounded, as explained in Chapter 6, by this defense of immediate realism. And in terms of existential act, *a posteriori* reasoning seems to possess a basis for concluding to an infinite First Cause of the *esse* "possessed" by sensible things. In the next section I want to explain how Neo-Thomism can address the accusations of previously described theological weaknesses.

## 5. NATURE AND GRACE

What of the alleged theological weaknesses of Neo-Thomism? First, does Neo-Thomist metaphysics so perfect human nature as to render supernatural grace superfluous, or merely extrinsic to human nature? This charge illustrates an ignorance of the role analogical conceptualization plays in Aquinas' metaphysics. The relation of human nature to the supernatural world of grace is complex but consistent. The human intellectual ability to know sameness-in-difference is the root of that consistent complexity. To begin, a Neo-Thomist should acknowledge partial guilt. Given what was said in Chapter 5 about the ability to intellect the analogical transcendental of being, Thomistic metaphysics does represent a high-water mark in the intellectual life. To have the intellectual intuition of being is to experience an earthquake in one's intellectual life. Thereafter one is not the same. Everything becomes of interest insofar as it is seen to reveal through its differences a little more of the richness of being. When one realizes that being is the nature of the First Cause, one realizes that the richness of being is more than the richness of an abstraction, but of a reality. Hence it is not merely hyperbole that leads Aquinas, at *C.G.*

I, 5, to agree with Aristotle that the little we know of higher substances is loved and desired more than all the knowledge about less noble substances. Furthermore, this little and imperfect knowledge produces “intense joy” (*vehemens sit gaudium eius*) and brings the “greatest perfection to the soul” (*maximam perfectionem animae*).

Aquinas also insists that metaphysical contemplation produces an imperfect happiness. What stunning object could be productive of such happiness? Is the metaphysician contemplating just a string of propositions syllogistically arranged, so that God is known in the truth of a proposition? Surely that cannot be the entire story. Later at chapter 8 of *Contra Gentiles* I, Aquinas expresses the matter in terms of intellectual vision and consideration, weak as they may be: “For to be able to see [*posse inspicere*] something of the loftiest realities, however thin and weak the sight may be [*parva et debili consideratione*], is, as our previous remarks indicate, a cause of greatest joy.”<sup>3</sup> Hence, a central role for the analogon of being and its modification to think the quiddity of the First Cause is all part of the picture that forms in the contemplation of the metaphysician and produces joy in the soul. Thought through in terms of analogical intelligibilities, Aquinas’ metaphysics produces an undeniable profound satisfaction in its student. In that respect, it is untrue that without grace the human is totally frustrated and destitute. Rather, human existence as *human* possesses a natural and impressive accomplishment.

But insofar as the object of contemplation is analogous, a sameness-within-difference, then what has been already remarked is only half the story. Because being is naturally known in and through its analogates that are sensible beings, then the commonality of being is always best perceived in the fashion of a veiled analogon. We see it, but we see it like any analogon, that is, dimly. Analogons are grasped in and through the differences of their analogates. That point means that we do not grasp them clearly and distinctly. Paradoxically, in all analogical conceptualization, intellectual achievement exists side by side with intellectual failure. Presented with analogical knowledge, one cannot but want more. If possible, one would like to gaze upon the analogon in itself. Because Neo-Thomists reach God in terms of subsistent being, then what holds for our thinking about being holds true for our metaphysical thinking about God. As I explained at the

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<sup>3</sup> Aquinas, *C.G. I, 8, Utile*; trans. Pegis, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 1, 76.

end of Chapter 7, our knowledge of God will also be in terms of the dimly perceived, though philosophically refined, analogon of being. The philosopher's *cognitio confusa* of the divine quiddity, the *primum principium essendi*, is in terms of the philosopher's analogical conceptualization of the nature of *esse*. As Aquinas remarked at *In de Trin.* I, 2, ad 5m, when something is not known through its form but through its effect, the form of the effect takes the place of the form of the thing itself.

Even though the metaphysician has gone as far as natural intellectual powers allow, the metaphysician realizes that analogical knowledge of God presents a *sui generis* possibility—specifically, the possibility of apprehending an analogon in itself. First, the capacity to conceptualize *esse*, albeit analogically, shows that the human intellect is to the divine quiddity not like the eye is to sound but like the eye of the owl is to the light of the sun. Aquinas' given reason at *C.G.* III, 54, *Rationes*, is that God is the first intelligible object (*primum intelligibile*) and the principle of all intellection (*totius intellectualis cognitionis principium*). Earlier in the *De Veritate*, we saw Aquinas describe the *ratio entis* as the *primum cognitum* (article 1) and as a universal conception “through which we judge about other things and in which we foreknow these others” (10, 6c). Evidently, some connection exists between God and the *ratio entis*. If it is recalled that God is *esse subsistens* and that the *ratio essendi* is the key component within the *ratio entis*, one understands the nature of the connection. God is the first intelligible in that the *ratio essendi* is some reflection of God, understood as *esse subsistens*. Hence the ability of the intellect to frame the *ratio entis* is an indication that the intellect is at least remotely disposed to receive the divine quiddity.

Likewise, at *S.T.* I, 12, 4, ad 3m, the immaterial character of our intellect is an indication that grace can raise the intellect to a higher level. By a certain resolution, our intellect is naturally capable by abstraction of apprehending the concreated form and concreated being (*esse concretum*). In the response, this intellectual capacity is glossed in terms of understanding things “in a universal way” (*in universali*). This makes sense in terms of Aquinas' philosophical doctrine of the analogical conceptualization of *esse*, that is, *esse commune* and the *perfectio essendi*. Hence the ability to conceive the nature of *esse*, even as dimly as analogical conceptualization allows, is still some indication of the intellect's capacity to receive the divine essence. Philos-

ophy can establish that the intellect is to the divine essence not like the eye is to sound.<sup>4</sup>

Second, every other analogon than being is just a concept formed from analogates that are real. Hence, the baseball fan realizes that further knowledge of the analogon is only by continued scrutiny of the parade of analogates that are the individual different great players. Here no player could ever rise to the level of the analogon and so be a direct and immediate presence of *great baseball player* itself. But attained as subsistent being, God is an analogate of being that embodies the very analogon of being. This situation engenders the philosophical grasping of the possibility that being reveals itself. Could philosophers at the metaphysical peak of their intellectual abilities be indifferent to this possibility and to the religious offering of the life of grace to attain it?

Aquinas does not think so. In fact, the situation described above engenders a “natural intellectual desire” to know the divine quiddity. In various places (*S.T.* I, 12, 2c; I-II 3, 8c), Aquinas explains that where the nature of the effect suffices to manifest that the cause exists but not what the cause is, a natural desire to know the essence of the cause remains. The same situation holds with knowledge of God from sensible effects. Hence a natural desire exists to know God’s essence. This interest makes eminent sense within the described reasoning for God from the *esse* of sensible things. In an ontological context where causes instantiate the nature of their effects, the desire to know the cause is a natural transmutation of the desire to know the nature of the effect. Before that demonstration of *esse subsistens*, a desire to know the analogon in itself is mere wishful thinking. The desire to know more of the analogon, for example, the *ratio entis*, is the same as the desire to know more of its analogates. Subsequent to a demonstration of *esse subsistens*, the desire to know more of the analogon is transmuted into a desire to know the ana-

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<sup>4</sup> One could ask if the Beatific Vision contradicts the mechanics of cognition detailed in my Chap. 6. What directly exists in cognition takes on another way of existing and must be existence neutral to do that. How, then, could God as *esse subsistens* inform the intellect without existentially neutralizing himself? The answer follows the realization that *esse subsistens* does not have to acquire an *esse* to be in cognition. As the analogate that is the analogon of *ipsum esse*, *esse subsistens* already has the *esse* by which it can be cognitively present. It does not have to wait upon something from the created knower in order to be in cognition. Because of its perfection, it can introduce itself.

logon itself. The emerging of this natural desire is what results from folding an intellectual scenario of knowing an analogon through its analogates into a causal inquiry starting from the *esse* of things. My point is that metaphysics engenders a natural desire for God. And again I ask whether philosophers at the metaphysical peak of their intellectual abilities could be indifferent to this possibility and to the religious offering of the life of grace to attain it.

But if an uncaricatured Neo-Thomism can be absolved of any extrinsicism of grace to nature, does it not come to wreck on the issue of the gratuity of the supernatural? My desire to know being becomes a desire to know God when I realize that being is the nature of God. In one respect this is a contingent transmutation. As Aquinas says in the *C.G.* I, 4, without divine revelation even of naturally knowable truths about God, few philosophers would come to know these truths, and those few would do so only after a long time and with the great admixture of error. Hence, without divine revelation mankind would be left in the “darkest shadows of ignorance” (*in maximis ignorantiae tenebris*). Given these remarks about the unsuccessfulness of unaided philosophy, the occurrence of the natural desire would be rare. But in another respect, the transmutation of the desire to know being into a desire to know God is something philosophically necessary. The metaphysical proof of *esse subsistens* as the cause of all that falls under the *ratio entis* locates all the perfection of the *ratio* in that instance. How can the desire to plumb the depths of being not refocus on the *primum principium essendi*? Granting that the central ideas of Aquinas’ metaphysics are the product of natural reason, the pure logic of those ideas would entail as an inevitable psychic effect a natural desire to know the essence of the First Cause of *esse*. Furthermore, given that the *ratio entis* is an automatic and spontaneous *abstractum* from sensible realities such that everyone acquiesces to the non-contradiction principle, why may it not also be the case that the intellect spontaneously grasps the implications of this idea so that an inchoate desire for God runs through humans? So much of philosophy is making explicit what is implicit. Why cannot the implicit be a *posteriori* notions and reasonings that the mind automatically performs?

But if the desire for God is “natural,” then why is not its fulfillment owed to us? The vision is not owed because the desire is not totally frustrated without grace. To think that there is total frustration is to

forget the role of analogical conceptualization. When one conceptualizes an analogical commonality, one is at once satisfied and frustrated. One sees it through the differences but one does not see it in itself. But to see it through the differences is to see it. Hence the analogical concept of being in Aquinas means that our conceptualizing capacity to some extent succeeds in attaining the nature of being. This is no mean thing. As noted, it produces a profound joy and perfection in the soul. In respect to natural capacities, Aquinas does not envisage the human as destitute and impoverished without grace. Analogical knowledge of the *ratio entis* disallows that. Also, the desire to know the divine essence is subsequent to a certain completion and achievement in our natural intellectual life. And the unfulfillment of the former does not cancel the latter. The intellectual perfection of metaphysical knowledge remains to assuage the desire. It is not a case of all or nothing. To some measure, being sustains and directs the human as the human patiently but with interest waits for any further direction from above.

The Neo-Thomist understanding of the human at the achievement of its natural powers abstracting from grace is that of an analogical intellector of being. As genuinely relevant as grace is for such a knower, grace remains gratuitous. So in my opinion, Neo-Thomism can provide what today's theologian wants from philosophy, and Neo-Thomism can do this, moreover, without the disastrous epistemological liabilities of Transcendental Thomism.

## 6. CURRENT NEO-THOMISTS ON THE NATURAL DESIRE

In the twentieth century alone, literally a barrel of books exists on the natural desire for God in the thought of Aquinas.<sup>5</sup> Recent Catholic philosophical periodicals contain some profound discussion of the topic on which it would be well for me to comment. In two articles, Steven A. Long argues that the natural desire for God subsequent to an *a posteriori* demonstration of God's existence is not the desire for the Beatific Vision. Long's reason is that this elicited desire is a desire

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<sup>5</sup> For a succinct survey, see O'Connor, *The Natural Desire for God*, 42–46. For the historical background, see Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 440–48, 471–81.

to know the essence of God known only through the effects of creatures. It is to desire God merely as “a cause of these effects”; this is to desire God under an improper and utterly disproportionate *ratio*. It is not to desire God in his inner being.<sup>6</sup> The intellectual desire for God in his inner being is a supernaturally evoked desire. Long’s position on the natural desire leaves human nature obedientially, or passively, disposed to divine elevation. Nowhere running through human nature as such is a desire specifically for the Beatific Vision.

Long’s interpretation understands pure human nature as essentially undisturbed and content with knowing God metaphysically through the book of his creation. The Beatific Vision is so “utterly disproportionate” to human nature as to be of no interest. In fact, Long provides this astonishing image of the regime of pure nature: “More importantly, the actual *contactus* with God within such an economy of providence would be wholly canalized through the contemplation of God via creation. Within such an order of providence, it would be, as it were, to ‘interrupt God when He is speaking’ should one turn from what He actually is providing for our perfection to an inefficacious desire whose object is desired in a manner that is utterly disproportionate.”<sup>7</sup> The flirtation with extrinsicism is so great that the desire to see God is almost, if not practically, *contra natura*.

To his opponents who profess that man desires the divine vision, Long charges that God would not then reveal man to himself in Christ, since “man already would know by nature and, as it were, in advance that human nature is in trajectory to the inner being of God.” Moreover, “grace would on such an analysis constitute merely a means for the perfection of a tendency already generically familiar and antecedent to revelation. Yet surely grace is more than the perfection of the natural desire for God . . . Grace brings with it the incipience of supernatural life.”<sup>8</sup>

Apparently going further than Long is Peter A. Pagan-Aquiar. In his eyes, Long’s understanding of pure human nature as utterly disproportionate to the vision of God amounts to philosophy strictly

<sup>6</sup> See Steven A. Long, “On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End for Man,” *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 222–23. For the same reasoning, also see Long’s “Obediential Potency, Human Knowledge, and the Natural Desire for God,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 37 (1997): 60.

<sup>7</sup> Long, “Purely Natural End,” 232.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

demonstrating that the vision is “absolutely possible.”<sup>9</sup> To the contrary, Pagan-Aquiar insists that Long can know that our obediential potency for the divine vision is more than extrinsic susceptibility to divine miracle only if Long also knows the availability of grace. And Long cannot do that, because for Aquinas grace is “inaccessible to unaided reason.”<sup>10</sup>

Also, even though he distinguishes between the natural desire for God as First Cause from the natural desire for God as triune, Pagan-Aquiar disagrees that a purely natural state would be marked by “mobilism.” As he sees it, “natural desire for knowledge in the state of pure nature could come to complete natural rest within human nature by attaining an exalted analogical knowledge of the divine nature through the relatively supernatural instrumentality of divinely infused species.”<sup>11</sup> Such a state would so satisfy human nature that the desire to know the divine nature directly would be “a pure velleity.”

To his Thomistic opponents who argue that because of a natural desire for the Beatific Vision man is naturally without an end, Pagan-Aquiar levels three criticisms. First, they deny the principle of finality according to which every nature acts for an end. The consequence of the denial is that human nature as nature is indistinguishable from nothingness, which also has no end.<sup>12</sup> Second, the opponents can avoid denial of the finality principle only by swerving into an exigency for the supernatural, for “it would seem contrary to the divine goodness that God would create man with an ontological exigency for a final end without intending that it should ever be fulfilled under any circumstances.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, Pagan-Aquiar sees his opponents as maintaining the incongruity of establishing the absolute possibility of an

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<sup>9</sup> “[Long] believes he can demonstrate on strictly philosophical grounds that the immediate divine vision as participated act is absolutely possible, not that we are in fact called to the beatific vision.” Peter A. Pagan-Aquiar, “St. Thomas Aquinas and Human Finality: Paradox or *Mysterium Fidei*?” *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 384. In my reading of Long, I caught him claiming the opposite: “Revelation and supernatural grace are required for the beatific embrace to be known and hence to be desired,” Long, “Obediential Potency,” 58; and “The natural desire for God does not reveal to the mind how such knowledge might be possible, nor does it in itself manifest the real possibility of supernatural beatific vision,” Long, “Purely Natural End,” 232.

<sup>10</sup> Pagan-Aquiar, “St. Thomas Aquinas and Human Finality,” 386.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.

intrinsically supernatural end from the intrinsic principles of nature alone.<sup>14</sup>

In comment, let me begin by noting the strident extrinsicism of these two positions. For both, pure human nature has little if any interest in grace. For Long the possibility of grace is a distraction from the metaphysical contemplation of reality. For Pagan-Aquiar the thought of grace is nothing more than a pure *velleity*, that is, a fantasy. From what I can gather, both would deal with the extrinsicism charge by noting that if God wanted to call humans to himself, God would create human nature with that interest. In fact that divinely instilled interest is in existing human nature. Their reply has similarities to de Lubac's reply to the exigency criticism of his position. De Lubac placed a desire for God so deep within man that a human nature uncalled to beatitude appeared inconceivable. Just as parents would be delinquent for not feeding their baby, so too God would be delinquent for not meeting the human need for beatitude. De Lubac maintained that grace is still correctly regarded as gratuitous, because God did not have to create man at all. Another intellectual creature without a dynamism to the infinite is possible.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the two positions can fight themselves to a draw. Each is a consistent way of thinking about us and our relation to the supernatural. Still worth asking is whether any of these positions are Aquinas' view and whether any, including Aquinas', can be known as true.

Contrary to de Lubac, Aquinas' doctrine of both an implicit and explicit desire for God is *a posteriori*. The will's implicit desire for God is a reinterpretation of the will's response to the *ratio entis* in the guise of the *ratio boni*. The intellect presents this *ratio* to the will subsequent to the intellect's abstraction of it from the self-manifestly real things provided by sensation. Also as noted, Aquinas derives *a posteriori* the intellect's desire to know the divine essence. This desire is a transmutation of the intellect's first operation once the existence of *esse subsistens* is reached.

Contrary to Long and Pagan-Aquiar, the explicit intellectual desire to know the divine essence that follows philosophically knowing that God exists is textually what Christians call the Beatific Vision.<sup>16</sup> At

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

<sup>15</sup> De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 123–26, 272–73. See also *supra*, Chap. 1, n. 33.

<sup>16</sup> In *The Eternal Quest: The Teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Natural Desire for God* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947), 184–85, William O'Con-

S.T. I, 12, 1c, this explicit intellectual desire is presented as a desire for none other than the divine vision promised in Scripture. Also, not only is there no evidence of a distinction between a natural desire for God as cause versus a natural desire for God in himself, the distinction makes nonsense of Aquinas' remark, "[I]f the intellect of the rational creature could not attain to the first cause of things, the natural desire would remain vain." Some kind of subordinate knowledge of the divine essence would be there to save the natural desire from being in vain. Neither does it do any good to read the text theologically, specifically, as talking about human nature in the present order of providence. The desire is evoked philosophically, and philosophy is a body of truth worked out by human nature as such.

What of Pagan-Aquiar's insistence that one can desire only what one knows to be possible, and that knowing the possibility of the Beatific Vision entails knowing about grace? Again, S.T. I, 12, 1c, argues the possibility of the Vision using simply philosophy. Later in article 4, in replying to the third objection that the Beatific Vision is like the impossibility of a sense power grasping the incorporeal, Aquinas again defends the Vision's possibility. He disputes the intellect's analogy to sense on the basis that the intellect already knows *esse concretum in abstractione*. It is true that the reply also mentions grace: "But our intellect, or the angelic intellect, inasmuch as it is elevated above matter in its own nature, can be raised up above its own nature to a higher level by grace." Yet the next article appears to present this requirement as philosophically knowable. The major premise of the *responsio* of article five is: "Everything which is raised up to what exceeds its nature must be prepared by some disposition above its nature; as, for example, if air is to receive the form of fire, it must be prepared by some disposition for such a form." The example shows that the major is derived from ordinary experience available to the philosopher. The prerequisite grace Aquinas calls the light of glory.<sup>17</sup>

Pagan-Aquiar seems driven by the thought that to grasp a possibil-

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nor concludes to a nicety not often observed in the debate on the natural desire. Strictly speaking, in this life there is no natural desire for the Beatific Vision. Such thinking conflates the natural desires of the intellect to know what God is subsequent upon knowing that he is and of the will to attain happiness.

<sup>17</sup> Cf., Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 99–100 and n. 3, who regards grace and the light of glory as philosophically unknowable conditions for the Beatific Vision, whose possibility is nevertheless philosophically established.

ity one must grasp, if not all the conditions, most of the conditions. But surely the axiom “from actuality to possibility” gives lie to that. The actuality of something is sufficient for knowing its possibility. But that ground is obviously insufficient for knowing all the conditions for the possibility. Granted, the philosopher cannot argue from the actuality of the Beatific Vision to its possibility. But are other ways excluded? And why may not these other ways fail to reveal all the conditions? That is just what Aquinas seems to be doing. The desire to know an analogon through its analogates is transformed into a desire to know the analogon in itself in the wake of a metaphysical penetration of reality to a First Cause whose nature is that of *esse*. Before that transformation, the desire to know an analogon just in itself would have been mere wishful thinking.<sup>18</sup> But knowing that *esse* is the nature of the creator means that there is the possibility of knowing *esse* in itself by the creator presenting itself. This seems to be sufficient to grasp the Beatific Vision as possible, despite continued ignorance of how it will be so in detail. Someone who wants to become a marine need not realize that one of the conditions is for the recruit to acquire the ready desire to sacrifice his life for his comrades. This is one of the transformations boot camp will effect. Likewise, while desiring the Beatific Vision in the way just explained, the philosopher can be perfectly ignorant of the supernatural love of God that must be stirred up within the soul before it can be disposed to receive the grace that is the light of glory. Hence, as Long notes,<sup>19</sup> Aquinas can remark at *De Ver.* 14, 2c, that for the vision of God, human natural powers are insufficient for knowing and desiring (*ad cogitandum vel desiderandum*). So by the very science, the metaphysician is prompted not only to keep reading the book of God’s creation but also to listen to the claims of various religions to revelation from the supernatural concerning its *de facto* designs for humans.

In sum, the Aquinas who considers grace undue to human nature is the same Aquinas who considers human nature to have a natural intellectual desire for the divine essence. This is non-contradictory because the desire is subsequent to a profound intellectual achievement in the knowledge of being. Human nature is not totally desti-

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<sup>18</sup> More sternly, Phelan reproves the metaphysical attempt to look directly at being. It produces intellectual blindness and sins against intelligence; vd. *supra*, Chap. 5, n. 15.

<sup>19</sup> Long, “Obediential Potency,” 228.

tute without grace; and just as parents are not derelict for not completely feeding their children, so too God is not delinquent for partially surfeiting the desires of his creature. Also, the Neo-Thomist can refer to this profound intellectual achievement to preserve the principle of finality even in an order of pure nature.

So do we now have a three-way draw? From what I have already explained about the natural desire, it is clear that I think that the answer is no. If one accepts the fact of analogical conceptualization, then one should also realize that only Aquinas has thought through the implications most thoroughly. Analogical conceptualization sufficiently grasps the *ratio entis* both to excite the life of the intellect and to ignite the will. Long appears to understand this in his descriptions of the intellect's desire for knowledge and the will's desire for the good. Both descriptions make use of his distinctions between material quiddity as proper object of the human intellect in which is grasped its adequate object (being), its formal object (truth), and the object of the will (good).<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, in metaphysics the intellect uses its continual knowledge of the analogates of being not only to plumb the depths of being, but also to increase its knowledge of God who is subsistent being. Long acknowledges this role for analogy in his description of metaphysics as listening to God speaking through his creation, or as reading the terrestrial book whose author is God. In this respect, Long is more correct than Pagan-Aquiar to emphasize the imperfection and mobilism that are attached to metaphysics. Analogons are conceived through the differences of their instances, and so are always grasped imperfectly. There will always be more to know of the content of an analogon or of any being represented by the analogon. Pagan-Aquiar's understanding of a natural beatitude consisting of a state of complete natural rest produced through "an exalted analogical knowledge of the divine nature through the relatively supernatural instrumentality of divinely infused species" is oxymoronic. Understood as the grasp of a sameness-within-difference, analogical knowledge cannot be "complete."

But where Long halts, Aquinas would insist upon continuing. In a metaphysics where one analogate is the analogon, does there not arise the genuine possibility of knowing the analogon not through a

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 56.

continual knowledge of its analogates, but through the analogon itself? As I explained in Chapter 7, Aquinas' metaphysical approach to God from the *esse* of sensible thing suffices to know God's nature as *esse subsistens*. As a reality in the First Cause, the nature of *esse* could reveal itself.<sup>21</sup> "Will that stepping forth ever happen?" is, in my opinion, an obviously intriguing question for the metaphysician. Nothing deducible from the naturally available data enables the metaphysician to answer this question. All the metaphysician knows is that the creator's providence might include this event and might not. For example, at *S.T.* I, 12, 1c, and from the datum of the natural desire, Aquinas concludes only that the created intellect can see the divine essence.<sup>22</sup> Somewhat similarly, Aquinas knows without resolution that the universe could have been created with a first moment of existence and without such a moment.<sup>23</sup> As I understand it and *contra* Long, Aquinas' doctrine of the natural desire preserves the momentous revelation in Christ of our actual supernatural destiny.

## 7. NEO-THOMISM AND HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Nor is there any disconnect between Neo-Thomist metaphysics and lived human experience. Some complain that the immediate realism of Neo-Thomism makes its metaphysical categories too objective to handle subjectivity. To deal with the life of the person, the Thomist

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<sup>21</sup> The disparity between these two ways of knowing an analogon suffices for Aquinas to say (*De Ver.* 18, 1c), as noted by Long, "Obediential Potency," 63, that the Beatific Vision compares to philosophical wisdom not as "perfectius et minus perfecte videre, sed per hoc quod est videre et non videre."

<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Maritain says, "It is in no wise necessary that [the natural desire to see God] be satisfied, since it asks for what is impossible for nature. But it is necessary that by some means (which is not nature) it be able to be satisfied, since it necessarily emanates from nature," *Approaches to God*, 99. For the explanation of how to reconcile *S.T.* I, 12, 1c, with other texts that assert the impossibility of *de facto* unfulfillment of a natural desire consider: "The difference in expression is accounted for by considering the impediment as present or absent. When the impediment is present, the natural desire is in vain if it cannot reach its goal; when the impediment is absent, the natural desire is in vain if it does not reach its goal." O'Connor, *The Eternal Quest*, 189–90. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, 468, acknowledges only one way to save the natural desire: "This conviction—that God has actually ordained man to a supernatural end—and it alone, sustains Aquinas's unhesitating affirmation that the natural desire to see God is not in vain."

<sup>23</sup> Aquinas, *S.T.* I, 46, 1 and 2.

must adopt the standpoint of modern transcendental philosophy. Already what I have said about the natural desire should give the lie to these remarks. As basically informed by being, the human intellect can even unconsciously grasp conclusions that will engender stirrings only God can quell. But if one reconsiders Neo-Thomist data on the *ratio entis* and the *ratio boni*, then the entire parade of our subjective life will pass before one's eyes.<sup>24</sup> The deepest yearnings and groanings

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<sup>24</sup> John Paul II unambiguously and fundamentally locates the philosophy of the human person within the metaphysics of *esse*: "It is from this proclamation of being that the philosophy of St. Thomas derives its ability to grasp and to 'affirm' all that shows itself to the human intellect (what is given by experience, in the widest sense) as a determinate existing being in all the inexhaustible richness of its content; that it derives its ability, in particular, to grasp and to 'affirm' that 'being' which is able to know itself, to be filled with wonder in itself, and above all to decide for itself and to fashion its own unrepeatable history . . . St. Thomas is thinking of this 'being' and of its dignity when he speaks of man as that which is 'the most perfect thing in the whole of nature' (*perfectissimum in tota natura*: *S. Th.* I, q. 29, a. 3), a 'person,' requiring that it must be given exceptional and specific attention. This says all that is essential with regard to the dignity of the human being, even though much more still remains to be investigated in this field, one where the contribution of modern trends of philosophy can be helpful." John Paul II, "Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas for the Youth of Our Times," 219. Another approach to the human person from Aquinas' metaphysics of *esse* is found in Robert Connor, "Relational *Esse* and the Person," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 65 (1991): 253–67. The works of William Carlo and Gerald Phelan provide the larger context. In *The Ultimate Reducibility of Essence to Existence in an Existential Metaphysics* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), Carlo conceives essence as a "negative limitation" (xii), or where *esse* "stops" (103). Accordingly, each nature is *esse* "frozen" at a certain degree (104). Likewise, in his "Being, Order and Knowledge," in Kim, *G. B. Phelan: Selected Papers*, 126, Gerald Phelan remarks: "Just as in God there is nothing but *esse*, writ large, so in things there is nothing but *esse*, writ small." Hence Connor insists that *esse* is to be seen "not as an actuality of a substance, but an intensive act in its own right of which substantiality is a 'mode.' . . . When *esse* is *intelligere* the agent is a person," 255. *De Ver.* I, 1c, is cited as saying that *substantia* is a *specialis modus essendi*, not *modus entis*. And for purposes of defining the person in terms of *esse*, Connor ("Relational *Esse* and the Person," 256–57) cites many texts in which Aquinas refers to the *esse* of the soul as its *vivere* and its *intelligere*.

This thin essence/thick *esse* approach in Thomistic metaphysics raises many issues (vd. Connor, "Relational *Esse* and the Person," nns. 34–38) to which I would add the following. First, *De Ver.* I, 1c only says that the name of substance *exprimitur modus essendi*; also when Aquinas identifies *esse* with *vivere* and *intelligere*, he is not denying that these terms also stand for second acts, i.e., operations, of the substance. On this twofold use, see especially Owens, "The Accidental and Essential Character of Being," 243–44, n. 22. Second, apart from the fact that talk about essence as a negative limit amounts to essence being no limit at all, the thesis that real things are just *esse* frozen at various degrees collides with what is discovered by the *duplex operatio intellectus*. As I explained in Chap. 6, reflection confirms that in

of the human person can find a home in *a posteriori* Thomism. No necessity exists to interpret them in light of a constitutive *a priori* intellectual dynamism.

Let me preface the Neo-Thomist interpretation of lived human experience with an observation. Without any notion of the categories of analogon and analogate and even without a definition of the analogon *great baseball player*, an ardent fan of the game still has an appreciation of the analogon sufficient to generate a continued interest in the game and to form associations of like-minded individuals. Here even an inchoate awareness of the analogon produces both an intellectual and volition dynamism. Note that nothing prohibits an analogon from being unconsciously abstracted but nevertheless having conscious effects in everyday life. The Neo-Thomist will insist that nothing known about the initial notion of being prohibits understanding the notion as an *abstractum* spontaneously and automatically taken by the intellect from the self-manifestly real things given in sensation. Such a notion of being also can lie unnoticed in the depths of our conscious life and still nevertheless have conscious effects. I want to mention three effects: intellectual curiosity, awareness of human freedom, and a sense of human dignity.

One effect of the natural presence of the *abstractum* of being will be intellectual dynamism. Through its implicit presence, anything we come to know, for example, lions and tigers and bears, will come across as only part of the totality of what is to be known. The knower cannot help but always wonder what else to be known is out there. Before you saw a hippopotamus, could you ever have imagined that being could take the form of that analogate? From such experiences, is not interest aroused to know what other analogates of being exist? This intelligible scenario of being as analogon and beings as analog-

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sense awareness, reality presents itself as also cognitively existing. This phenomenon requires that reality is not real of itself. Rather, reality involves a dimension that as existence-neutral enables reality to take on in a genuine fashion another way of existing. Reality is, then, a composition of an existence-neutral subject plus its act of real existing. The understanding of real things as limited *esse* makes reality impervious to another way of existing; the realism of human cognition is rendered impossible. Finally, the discussion should not be confined to the two alternatives of thick essence/thin *esse* and thin essence/thick *esse*. The more traditional view accommodates an intensity for *esse*, for in order to actuate a substance with certain perfections, an *esse* must be understood to contain those perfections. So, thick essence/thick *esse*.

ates explains why some people are motivated to devote their entire lives to pursuing knowledge just for its own sake. Intellectual dynamism is a phenomenon perfectly accommodated by the basic ideas of Neo-Thomism.

A second effect of our natural knowledge of being is real freedom. As mentioned in Chapter 5, as a transcendental, being has an unsurpassed intelligible richness to it. All things are its analogates, and so all their perfections are its perfections. For this reason Aquinas also called being the good (*bonum*). Hence even through being's implicit presence in human consciousness, anything will come across as only perfect in a certain respect, as only a good and not as the good that is the analogon itself. Granting that being is objective because it has been drawn from real things presented in sensation, we are correctly aware that we are posed before things with a real indifference, a freedom. We are correctly aware that we can go for things because they are goods. But we are also correctly aware that we can refrain because things are not the good. Given that the appearance of human freedom has been built up from a realist epistemology, there is no worry that the appearance of freedom may be an illusion.

Finally, a third effect of the abstraction of being in Neo-Thomism is an ethical existence in society with our fellows. We all inchoately realize that being as the good is present in our fellows. Does not this fact suffice to stir up that natural and spontaneous respect and love for each other that is felt at least in better moments? Through their intellection, our fellows are special analogates of being. Unlike trees and cows and daisies, humans through their intellection are analogates that contain the analogon of being in heightened fashion. Does not even a dim perception of this fact suffice to explain a sensed moral obligation to other humans? As before any analogate, so too before our fellows we stand free; but unlike before any analogate, before our fellows we stand free and morally obliged. Also, what is by itself a speechless abstraction acquires a voice through its intellection by the human. In fellow humans, being can speak to us. Does not an appreciation of this fact generate a desire to live a social existence? Does one not want to hear what others perceive of being? And, obviously, to do that requires living together. Finally, it is worth repeating from Chapter 8 that our basic intellectual determination by the *abstractum* of the *ratio entis* not only leaves us free. Being itself also instructs us in the proper use of our self-determination.

Understood both as an intellector and willer of being, the human person is a special analogate of being; the human is an epiphany of *ratio boni*. This insight into the human person has the capacity to evoke our obligation. In other words, the *ratio entis* provides us with the bearings on which to set our moral compass. When it is said that our dignity consists in being a rational animal, I prefer to understand that dignity in and through the intellect's capacity to render analogically present to itself the *ratio entis*.

Through its abstractive approach to being, Neo-Thomism is more than adequate to understand intellectual, volitional, and moral dynamisms. The richness of its ideas are there for the taking.

## 8. NEO-THOMISM AND HISTORICITY

Many opponents of Neo-Thomism would be unsatisfied by the above Neo-Thomist retrieval of human subjectivity. Their understanding of subjectivity accords a key place to historicity. In their view, the human is a time-bound individual. Even thinking is in large measure a result of the culture in which the human reflects. Again and ironically, it was Gilson who displayed pluralism as a mark of the thought systems in Scholastic philosophy and theology. People seem to think differently in different times and places. Does not this overwhelming fact of intellectual pluralisms show that the Neo-Thomist treatment of subjectivity is still out of touch?

On the contrary, the Neo-Thomist idea of one, true metaphysics suffers no embarrassment from the existence of pluralism. First of all, the *de jure* character of this pluralism is still far from established. As noted in Chapter 5, Le Blond's arguments for the asymptotic character of our concepts can be defanged.<sup>25</sup> In sum, the analogy of

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<sup>25</sup> For a discussion that relates Thomistic proponents of pluralism to the larger philosophical debate on pluralism, see Denis J. M. Bradley, "Philosophical Pluralism and 'The Internal Evolution of Thomism': Some Realist Animadversions," in John F. X. Knasas, ed., *Thomistic Papers VI*, 195–227. In *Cognition*, 333, Joseph Owens attributes the pluralism of philosophies in large part to "temperament and upbringing." It is important to understand that for Owens, temperament and upbringing function more like prompts and cues rather than interpretative contexts. Recall Owens' explanation of Gilson's thesis that Aquinas found in Exodus III, 14, a prompt to philosophically develop his metaphysics of *esse*. See *supra*, Chap. 7, n. 38. One could also bear in mind the mathematics student as the student learns mathematics using a book with the answers at the back.

truth only requires that human knowledge be deficient in its grasp of all the analogates of the analogon. For example, to know that the *ratio entis* should be fundamentally described as *habens esse* is not to know all the analogical modes in whose differences that description is realized. Second, that our fundamental contact with reality is through a non-conceptual dynamism to Infinite Being à la Maréchal's epistemology is both textually and philosophically unverified. Finally, the incompleteness endemic to abstraction does not necessarily result in asymptotic concepts. Conducted without precision, abstraction can form transcendental concepts such as the *ratio entis*, whose epistemic incompleteness does not lie in a failure to be fundamental expressions of the real. Rather, the incompleteness pertains to our knowledge of all the analogates of these notions.

Second, it is true that Gilson's works on Augustine, Bonaventure, Aquinas, and Scotus do show strikingly different metaphysics at work. In fact, Gilson is a student of the entire history of philosophy and so knows well the full breadth of philosophical pluralism. Yet Gilson never despaired of discovering a one, true metaphysics, and he believed that we possessed that metaphysics in Aquinas' metaphysics of *actus essendi*. Moreover, Gilson was sufficiently reflective to wonder why so many could be wrong and so few right. In works such as *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* and *Being and Some Philosophers*, Gilson explained how Aquinas' metaphysics of *actus essendi* could be true yet so unique. In sum, it is easier to conceive existence as the fact of some essence rather than the act of some essence.<sup>26</sup> The diffi-

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<sup>26</sup> "Every time a lecturer begins a sentence by saying: 'As a matter of fact,' you know at once that the man is at his wit's end. Granting that something is, he can tell you a great deal concerning that which is; what he cannot do is to account for the very existence of the thing," Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, 68. "On the other hand, this fundamental fact, which we call existence, soon proves a rather barren topic for philosophical speculation. It belongs in the class of those 'it-goes-without-saying' statements which, precisely because they are ultimate in their own order, have to be made once but do not need to be repeated, because they are not susceptible of any further elucidation," Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 5. "Moreover, conceiving apart that which the thing is and the fact that it actually is, we can form the two abstract notions of essence (question, *quid sit*) and of existence (question, *an sit*), but this is the point where most of the philosophers will stop while Thomas Aquinas insists on going on. Existence may mean either a state or an act. In the first sense, it means the state in which a thing is posited by the efficacy of an efficient or of a creative cause, and this is the meaning the word receives in practically all the Christian theologies outside Thomism, particularly those of Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Scotus, and Suarez," Gilson, *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 142.

culty of getting it right is the reason for the *de facto* pluralism of metaphysics. Difficult things are correctly accomplished rarely. How many pianists can play Rachmaninoff as Rachmaninoff is supposed to be played? Aquinas acknowledges difficulty as the source of philosophical pluralism when pointing out at *C.G.* I, 4, as noted, that without revelation even of naturally known truths, mankind would be left “in the darkest shadows of ignorance.” Only a few, after a long time and with a great admixture of error, would come to some natural knowledge of God. Also, even though the concept of being, the *ratio entis*, is what falls first in the apprehension of the intellect so that the principle of contradiction can be a self-evident proposition known to all, Aquinas says at *S.T.* I, 44, 2c, that philosophers only gradually (*paulatim*) and, as it were, step by step (*quasi pedetentim*) come to *habens esse* as the correct definition of the *ratio entis*.

Hence, until proponents of the demise of Neo-Thomism establish that philosophical pluralism is more than just *de facto*, Neo-Thomists can justifiably appeal to the intrinsic difficulty of the task to explain why metaphysical speculation is so pluralist while one metaphysics is true. Existential Thomists especially can make this appeal, because the datum to which they apply the *duplex operatio intellectus* is tricky to view and to appreciate correctly. As I described in Chapter 6, the datum is the real thing cognitively existing. Since modern philosophy, this immediate realism has been problematic. But even before modern philosophy and among Aristotelians, was not this fact reduced just to the form of the thing known in the knower? No attention was paid to the fact that the form as real had to be in the knower, and to do that the form could not be real of itself. This simple but incisive meditation opens the philosopher’s mind to the possibility that the *ratio entis* contains a more fundamental *actus* than *forma*.

## 9. NEO-THOMISM AND THE FUTURE

In conclusion, and in my opinion, the philosophical assessment of Neo-Thomism leaves the historical assessment unvalidated. The philosophical assessment is that Neo-Thomism is alive and well, the historical assessment is that Neo-Thomism is dead and gone. Obviously, for me the situation is a tragic one. It need not have come to this. Are there any chances for a historical revival of Neo-Thomism? If the

original Neo-Thomist revival is any indication, the answer will depend upon enough people convincing enough clerics and theologians that Neo-Thomism is a useful theological tool. Again, in Catholic intellectual circles, philosophical popularity rides the waves of a theological tide. Interestingly, as I noted in my Introduction, in paragraph 97 of his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II calls upon theologians to use a philosophy of being “based upon the very act of being.” If memory serves me right, this papal recommendation is the first in an encyclical of a specific Thomist philosophical doctrine, the *actus essendi* doctrine of what is meant by a thing’s existence. The encyclical is clear papal encouragement that this discovery of twentieth-century Thomistic scholarship, so brilliantly exploited in the writings of Maritain and Gilson, should not be eclipsed at the start of a new millennium.



## CONCLUSION

IN 1992, Fordham University's Gerald A. McCool, S. J., published his narrative of the twentieth-century Thomistic revival, *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism*. It is an extremely provocative book. McCool's ironic thesis is that the widely perceived call of Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* to reintroduce the philosophy of St. Thomas as the one true philosophy was refuted by the twentieth-century Thomistic revival itself. A number of twentieth-century Thomists, specifically, Maréchal, Rahner, and Lonergan, claimed that in Aquinas' epistemology the mind's contact with reality is not through static concepts, but through the mind's supra-conceptual dynamism. Implied by this thesis is that any philosophy understood as a conceptual system can never be a perfect expression of reality. All the great philosophies will be different but inadequate conceptual attempts to understand reality. This judgment also applies to Aquinas' own conceptual formulations.

I saw McCool's thesis as a challenge to the program of the Center for Thomistic Studies. In 1981, the Center published under the editorship of Victor B. Brezik, C.S.B., a volume entitled *One Hundred Years of Thomism: Aeterni Patris and Afterwards, A Symposium*. It is accurate to say that its articles comprised something like a manifesto of the Center's motivating ideals. In that respect *Aeterni Patris* had not become dead letter. Rather, its call to philosophize in the manner of Aquinas for the good of today's world still sounded a harmonious note deep in the hearts of the volume's authors. Also, Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain stood forth as giants to exemplify how to respond to the wishes of the Pope and as reliable guides to Aquinas' distinctive and perennially true philosophical principles. Especially noteworthy were their expositions of Aquinas' metaphysics of *esse* and analogy, and Aquinas' epistemology of direct realism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For another expression of these motivating ideals, see Victor B. Brezik, "A Living Thomism," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* (May 1983): 55–6. With Anton Pegis, Brezik is called co-founder of the Center for Thomistic Studies.

The Center also made a reply to McCool in my editing of *Thomistic Papers VI* that enlisted as many as possible of the authors from *One Hundred Years*.

Yet I continued to reflect on McCool's many-faceted narrative. Two years ago I authored "Whither the Neo-Thomistic Revival?" The article attempts to sketch the give and take among the various Thomistic camps in order to delineate the tasks a Gilsonian-Maritainian Thomism must accomplish to stand any hope of renewed widespread acceptance. This article became the basis both for a graduate course and the book that I have now written.

*Contra* McCool, I think that one twentieth-century interpretation of Aquinas' conceptually formulated philosophy can show itself to be the one true philosophy. I am talking about Existential Thomism. This is the Thomism about which Gilson and Maritain wrote. I call it existential because of its peculiar understanding of the phrase *the existence of the thing*. The thing's "existence" refers not just to the fact of the thing, but more profoundly to a distinctive act of the thing. A thing has many acts. I have now my act of lecturing, my vital activity, and I could have the act of walking. All these are acts that presuppose me; they are posterior and subsequent to me, their subject. My act of existing is distinctive and unique because it is an act basic and fundamental to its subject. The philosophical elaboration of Aquinas' *actus essendi* concept of what we call the existence of the thing is a fascinating thing to watch in Aquinas, and I have tried to describe my understanding of it in Chapter 6. It is also a decisive moment of the Western philosophical advance in the understanding of the concept of being, the *ratio entis*. No one has gone deeper in that understanding than Aquinas, something that has profound implications for our knowledge of God and for ethics. I have tried to explain these implications in Chapters 7 and 8.

Besides acquainting me with many interesting ideas, the research for this book has also produced a great sadness. For I have witnessed how the intellectual labors of many scholars have just been thrown out by later scholars. Go through the back issues of *The New Scholasticism* or *The Thomist* and notice the names. Who remembers these names? For someone in the philosophical profession this is a sobering and frightening fact to see. What happened to the Thomists will hap-

pen to me. And this leads to the question, Why invest the great time and energy required to do philosophy?

But surely every philosopher has had this experience and has asked this question. What, then, motivated the twentieth-century Thomists to philosophize, knowing that like philosophers before them, they also would suffer the vicissitudes of history? Here I quote a passage from Augustine's *De Libero Arbitrio*. The passage is about truth. And though Maritain would disagree with Augustine's illumination interpretation, the passage does go a long way to express what Maritain called *l'intuition de l'être* and Thomists call the *ratio entis*.

Men claim they are enthralled when they embrace the beautiful bodies of their wives or even courtesans. Do we doubt we are happy in the arms of truth? Men with throats parched with thirst cry out with joy when they find an abundant spring of pure water, or, if famished, when they discover a splendid dinner or supper. Shall we deny the happiness that comes from being given the food and drink that is truth? We frequently hear men say they are happy on a bed of roses or other flowers or inhaling the perfume of some fragrant ointment. But what is sweeter or more pleasant than the bouquet of truth? Many consider the happy life to consist in song or the music of strings or woodwinds. Without music they consider themselves miserable, with it they are entranced with joy. But when the silent truth penetrates our minds without tumult or oratorical tirade do we look further for the happy life or enjoy what is at hand and assured? Men enjoy what is bright and pleasant, the sheen of gold and silver, the sparkle of precious stones, the flash of color, the light itself which falls on the eye from the stars, sun or moon, or some earthly fire. They think themselves happy if no trouble or want robs them of such pleasure and they desire to live forever. Should we fear to find life's happiness then in the light of truth? Since it is in that truth called wisdom that the supreme good is seen and grasped, let us turn to truth to possess and enjoy that good. Happy indeed is he who is enraptured by the highest good. For here is the truth that reveals all things that are really good, so that each man according to his lights selects one or more of them for his enjoyment. Of those who choose by the light of the sun what they wish to enjoy seeing, there are those who if they were endowed with stronger, more healthy, or vigorous eyes, would love to look at nothing better than the sun itself which sheds its light on all the other things that delight weaker eyes. So too a powerful and penetrating mind, having seen with

certainly many unalterable truths, turns to truth itself wherein all is revealed, clinging to it as if forgetful of all else and enjoying in it everything at once. For whatever delights us in other truths, does so by reason of truth itself.<sup>2</sup>

What is Augustine seeing? What could be more beautiful and stunning than the sensible things that he enumerates? Augustine is not hallucinating, and we “see” with more than our eyes. Human consciousness includes an awareness of intelligible objects. In this case the intelligible object is what the later Scholastic tradition called the *ratio entis*, and what Aquinas discussed as the *primum cognitum* at *De Ver.* 1, 1c, and 21, 1c. By recalling some points from the previous chapters, I want to explain how the life of the intellect presupposes this object. My remarks follow Maritain’s presentation of the same in terms of his “intuition of being” thesis. The *ratio* is not basically a logical notion, a second intention, that contains “blanks” or “variables” that are “filled in” by various modes. Rather, being is a sameness that we see extending through all things, but more importantly, extending precisely through the very differences of things. It is a sameness both over-arching and pervading all things. As Maritain remarked, with perhaps a note of desperation, “Everything which divides these beings from one another is the same being which I find in each of them—varied. I simply have to fix my attention on it to see that it is at once one and multiple.”<sup>3</sup>

Being is a sameness-in-difference, a formula that many Thomists designate as “analogy.” This description may sound oxymoronic, but even ordinary experience illustrates other cases of it. For example, the only way that we can express the sameness that we see between Koufax and Mays is to talk precisely of what one has and the other does not. Koufax is a great baseball player like Mays because of his pitching, and Mays is great precisely because of his fielding and hitting. The sameness in these two instances is within the differences. That is where you have to go to appreciate the sameness. To avoid these differences is to avoid the sameness.

As a sameness-in-difference, being has an unsurpassable richness. Any conceivable thing with its differences is seen to give a limited

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, Bk. II, ch. 13; trans. Wippel and Wolter, *Medieval Philosophy from St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, 72.

<sup>3</sup> Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 213.

expression to being itself. Does this not lead one to want to know more and more things which in their new ways of being enable one to see a little more of the richness of being? In other words, is not the intellectual life called forth here? Do we not have attractively presented the idea of pursuing knowledge just for the sake of knowledge? Each known thing adds a note to the symphony that the intellect is listening to in his mind. The *ratio entis* is, then, apprehended as an unfathomable deep of richness and perfection, each thing in its perfection only giving us a glimpse of being's richness.

But even this glimpse is transfixing enough to rivet the mind and to ignite the desire to plumb the depths of being. This is what motivates every authentic philosopher and so is true of the great minds of the Thomistic revival. They wished to know as much as possible of the intelligible object of being. For instance, is this "intelligible sky" against which all finite things are profiled an *abstractum*, something drawn from and discovered in things, or is it a *projectum*, something placed on the data of sensation so that the data stand forth in various ways? Also, what is the definition of being? To be aware of an intelligibility or commonality is not *ipso facto* to possess the definition of that intelligibility. At *S.T.* I, 44, 2c, Aquinas presents a version of the history of Western philosophy in which philosophers work out progressively more profound definitions of *ens*. In light of these thoughts on being, it is difficult to feel any hyperbole present in the above quote from St. Augustine.

But furthermore, some of the known instances of being are others like ourselves, fellow intellectors of being. And so what is a dumb and speechless abstraction in ourselves is given a voice in and through the intellection of our fellows. In the human person, being has a voice. Does this realization not make attractive a social existence in which each shares with others what one sees of being and its richness?

You would be wrong to think that intellectual pursuit and society demand an explicit philosophical presentation of the above. For Neo-Thomists, Aquinas understands being as such an automatic and natural abstraction from self-manifestly real things provided by sensation that the *ratio entis* can lie unnoticed in the depths of our conscious life and nevertheless have conscious effects. Such thinking goes a long way to explain why the non-contradiction principle is self-evident to all.

Because of this profound stamp of being on the human intellect,

the Thomist prediction is that philosophy and intellectual inquiry will always exist. Fundamentally and always, we face each other as fellow intellectors of being; that is the stage upon which human existence is played. But the well-being of philosophical discourse will rise and fall in proportion to the intensity of the intuition. The recipe for creativity not only in Thomism but in philosophy itself is fidelity to the intuition of being. Is there any way to maintain philosophy in an integral state? Here I return to *Fides et Ratio* and its message that philosophy has nothing to fear from the Church's teaching. The Christian faith stretches the intellect to its limits, and in that way supports a sustained reflection on being as such, the sameness-in-difference that runs through all things.

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