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Giovanni Ventimiglia

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Preface

Aquinas After Frege is a book not about Frege, but about Thomas Aquinas, read afresh in the light of certain insights of Frege.

The principal idea of the book is to show how after Frege, Thomas cannot and should not any longer be read through spectacles of a Heideggerian brand, as continues to be done even at the present time, albeit unknowingly, but rather through spectacles of a Fregean brand.

Despite this work having been initiated years ago by Peter Geach and Anthony Kenny, today's students of Thomas's metaphysics unfortunately still find their agenda of important topics mostly filled by existentialist Thomism *à la* Gilson, so that the full potential of these authors' work for a better understanding of Thomas has been left unfulfilled. This book instead intends to release this unexpressed potential, developing it in an original manner to thus demonstrate in detail that, through Fregean spectacles, one sees Thomas better.

In particular, it will be demonstrated, I hope, that some of what Thomas has written on metaphysical themes becomes clearer, not only in relation to analogous contemporary debates on such topics within the realm of analytic philosophy, but specifically in relation to the historico-philosophical context of Thomas's own time.

One of the methodological challenges of this work, in fact, is to show how certain suggestions deriving from contemporary philosophy, deriving in this case from Frege's philosophy, can help towards a greater

comprehension of a philosopher of the past within his own historico-philosophical context. Fundamentally this is something that has already happened in the past in Thomist historiography, for example, when the great historian of medieval philosophy Étienne Gilson showed how some insights of existentialism were useful in clarifying some “existentialist” aspects of Thomas’s notion of being, that had been forgotten for centuries by scholastic authors.

From what has been said it will be obvious that any reader interested only in Frege is likely to find this book disappointing. It is not an attempt to read Frege in the light of Thomas, but rather the other way around. Nor is it an attempt to discover how far Thomas in the thirteenth century was or was not a Fregean thinker. This would be an anachronistic and scholarly suspect project. As we shall see, even a hope to find Fregean elements *ante litteram* in Thomas will sometimes turn out to be delusory. For the metaphysical theses of Thomas that are rediscovered thanks to Fregean suggestions at times show themselves, at the end of the day, to be far distant sometimes from typical theses of Frege. After Frege, and thanks to Frege, Thomas turns out to be much more Aristotelian than Platonic, whereas Frege, as is well known, is on the contrary more Platonic than not.

Similarly, someone who is interested only in analytic philosophical discussions of the subjects treated in this book is likely to be disappointed. For the book is not, except to a very small extent, an attempt to enlist Thomas Aquinas in current debates.

In order to appreciate this book the reader must have a degree of interest in the history of philosophy and a degree of “textual deference” towards some of the great works of the past, such as those of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas.¹

The book is addressed primarily to those who practise philosophy in order to find out what has been said by great philosophers during the more than two millennia of philosophy’s history. It is not addressed to those who are seeking to find arguments and authorities in support of the theories of their own favourite philosopher, or in support of theories of their own which they imagine to be completely original.

Those who have been accustomed to read Thomas through different spectacles—for example, the now outdated of Thomistic existentialism

à la Gilson—will find themselves disoriented just as we do when we put on for the first time a new pair of physical spectacles. Probably, if they do not have the patience to get used to the new ones, they will look back regretfully at the old ones, complaining that they do not recognize their own Thomas.

But anyone who will have a little patience will, I hope, after some time have the pleasure of re-reading old passages with greater comprehension and discovering aspects that were in the past difficult to observe.

The structure of the book, in fact, follows that of the old manuals of ontology, with their classic themes of being, essence, and the transcendentals. But the topics treated here are, thanks to Frege, new and different. One of the results of a Fregean reading of Thomas is a revision of the agenda concerning the themes that are fundamental for a student of Thomas's metaphysics. The interesting thing that emerges is that such an agenda is in many respects that of Thomas himself. We can take, for example, the topic of the senses of being, which has become important since Frege after—as Alejandro Llano has pointed out—being forgotten for centuries in Thomistic literature.² It is a central topic in the overall structure of Thomas's thought, to which he makes reference whether he is discussing central topics such as being as the *actus essendi*, the being of the divine relations, the being of God, the being of evil, the being of the human nature of Christ. These, surely, are not unimportant issues in his metaphysics.

Consider another example, the topic of transcendental multiplicity ("*multitudo transcendens*"), re-examined in the light of Frege's reflections on number, as we shall see later. Hardly a single Thomistic manual, ancient or modern, discusses this in its chapter on the transcendentals. Usually, in fact, of the many mentioned by Thomas, only *ens*, *unum*, *verum*, and *bonum* are taken into consideration. However, "*multitudo*" is that most frequently mentioned among *nomina transcendentia* and represents, as some specialists have recently shown beyond doubt, one of Thomas's most original contributions to the discussion among his contemporaries both of the theory of the transcendentals and of the doctrine of the Trinity.³

After an analysis of the state of the art in twentieth-century studies of Thomas's metaphysics (first chapter) the book is constructed in three stages: being, essence, and transcendentals.

Three questions are addressed in the second chapter. The first is that of the senses of being in Aquinas, in the light of the insights of Frege, by distinguishing the “there is” sense from the “present actuality” sense of being, as interpreted by Peter Geach and Anthony Kenny.

The second is that of the relation between the two sub-senses of the present actuality sense, namely the “is” as predicate (*Socrates est*) and the “is” as copula (*Socrates est homo*).

The third is that of the relation between the two fundamental senses of being—the “there is” and the “present actuality” sense—in the light of Frege’s distinctions between the senses of “unit”.

The third chapter, on essence, discusses two topics. First, there is the distinction between universal form and individual substance, in the light of Frege’s distinction between object and concept. Secondly, there is the relation between universal form and individual form in the light of Frege’s understanding of a concept as a function.

The fourth chapter, on the transcendentals, deals with two topics. The similarity between Frege’s assertion sign and the Thomistic notion of transcendental, and in particular his notion of transcendental being, is analysed in the first section. The nature of Thomas’s most original and personal contribution to the doctrine of the transcendentals, namely “aliud” and “multitudo transcendens”, understood in the light of Frege’s insights into the non-empirical nature of number, is analysed in the second section. Furthermore, the same section shows the similarity between these transcendentals and Frege’s logical negation operator.

The fifth chapter has a historico-philosophical character and shows that Thomas’s interest in the topic of the senses of being, rediscovered today thanks to Frege, was the very same as that of Thomas’s contemporaries, such as Richard Rufus of Cornwall, Adam of Buckfield, Roger Bacon, Albert the Great, the so-called Anonymus Lipsiensis, Henry of Ghent, and Siger of Brabant. The chapter identifies the sources of Thomas’s theory of the senses of being and reconstructs its historical path.

From that chapter, I hope, it will become clear that the new agenda of themes and texts from Thomas that I have been drawing up in the previous chapters in the light of suggestions from Frege is also fertile for the history of medieval philosophy and can break new ground in historico-philosophical and purely philosophical research.

The Appendix shows that the interrelation between God's attributes and between the different transcendentals, expressed by Thomas in terms of identity *re* and difference *ratione*, can be better understood thanks to Frege's distinction between sense and reference.

Perhaps it will be good as well to give notice right away to fans of Thomas that there is no intention in any part of the book to venerate him and exalt him as the greatest and unsurpassed philosopher of all times. The intention is simply to study him with interest. Aquinas after Frege is an Aquinas less perfect and less coherent than used to be believed. This is not because he seems inadequate when confronted with Frege—one cannot object to a writer in the past because he did not sufficiently understand a writer who lived later—but because thanks to Frege there reveal themselves a number of incoherences within his own metaphysics, as Anthony Kenny has amply demonstrated.

Nonetheless, as I will emphasize in the final section of the book, *Aquinas After Frege*, I trust, is a new Aquinas, more faithful to the Thomas of history, and of greater philosophical interest.

Luzern, Switzerland

Giovanni Ventimiglia

Notes

1. Barry Smith, "Textual Deference," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1991): 1–13.
2. "The plurality of the senses of being becomes one of the most prolific topics in order to compare and bring them together [Thomistic and analytic metaphysics]. It is a central point of Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics that have, surprisingly, passed almost entirely unnoticed in contemporary neo-Thomism. Not only it is absent in the most used scholastic manuals in the 20th Century, but it fails to appear even in the works of important authors, such as Gilson and Maritain, while Cornelio Fabro only mentions it in passing" (Alejandro Llano. "Metafisica tommasiana e filosofia analitica del linguaggio: i sensi dell'essere," *Rivista Teologica di Lugano*, no.3 (2012): 339–348, here 348). (Trans. Myself). See also Alejandro Llano, *Metaphysics and Language*, trans. James W. Albrecht (Hildesheim-New York: Olms, 2005), 141.
3. Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

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Book Abstract

Aquinas After Frege is a book about Thomas Aquinas's metaphysics, read afresh in the light of insights from the works of Frege. The reason for this new reading is simple: through Fregean glasses one sees Aquinas better than through Gilsonian glasses (assembled, unbeknownst to Thomists, by the Heidegger Company!). In particular, Aquinas's doctrine of being can be better understood in the light of Frege's distinction between the "there is" sense and the "present actuality" sense of being, as interpreted by Peter Geach and Anthony Kenny. Aquinas's notion of essence becomes clearer in the light of Frege's distinction between objects and concepts and his account of concepts as functions. Finally, Aquinas's doctrine of transcendentals is more understandable thanks to Frege's accounts of assertion and negation. *Aquinas After Frege* is a new Aquinas, more faithful both to Thomas's texts and their historico-philosophical context, and of greater purely philosophical interest.

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1

State of the Art

In this chapter I propose to explain the state of the art among studies of Thomas Aquinas, dwelling particularly on two aspects: the still present division between “historical” and “theoretical” studies of Thomas, and the division between studies that treat Thomas as fundamentally neo-Platonic and those that consider him fundamentally Aristotelian. The analyses of both these questions, besides orientating the reader within the vast profusion of studies of Thomas, will also introduce him to the perspective within which this book is written.

1.1 The Divide Between Historical and Theoretical Thomism

Studies of Aquinas’s metaphysics, and of his philosophy in general, published in recent decades, still clearly fall into two separate groups: those by “historians” and those by “philosophers”.

“Historians”¹ read Aquinas only from the point of view of the history of philosophy and often ignore contemporary philosophical discussions of Aquinas and of those aspects of his thought that are still of great significance to the international philosophical community.

“Philosophers”² read Aquinas mainly from the point of view of the most recent discussions, often ignoring the best results of research by historians.

Origin

The divide in question is not new. It began with neo-scholasticism and it has grown wider and wider into its present state.

It has become traditional to date the beginning of neo-scholasticism in 1879—the date of the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in which Leo XIII placed an obligation on all ecclesiastical educational institutions to teach the doctrine of St Thomas.

From that time on Aquinas’s doctrines have been imposed by decrees, *motu proprio*s and by the publication of official Thomistic theses.³ Thus, there came into being a “compulsory” Thomism which, in addition to the title “Doctor of the Church” conferred on the “Angelic Doctor” as long ago as 1567, led in the end to the identification of the thought of Thomas with that of the Roman Catholic Church. The consequence was the rejection of Thomistic thought by philosophers who were not believers. As we shall see the situation did not change until after the second Vatican Council.

To return to neo-scholasticism and *Aeterni Patris*. What was their purpose? The aims, in fact, were twofold.

1. First, to distinguish Aquinas from Duns Scotus, Francisco Suarez and to return to the genuine thought of St Thomas, in contrast to the philosophical eclecticism typical of the earlier Suarezian scholastic manuals
2. Second, to distinguish this genuine Aquinas from modern philosophy, in contrast to the philosophical eclecticism typical of some Catholic thinkers like Antonio Rosmini but also later to engage Aquinas in constructive dialogue with contemporary philosophy and science.

The first aim gave rise to “historical Thomism” while the second gave rise to “theoretical Thomism”.

Historical Thomism

Historical Thomism relates Thomas to authors contemporary with him or precedent to him (the sources), theoretical Thomism relates him to authors subsequent to him, usually contemporary with the writer.

A year after the publication of the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* there was founded the *Commissio Leonina* (called after the Pope who set it up) to produce a critical edition of the works of Thomas. The work on a critical edition made clear the importance of a historical study focussed on the identification of the sources. The rebirth of Thomism and the need to come back to the genuine thought of St Thomas required the help of archivists, paleographers, and historians of philosophy.

Thus, began a series of studies of medieval philosophy which, non-coincidentally, were of an Aquinocentric brand. We should mention here, among the principal figures, the pioneers of the *Commissio Leonina*: the Dominican Heinrich Denifle (1844–1905), the Jesuit Franz Ehrle (1845–1934), and then especially: Clemens Baeumker (1853–1924) and Martin Grabmann (1875–1949) in Germany; Pierre Mandonnet (1858–1936), Étienne Gilson (1884–1978), and Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895–1990) in France; Maurice de Wulf (1867–1947) and Fernand van Steenberghen (1904–1995) in Belgium; Amato Masnovo (1880–1955) and Sofia Vanni Rovighi (1909–1990) in Italy.

Mention should also be made, in addition to the afore-mentioned Chenu, of Antonin-Dalmace Sertillanges (1863–1948), a distinguished scholar who belonged to the Dominican theology faculty of Le Saulchoir, which became a great centre of studies.⁴

In the period between *Aeterni Patris* and the present day immense progress has been made in the study of the sources of Thomas's thought. At the beginning, as we shall see better in the next section, Aristotle appeared to be the privileged and almost the only source of his work, but it is nowadays well known that many neo-Platonic sources had an equally fundamental role. Particular attention has focussed on the influence of pseudo-dionysian neo-Platonism (especially *De Divinis Nominibus*⁵) and on the *Liber de Causis* (a work believed to be by Aristotle, but of which

the attribution was rejected by Thomas himself)⁶ and in general also on the indirect influence of neo-Platonism.⁷

In traditional iconography the Arabic philosophers are represented as vanquished by the Christian St Thomas, but there has been a steady re-evaluation of the influence they exercised on Aquinas's thought. Avicenna in particular emerges more and more as a constant point of reference of Thomas's philosophy, and not only at the time of the juvenile *De Ente et Essentia*.⁸ The place of the Jewish philosopher and theologian Moses Maimonides has also been re-evaluated, in particular with regard to his influence on the negative theology of Thomas.⁹ It seems that it was owing to him that Thomas's thought evolved on the topic of the proper name of God, as we will see in the second chapter.¹⁰

The commentators on Aristotle too have been studied and re-evaluated as indispensable sources: Themistius's paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima* was important for Thomas's commentary on the same work and for the opusculum *De unitate intellectus*. Themistius's paraphrase on the *Posterior Analytics* had a similar importance for Thomas, who made use of it in his own commentary on the work.

Further, it was through Themistius that Thomas came to know the teaching of Theophrastus, and through Averroes that he came to know that of Alexander of Aphrodisias. Also Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* and on Aristotle's *De Caelo et Mundo* were frequently used by Thomas.

Some works and themes of logic have been shown to be unsuspected but decisive sources. Peter of Spain is an example, but also some authors nowadays considered minor but in that period fundamental: Peter of Ireland (Thomas's teacher at Naples) and Johannes Pagus (master in the Paris faculty of arts). It has been shown, for example, that the background of Thomas's famous doctrine of the transcendentals would be incomprehensible without the manuals of the *Logica Modernorum* and contemporary commentaries on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, where the doctrine of infinite, "omnia continentes", names (*ens, unum, aliquid, and res*) is set out.¹¹

In theology not only the Latin but also the Greek fathers, especially Maximus the Confessor for Christology, were indispensable sources for Thomas.

In ontology and metaphysics it is possible clearly to identify three or four generations of investigation, which I shall discuss in detail in the following section.

Theoretical Thomism

The label “theoretical Thomism”, coined by Porro¹² is now commonly used to indicate studies whose principal object is not to reach an understanding of the genuine thought of Thomas, as in the case of historical Thomism, but to use him as a starting point to enter into dialogue with some present-day philosophers. In these cases Thomas is not an object of study (*quod*) but is often an instrument (*quo*) for engaging in philosophical comparisons and speculative inquiries.

At the beginning of the Thomistic renewal, which preceded the Enciclica *Aeterni Patris*, we meet some neo-scholastic authors, such as Vincenzo Buzzetti (1777–1824), Gaetano Sanseverino (1811–1865), Serafino (1793–1865) and Domenico Sordi (1790–1880), Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio (1793–1862), Matteo Liberatore (1810–1892), Carlo Maria Curci (1809–1891), and Tommaso Zigliara (1833–1893). They showed a negative and purely defensive attitude towards the whole of modern philosophy: St Thomas was used as a weapon against the modernist movement. In particular a battle was conducted against immanentism, whether in its epistemological forms (the immanentist method and the so-called “ontologism” of which Rosmini was accused) or in its metaphysical forms (idealism and neo-idealism). It seemed that for this purpose the best bulwarks to defend catholic doctrine would be the epistemological realism of Thomas, plus the doctrine of the real distinction between essence and existence—despite the fact that this last had hitherto been a minority opinion among Thomists, supported in fact only by those of them who were Dominicans.

Later, Cardinal Henri de Lubac wrote of this kind of Thomism:

A kind of dictatorship called ‘Thomistic’ [...] attempted to suffocate every attempt at freer thought. A network consisting of some Roman professors and their former pupils, scattered around the world was suspicious of anything that tried to exist outside. So [...] denunciations began to pour

down [...] During that period many of those in post turned ‘Thomism’ into pure ecclesiastical conformism, which was nothing more than a certain hardening of the spirit, a certain negative attitude of universal condemnation.¹³

This negative and purely defensive attitude has unfortunately remained within the neo-scholastic movement and until now still represents a kind of sub-current inside it, very close minded and obtusely conservative.

However, some years later the afore-mentioned neo-scholastic authors also began a different type of Thomism, championed by D. Mercier (1851–1926), who set up the Institut Supérieur de Philosophie at the Catholic University of Louvain in 1894 and founded the “Revue néoscholastique de philosophie” (later called “Revue philosophique de Louvain”). Right from the start this group took account of the need to engage in constructive dialogue with contemporary philosophy and science, such as positivism and experimental psychology.¹⁴

One of the foremost figures of theoretical Thomism was undoubtedly Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), who was perhaps the first to place the thought of Thomas in a dialogue—even though often critical—with that of other modern and contemporaneous philosophers, from Luther to Descartes, from Rousseau to Kant, from Hegel to Marx, from Comte to Dewey, from Bergson to Mounier.¹⁵ Thus, while he was an attentive student of Thomas, he was also a kind of diviner attentive to every murmur and rustle coming from contemporary culture.¹⁶

Besides Maritain we should mention here three Thomists: Erich Przywara (1889–1972), in dialogue with Max Scheler, Karl Barth, and Georg Simmel; Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984), in dialogue with Kant and others; Edith Stein (1891–1942), in dialogue with Edmund Husserl.

What is called “transcendental Thomism” deserves separate treatment. In dialogue with Kant, it developed a critique of claims made by many conservative Thomists about the epistemological realism of Thomas. However, it was hardly recognized by “classical” Thomists as a form of authentic Thomism, and it was labelled “the Thomism of the departure from Thomism”. This tendency of historical interpretation was mainly Jesuit and German: it was founded by J. Maréchal (1878–1944) according to whom the only possible point of departure for metaphysics was the human subject.

His followers, Karl Rahner (1904–1984), Emerich Coreth (1919–2006), Johannes Baptist Lotz (1903–1992), Gustav Siewerth (1903–1963), and Max Müller (1906–1994) in addition to the dialogue with Kant confronted Heidegger, with the intention of defending the metaphysics of Thomas against the accusation that it was an onto-theology. I shall discuss this issue in the next section.

Finally, we should mention also Anglo-Saxon Thomism, which is also called “analytic Thomism”, an expression coined by John Haldane. It comes in two forms: “Wittgensteinian Thomism”—an expression coined by Roger Pouivet—and “Fregean-Geachian “Thomism”—an expression coined by myself. This is one of the most interesting new developments, both from the theoretical and historico-philosophical point of view.¹⁷

What I have called “Fregean-Geachian Thomism” has a precise birthday: 9 May 1955 at the Aristotelian Society of London, when Peter Geach (1916–2013) read a paper entitled *Form and Existence*, later published in the Proceedings of the Society.¹⁸ In this pioneering lecture Geach initiated a fruitful and interesting comparison between the thought of Thomas and the thought of Frege based on an attentive and insightful reading of texts of both thinkers. Even from the point of view simply of the exegesis of texts of Thomas there were a number of provocative novelties, such as the parallel between Thomas’s theory of forms and Frege’s theory of functions. Another was the parallel between Thomas’s distinction on the one hand between being as the answer to the question “an est?” and being as the individual actuality of being, and Frege’s distinction on the other between being as “there is” (*es-gibt Existenz*) and being as reality (*Wirklichkeit*).

So-called “Wittgensteinian Thomism” likewise has a fairly precise birthday: May 1958 when Anthony Kenny read a paper called *Aquinas and Wittgenstein* to the Oxford Socratic Club, which was later published in the *Downside Review*.¹⁹ Indeed, one year before, there had already appeared two books which are fundamental for the post-Wittgensteinian reading of Thomas, one by Peter Geach²⁰ and the other by Elizabeth Anscombe.²¹ Kenny would go on to write other books.²² This branch of theoretical Thomism has contributed a great deal to the rediscovery of central pages of Thomas on philosophical anthropology, on epistemology, on the theory of action, and on ethics. Its central idea is to exhibit that

many of Wittgenstein's criticisms of modern and contemporary philosophy (including phenomenology) on the basis of its Cartesian legacy belong to a climate of thought very similar to that of Thomas's criticisms of his contemporaries. Both Wittgenstein and Thomas reject theories that in modern parlance would be called "internalist" and "individualist".

Freelance Thomism and the Divide

In his recent and widely read *New History of Western Philosophy* Anthony Kenny has observed:

Since the second Vatican Council St Thomas seems to have lost the pre-eminent favour he enjoyed in ecclesiastical circles, and to have been superseded, in the reading lists of ordinands, by lesser more recent authors. This state of affairs is deplored by Pope John Paul in *Fides et Ratio*, the most recent Papal encyclical devoted to Aquinas. On the other hand, the devaluation of St Thomas within the bounds of Catholicism has been accompanied by a re-evaluation of the Saint in secular universities in various parts of the world. *In first years of the twenty-first century it is not too much to speak of a renaissance of Thomism*—not a confessional Thomism, but a study of Thomas that transcends the limits not only of the Catholic Church but of Christianity itself. The new interest in Aquinas is both more varied and more critical than the earlier, denominational reception of his work. The possibility of very divergent interpretations is inherent in the nature of Aquinas' *Nachlass*.²³

Kenny's analysis is a fair description of the state of Thomistic studies at the beginning of the new millennium. More than anything else it marked the end of an era, caused by the "institutional shipwreck" of ecclesiastical Thomism in the Second Vatican Council.²⁴ From that time, that is to say from 1962, there began a period which has been described as a long "purgatory" for Thomism, resulting in an unexpected "renaissance" which is something quite different from a "restoration".²⁵

To give an idea of what is happening, it will suffice to remark that a publisher of the calibre of Cambridge University Press has in its current catalogue one hundred and three works by and on Thomas, including a

Companion to Aquinas which has gone through seven impressions.²⁶ Similarly, Oxford University Press recently published, in addition to sixty titles in its catalogue, a *Handbook to Aquinas* of some six hundred pages.²⁷ If one adds general presentations of Thomas's thought, published or republished from 2000 to the present day, one reaches more than twenty books, or an average of more than one volume a year simply of introductory texts.²⁸

What are the characteristics of this ongoing phenomenon? It is not easy to respond to this question, partly because the game is as it were still ongoing, and so we cannot exclude dramatic changes before the final result is known. But some facts seem already clear.

First and foremost, it is clear that the Thomism of the new millennium no longer speaks French or German, but English: most of the students of Thomas today teach in North American universities, whether in Canada or the United States (Indiana, New York, Washington, Colorado, Texas, Missouri, and Ohio). In Europe, if we leave aside some Roman pontifical universities, there are only Fribourg and Lucerne in Switzerland and Toulouse and Paris in France.

Second, medieval thought is no longer Aquinocentric. Students of Thomas, especially on the continent, are often also specialists on other medieval authors: from Avicenna to Henry of Ghent (Pasquale Porro), from Theodoric of Freiberg to Moses Maimonides (Ruedi Imbach), from Albert the Great to Meister Eckhart (Alain de Libera).

Thirdly, the Thomism of the new millennium is no longer "compulsory" and "fanatic". As Kenny remarked earlier, Thomas is nowadays read critically in a way that earlier was unthinkable. When we consider also that the majority of students are laymen not necessarily linked to ecclesiastical institutions, we realize the aptness of the definition recently offered by McNerny "freelance Thomism".²⁹

What about the divide between "historical" and "theoretical" Thomism within this "freelance Thomism"? In spite of some attempts to bridge it, the divide still exists.

In the latest *Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, for instance, authors of a decidedly historical stamp (like Torrell, Emery, and Hankey) have published some chapters beside others by authors of a more theoretical stamp (like Davies, Pasnau, and Klima, for instance).

The problem is that these chapters, by two such different kinds of authors, do not enter into any fruitful dialogue with each other and therefore seem to belong to two parallel lines, which do not meet.

Certainly, there has been progress in comparison to the period before “freelance Thomism”: previously the logic was that of *aut-aut* (either/or) (either “historical Thomism” or “theoretical Thomism”), nowadays the logic is that of *et/et* (both this *and* that) (both “historical Thomism” and “theoretical Thomism”). But “this and that” do not enter into dialogue.

Moreover, some specialists, who have devoted themselves to Thomas from a historical point of view, have begun to take an interest also in contemporary philosophical debates. Examples are the cases of Alain De Libera and Enrico Berti. In particular Anglo-Saxon students, such as Anthony Kenny, Robert Pasnau, and Anthony Lysska, for example, who have written fine books on Thomas, take an active part in international debates within theoretical philosophy. They concern themselves not only with philosophical problems discussed by Thomas but also with analogous philosophical questions that are the subject of debate in our own day.

Historical Because Theoretical

But, nevertheless, these are quite isolated cases, which have not yet inaugurated a school of thought nor a new approach to Aquinas. In my opinion it is time to overcome the stage of “*et/et*”, and to reach the stage of “*because*”: historical Thomism, *because* theoretical.

It is often said, not without irony, that the first group, the historical studies, seek to understand Thomas in the light of what went before him, while the second group, the theoretical studies, seek to do so in the light of what came after him, thus condemning themselves at the outset to anachronism and equivocation.

Such an opinion is not correct in many ways: it reveals a failure to have grasped even the essential message of hermeneutic philosophy (Gadamer), which showed, in a manner difficult to refute, that there is no such thing as a neutral historical interpretation, and that every understanding starts from a conscious or unconscious “precomprehension” which may be explicit or concealed.

In this regard, I consider three examples of historico-philosophical Thomism. The discovery of the existential character of Thomas's notion of being was originally made by Jacques Maritain, who in his turn influenced the great historian of medieval philosophy, Étienne Gilson.³⁰ According to his own explicit testimony, Maritain recognized in Kierkegaard the modern philosopher who had the greatest insight into the existential character of being.³¹ Gilson himself, according to his biographer Laurence Shook, was moved to tears when listening to Heidegger because of the perfect concord that he detected with his own thought. How then can we fail to recognize a direct or indirect influence of existentialism on the historico-philosophical discoveries of Gilson that are said to have shown the "existential" character of Thomas's notion of being? In the introduction to the Proceedings of a study week conducted by the Academy of St Thomas in April 1947 the then General Secretary of the Academy, Carlo Boyer, wrote "Existentialism has made us more aware of the riches of our great Doctors, and especially of the Common Doctor, St Thomas Aquinas".³² As J. Owens has observed: "What is meant exactly by the existential interpretation of St. Thomas' doctrine? The term 'existential' is quite evidently borrowed from the trend in modern thought that commenced with Kierkegaard and is so well known today through the work of men like Heidegger, Jaspers and Sartre."³³

In the realm of epistemology, it was Sofia Vanni Rovighi (1908–1990) who was the first, at least in Italy, to rediscover Thomas Aquinas's theory of intentionality. She too acknowledged that it was Husserl who had taught her "to read the texts of Thomas with new eye".³⁴

Finally, the "theoretical" studies of Geach, explicitly influenced by Frege, have set in train a series of excellent historico-philosophical studies on the senses of being in Thomas, a topic that in the past did not even appear in the list of themes worthy of treatment by a student of Thomas: Anthony Kenny,³⁵ Hermann Weidemann,³⁶ Norbert Bathen,³⁷ Christopher Martin,³⁸ Alejandro Llano,³⁹ Gyula Klima,⁴⁰ David Braine,⁴¹ Stephen Brock,⁴² as I have shown in my book *To be o esse*.⁴³

All this means that, at least sometimes, the best studies in the history of philosophy, are such exactly *because* they are theoretical, which is to say, they are driven by an interest that begins with the concerns of contemporary philosophy.

In the course of this book, I will show how some insights by Frege have been—and still are—useful, as if they were spectacles, in order to bring into better focus some fundamental texts by Aquinas and to better understand them in their own historico-philosophical context.

In particular we shall see that the “theoretical” studies of some Anglo-Saxon authors such as Geach and Kenny, explicitly influenced by Frege, have contributed to the rediscovery of texts of Thomas, forgotten by previous historians but central to his work, concerning important themes like the senses of being (Chapter 2.1., 2.2., 2.3.), the distinction between universal and individual (Chapter 3.1.), the very notion of form (Chapter 3.2.), the notion of the transcendental (Chapter 4.1.), the notions of *aliud*, *divisio*, *multitudo transcendens* (Chapter 4.2.), the distinction between *ratio* and *res* (Appendix).

In explaining their approach I will endeavour to expand on them, but always using Frege as my guide. I hope to show that “Aquinas After Frege” is a more genuine Aquinas, and at the same time a more philosophically interesting Aquinas.

1.2 Thomism Between Platonism and Aristotelianism

Thomism was and is a rich and complex system, corresponding to the richness and complexity of the work of Thomas Aquinas himself. Within it two different and partly irreconcilable types of metaphysics have endeavoured to live together as it were under the same roof, namely neo-Platonic metaphysics and Aristotelian metaphysics. This explains why the history of Thomism is a long story of syncretisms and oscillations among Aristotelian Thomists and neo-Platonic Thomists.

Historical Thomism Between Platonism and Aristotelianism

First Generation: Aristotelico-Thomistic Metaphysics

Until the end of the 1930s, Thomas's metaphysics was considered identical with Aristotle's, so that a single expression was used to denote both: "Aristotelico-Thomistic metaphysics". The first neo-Thomists, in fact, had the idea that all Thomas did was to "baptize" Aristotle. On this point all the scholars of the time were in agreement, for example, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877–1964), Francesco Olgiati (1886–1962), Antonin-Dalmace Sertillanges (1863–1948), Gallus Manser (1866–1950), and Aimé Forest (1898–1983).

In Aristotle they emphasized above all the thesis that being is said in many ways and that therefore beings are from the outset different from each other. They defended, that is to say, the doctrine of what is called "the analogy of being". They gave a special role to analogy of proportionality, dear to the commentators Thomas de Vio Cajetan and John of St Thomas, rather than analogy of attribution which has a neo-Platonic character. The reason was clear: the first kind of analogy emphasized better than the second the diversity to be found among beings. A mathematical proportion (e.g. $2:4=3:6$) does not imply the presence of equal numbers: similarly an ontological proportion (e.g. man is to his being as God is to his being) does not imply the equality of any term of the proportion. In other words, there is no common genus "being" that includes varied beings and including beings and God.

In these studies of the first generation, however, beside the thesis of analogy there co-existed another one that is not at all Aristotelian, namely that in creatures' essence and being are really distinct, while in God they are identical. It was a thesis that gave rise to a heated controversy, especially between the Dominicans, who defended it, and the Jesuits who, following the Thomist Francisco Suarez, denied it. The climax of the dispute came with the *motu proprio Doctoris Angelici* of Pope Pius X, on 29 June 1914, and the subsequent publication on 27 July 1914 by the Congregation of Studies of "24 theses of the philosophy of St Thomas".

These included the real distinction between essence and being, and hence gave the victory to the Dominicans over the Jesuits. The latter were thus expelled—undeservedly—from the number of those entitled to bear the title “Thomist”, and they were branded with the epithet “Suarezian”, now considered as a mark of disgrace.

The thesis of the real distinction between essence and being, as the Jesuits well understood, was probably not upheld by Thomas and certainly not by Aristotle, for whom “‘existent man’ and ‘man’ are the same [...] it is clear that they are not separated either in coming to be or in ceasing to be” (*Met.* IV, 2, 1003 b 29). Even less Aristotelian is the thesis of the identity of essence and being in God, which rather is closely reminiscent of the doctrines of the Platonists criticized by the Stagirite himself in various parts of his *Metaphysics*.⁴⁴ But the scholars of the first generation seem not to have known this and so they handed on this thesis to the scholars of the second generation as if it was typical of Aristotelico-Thomistic metaphysics, and the latter made it their warhorse.

Second Generation: Originality of Thomistic Metaphysics and Neo-Platonic Influences

The beginnings of this generation should be placed around the late 1930s and the early 1940s. The point becomes clear if we consider the evolution of the thought of Gilson. Once a follower of the first generation, around 1940, Gilson displayed the signs of a profound change: he no longer considered Thomas’s notion of being as identical with Aristotle’s, but came to think that it came from the Bible, from the book of Exodus which was unknown to the Stagirite.⁴⁵ The change, it is obvious, was radical, and from that moment onward it became definitive, and was consolidated under the name of “Thomistic existentialism” or “the metaphysics of Exodus”.

The expression “Thomistic existentialism” indicates the conception of God as an “existence without essence”, a Being which is not a being, similar to what existentialist philosophers were saying at the time, though not in theological tones.

As for the “metaphysics of Exodus”, this took its origin, according to Gilson, from the definition that, according to Exodus 3, 14, God gave of himself as *He who is*.

The identification of God as subsistent being itself, as the being whose essence is nothing other than existence was, according to Gilson, derived from this Biblical passage by Thomas and only by him.⁴⁶ It began to be considered as the starting point of any typically Christian metaphysics, and especially that of Thomas. This meant, in other words, that according to Gilson the whole of Greek philosophy, lacking the help of revelation, could never have conceived of God as subsistent being itself—so not Aristotle, and not even (sic) Plato or the neo-Platonists. Consequently, Thomas’s metaphysics should be regarded as wholly original and no longer as “Aristotelico-Thomistic”.

The distance between the metaphysics of Aristotle and that of Thomas, and the absolute originality of the latter, was emphasized also by Cornelio Fabro (1911–1995). As Gilson had already done Fabro criticized Aristotle for his “essentialism” and for not having given primacy to being, or better “the act of being” as Thomas had done. He also emphasized another aspect of Thomas’s metaphysics: the notion of participation, one of the characteristics of Platonic metaphysics.⁴⁷

Other studies that followed the track of the discovery of Thomas’s “Platonism” were those of Louis-Bertrand Geiger (1906–1983), Louis de Raeymaker (1895–1970), and Joseph de Finance (1904–2000) who, emphasizing the neo-Platonic influence on Thomistic metaphysics, on the one hand were successful in rescuing Thomas from the embrace of Aristotle but on the other hand handing him over in entirety—surely against their will—into the hands of the neo-Platonists.

Certainly, besides the scholars mentioned there have been many others who, in later years and up to the present day, have copied the interpretations of Gilson and Fabro, without taking account of the historical discoveries in the meantime (third generation). For example, John Wippel and more recently Gaven Kerr have in substance accepted the theses of the “second generation”.

Furthermore, some contemporary Thomists, not only ignore the acquisitions of the third generation, but do not even take into account the studies of Thomism I had referred to before as “Fregean-Geachian”,

so that the agenda of the important themes for a student of Thomas has remained almost identical to that of the second generation, that is, of the pre-1970s era: where Thomas's being is the act of being, where God is subsistent being itself, and where these were novel notions at the time. Questions from the third generation that (as we shall see) are still unanswered: what of the notions of being as act of being and of God as subsistent being itself already widely present in the neo-Platonic tradition, both Christian and pagan? Questions from Fregean-Geachean Thomism still unanswered: is being as act of being the only sense of being that is metaphysically important? For example, can the statement "Does God exist?" be understood in terms of being as act of being? These and other questions remain entirely unanswered in many studies of contemporary Thomists, still stuck in the second generation.

Returning to the glory years of the second generation, it must be noted, in conclusion, that the positions were of course not in total agreement. For example, Gilson's conception of being was very different from that of Fabro, as was well shown in an old but still excellent study by Keller.⁴⁸ The conception of de Finance, influenced by what is called "transcendental Thomism" is certainly not the same as that of Fabro. However, they have historiographical features in common, such as distancing from Aristotle and emphasizing the originality of Thomas's metaphysics, which are novel by comparison with earlier studies (first generation). These features enable us to classify all these authors as belonging within the same generation.

Third Generation: Neo-Platonic Thomistic Metaphysics

The third generation was born at the beginning of the 1970s when Cornelia de Vogel (1905–1986) published an article with the significant title *'Ego sum qui sum' et sa signification pour une philosophie chrétienne*. It was as it were a manifesto for this nascent historiographical tendency, and it overturned completely the thesis of the "metaphysics of Exodus".

As you are aware, Gilson's answer to the question of how Christian authors arrived at the identification of God with being was that they found this identification in Exodus while the Greeks had no knowledge of it. If this

answer is analysed it is found to imply two theses: 1) the identification of God with absolute being is a truth directly revealed in Exodus 3,14; 2) this truth was not understood by the Greeks. These two theses turn out to be erroneous [...] I conclude that it is necessary to overturn the thesis of Gilson and ask whether the Christians did find the identification of God with absolute being in the text of Exodus 3,14, and whether they learned from the Greeks the notion of absolute being.⁴⁹

The revolutionary implication of these assertions, the result of long documentary researches, was instantly apparent.

On the track of de Vogel, Werner Beierwaltes (1831–2019), followed particularly by Klaus Kremer (1927–2007), devoted in the first case an article and in the second an entire book to identifying the neo-Platonic origin of the Thomistic doctrine of being. Kremer especially left no room for misunderstanding: “Thomas Aquinas”—he wrote—“in his philosophy of being is structurally dependent from that line of neo-Platonic thought that came down to him from Plotinus, via Porphyry, Proclus and Dionysus. So, Thomas took his *ipsum esse subsistens* from neo-Platonism”.⁵⁰

After Kremer’s fundamental text there should also be mentioned an article of Hadot (1922–2010) devoted to the interpretation of Gilson, in which it was shown that the identification of God and being was not a specifically Christian idea, but rather Porphyrian.⁵¹ Subsequently the challenge of de Vogel was taken up by excellent historians of medieval philosophy such as Wayne Hankey⁵² and David Bradshaw.⁵³

Deserving of separate mention in this context are the writings of Cristina D’Ancona Costa, who has shown that the origin of Thomas’s idea of being is to be found not so much in Porphyry and in general in pagan neo-Platonist circles, but rather in pseudo-Dionysus, that is to say in Christian neo-Platonic circles where the notion of creation was at home.⁵⁴ In fact, Thomas could read and did read the thesis of the identification of God with being itself in the *Liber de Causis*, propositions 4 and 9, and in the *De Divinis Nominibus* itself in chapter 5. If it is true, as D’Ancona Costa has shown, that the *De Divinis Nominibus* is among the sources of the *Liber de Causis*, and in particular of the propositions in which the first principle is identified with being itself, then the question of the origin of the idea of God as *ipsum esse subsistens* focuses itself on the

identity of pseudo-Dionysus himself. Carlo Maria Mazzucchi has presented copious arguments to show that he is identical with Damascius, a pagan neo-Platonist, while others maintain that we are dealing with a Christian fellow pupil of Damascius.⁵⁵

Finally, a recent contribution of Pasquale Porro, one of the best historico-philosophical studies on the thought of Thomas Aquinas, confirms that “the thesis of the identity of being and essence in God is evidently not an original thesis of Thomas, but is a commonplace for all scholastic thinkers, starting in the Latin world at least as far back as Augustine”. His interesting book also reveals the influence on Thomas not only of the *De Divinis Nominibus* and the *Liber de Causis*, but also of Avicenna.⁵⁶

It seems then that two fundamental facts have been established. (1) Thomas’s metaphysics, and in particular his notion of being, is not in fact totally original, as the second generation believed. (2) It turns out to be almost totally identical with that of the neo-Platonic tradition, whether pagan or Christian, and that of the Islamic tradition in which Aristotelianism and neo-Platonism were often fused with one another.

Fourth Generation?

Does there exist a fourth generation of studies after the generation that seemed to have definitively classed Thomas as a neo-Platonist?

It seems to me that there have been various recent signs of a new change of direction.

First of all it is worth quoting the judgements of some great historians of medieval philosophy who showed themselves sceptical in the very years of the re-evaluation of Thomas’s neo-Platonism. A particular interest attaches to the position of Sofia Vanni Rovighi, one of the best historians of medieval philosophy. She wrote:

The position of St Thomas with regard to Plato and the Platonists is predominantly critical, which is understandable when we remember that the principal source of St Thomas’s knowledge of Platonism was Aristotle. This conclusion [...] does not prevent anyone from maintaining that Thomas was more Platonic than he thought, but it sets out the necessity of bearing in mind what St Thomas actually said about Platonism.⁵⁷

She was in a position to show that while in the minds of contemporary students of the second and third generation Thomas appeared a neo-Platonist, in the minds of his own generation he appeared rather as an Aristotelian. “The novelties for which John Peckham rebuked Thomas Aquinas present themselves as due to the influence of Aristotelian thought confronting a tradition that was Platonist and Augustinian.”⁵⁸

No different was the judgement of René Antoine Gauthier (1913–1999), by common consent the most authoritative scholar and editor of the works of Thomas in critical editions. In the conclusion of his magnificent study of Thomas’s commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima* he was in a position to write in forceful terms:

The historic task of Thomas, then, was to restore the philosophy of Aristotle to its purity so far as that was possible in an age in which Platonic prejudices were so strong. Above all, he had to take as an instrument for theological reflection no longer Platonic-stoic eclecticism as Augustine had done but rather the newly rediscovered Aristotle. This was the revolution that St Thomas brought about.⁵⁹

Similar, finally, is the judgement of Alain de Libera, a great historian of medieval philosophy in his *La Philosophie médiévale*: “Aristotelianism never existed in a pure form while it percolated from Avicenna down to Averroes: the movement of de-Platonizing of Aristotle carried out by Thomas Aquinas took place in the wake of Ibn Rushd.”⁶⁰

Altogether, it seems that the exegetical question of the amount of Platonism and of Aristotelianism present in the work of Thomas is now being posed in different terms. It is true that Thomas, as the studies of the second and third generation showed, was a Christian neo-Platonist, but it is also true that Thomas was not, at that time, the only neo-Platonist. At this point the exegetical question becomes that of identifying the distinctive contribution of Thomas in contrast to his contemporaries. Was he *only* a neo-Platonist? The answer is no—he was *also* an Aristotelian and indeed it is in his Aristotelianism that we can rediscover, as we have just read, the distinctive contribution of his work. Altogether, apart from particular cases to be specifically evaluated from time to time, the overall intention

of Thomas's metaphysics seems not to have been to Christianize or "baptize" Aristotle, improving him with a little Christian Platonism, but rather to de-Platonize Aristotle in order to correct neo-Platonism by means of this more Aristotelian Aristotle and to make use of the rediscovered Aristotle in philosophy and theology.⁶¹

It is this fundamentally Aristotelian option that is emerging, it seems to me, in recent studies from the end of the 1990s to the present day.

In my study of 1997 I showed the importance of Thomas's reception of Aristotle's criticism of Plato's unwritten doctrines for the understanding of some fundamental features of his metaphysics, especially the doctrine of the transcendentals, and of his theology, especially the theory of number in God.⁶²

In France a similar importance is attributed to the Aristotelian influence in the studies of Michel Bastit, in criticism of the attempt to de-Aristotelize Thomism.⁶³

In the anglophone world mention must be made at least of the studies of Robert Pasnau and Ralph McInerny. The first showed very well how far Aquinas's anthropology is from Platonism and how important the Aristotelian explanatory framework is for all the philosophy of Aquinas.⁶⁴

The second criticizes Gilson's interpretation, the Platonization of Thomas and the tendency to theologize him, as inconsistent with his overall philosophical and theological system. *Praeambula Fidei*, McInerny's final philosophical treatise, ends with the sentence: "Aristotelem aufer, mutus fiet Thomas: apart from Aristotle Thomas cannot speak to us".⁶⁵

A fundamental stage in the process of freeing Thomas's metaphysics from a neo-Platonic reading is constituted by Stephen Brock's essay *On Whether Aquinas's Ipsum esse is "Platonism"*.⁶⁶ He demonstrates, by reference to the texts, that the *ipsum esse subsistens* of Thomas is not to be understood in the neo-Platonic sense that God is being itself but in the sense that God is *his esse*. The whole context, he maintains, excludes such a Platonizing translation which is pregnant with univocist consequences. Moreover, in several passages, Brock observes, Thomas expresses himself in favour of the existence in God of a form, an essence, a *quidditas*, which would rule out thinking of him as pure being and nothing but being.

Enrico Berti (in 2009 and 2012) and I myself have continued reflection and research on the *ipsum esse subsistens* of Thomas, identifying important Aristotelian elements there that were previously unknown to scholars.⁶⁷ Again, David Braine's⁶⁸ essay of 2006 in *Analytical Thomism: Traditions in Dialogue*⁶⁹ follows the same line of thought.

Finally, we must note an important volume of 2015 edited by Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering significantly entitled *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, which by itself is a proof of the return of Aristotle to Thomism. In the Preface the editors take a stand against Mark Jordan's *The Alleged Aristotelianism of Thomas Aquinas*,⁷⁰ a sort of manifesto of the anti-Aristotelianism then dominant in Thomism. They endeavour to exhibit some of the "innumerable Aristotelian threads" in the theology of Thomas and "how and why Aquinas found Aristotle useful in Christian theology".⁷¹ I will single out just one of the many interesting aspects illuminated in this book, namely that discussed in Emery's essay: the notion of transcendental multiplicity at the centre of theological reflection on plurality in the Trinity. This is an original and typical notion of Aquinas, but it is a development of notions contained in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. It is an aspect which will occupy us later in this book (Chapter 4.2.).

As the reader will have realized, the book in his hands belongs in continuity with this last generation of studies, that which has re-evaluated the Aristotelian aspects of Thomas's philosophy, and which considers it the distinctive and original feature of his work.

Theoretical Thomism Between Platonism and Aristotelianism

What, finally, of the issue of Platonism or Aristotelianism in Thomas within the kind of Thomism that we have called "theoretical"?

Transcendental Thomism certainly was sympathetic to neo-Platonism, in particular to the theory of the identity of the hierarchy of intellectual forms with the hierarchy of beings. Karl Rahner in his work placed a high value the close relationship, typical of the *De Causis* between the perfection of being and the intellect's complete return upon itself.

De Causis was indeed one of the favourite sources of all the existentialist Thomists. There you could read texts which could not fail to arouse enthusiasm anyone who was sympathetic to existentialism. For instance, “And it is in such a way only in virtue of its closeness to the being that is pure (*esse puro*), unique and true, in which there is no multiplicity of any sort” (*Liber de causis*, prop. 4); “And what is in some way the primary cause has no formal determination (*ylathim*), because it is itself pure being (*esse tantum*)” (*Liber de causis*, prop. 9).

As is now known, there were two neo-Platonic theories about the first principle. The first maintained that God is the One and the Good, above and beyond Being; the other maintained that God, the One, and the Good was being itself, or, as Thomas could read in the *De Causis*, was “pure being” and “only being” and “nothing but being”. It is clear that all the passages of Thomas containing an idea of God as “only being” were well regarded by all the existentialist Thomists. Why was that? It was because they seemed to absolve Thomas from the Heideggerian charge of being an “essentialist”, and of conceiving Being as a being in the same way, according to Heidegger, as all Western onto-theology.

Gilson, for example, maintained: “The metaphysics of *esse* is a consideration of being rather than a discussion of what there is. It is not even an onto-theology, for the simple reason that it places God above what there is, as being itself: *ipsum purum esse*.”⁷²

Cornelio Fabro echoed him:

The Thomistic conception of being is the only one that escapes the Heideggerian criticism of essentialism [...] The theory of being as the act of a being [...] can show the originality of Thomas’s metaphysics by comparison with that of Aristotle of ‘being as being’ that was the target of Heidegger’s criticism.⁷³

Similar in tenor were the remarks of John Baptist Lotz, a Thomist who was a direct pupil of Heidegger.

For Heidegger being is not God, but it opens the road towards God: if a question about God can be posed, the question must be located within the horizon of being, not within the horizon of beings. God is not a being [...] Instead, the classical position of Thomas Aquinas is this: God is subsistent being, he is being in the most profound intimacy. God, considered as a

being is diminished and is made similar to created beings. I agree with Father Fabro: we must follow Thomas and not a later scholasticism that has largely or totally forgotten being. If the problem of God is posed in a genuine manner, it is always the problem of God as subsistent being.⁷⁴

It is clear that the texts of Thomas that underlie such remarks are those that are most neo-Platonic, those that refer to formal causality and participation, rather than those more Aristotelian that give greater importance to efficient causality. Lotz wrote “It is not a matter of efficient causality of which only Heidegger speaks and which he rejects as belonging to what exists, but of the exemplar causality which for Plato too is the more profound.”⁷⁵

Thus, one understands how even Jean-Luc Marion, who from a Heideggerian perspective accused the thought of Thomas as being a paradigm of an onto-theological theology, had subsequently to absolve Thomas of this charge in an article *Saint Thomas et l'onto-théo-logie*.⁷⁶ For, if God is understood according to the perspective of existential Thomism, then he is understood as and “esse without being”, a thesis that seems indeed close to the Heideggerian perspective. That is why Hankey has observed correctly: “Historical study and the Heideggerian critique of metaphysical ontology have combined to draw Thomism away from Aristotle and metaphysics toward neo-Platonism.”⁷⁷

In our day there are still Thomists who devalue the role of essence in ontology and applaud the notion of God as “pure being”, “being itself”, “just being”, “nothing but being”, whereas, according to them, everything that is created is an entity or *a* being (*ens*). Although they are not often aware of it, their interpretation of Thomas is, perhaps via Gilson, Heideggerian in its theoretical perspective and neo-Platonic from the historico-philosophical point of view.

On the side of analytic Thomism things are in a very different state. The very title of one of the books that launched this tendency is significant: *Three Philosophers: Aristotle, Aquinas, Frege*.⁷⁸ Not only Elizabeth Anscombe, Peter Geach, and Anthony Kenny, but also other authors belonging in different ways and forms to this line of thought, such as Alejandro Llano, Christopher Martin and Stephen Brock, exhibit in their writings a clear option in favour of Aristotle. Several essays contained in the 2006 volume *Analytical Thomism: Traditions in Dialogue* are devoted to the Aristotelianism of Thomas. There is, indeed, an interesting

convergence between the historical studies of what I called above the “fourth generation” and of the theoretical Thomism of the analytic type. Naturally, the reasons that have taken analytic Thomism in the direction of the Aristotelianism of Thomas are not historico-philosophical or philological. The reasons are more narrowly philosophical. For example, the clear and sharp distinction made by Frege between concept and object has led to the re-evaluation of Aristotle’s criticism, shared by Thomas, of Platonic subsistent ideas, and of the criticism of the idea of God as subsistent being itself.

As we see, the suggestions of Frege, who was more Platonic than Aristotelian, have nonetheless brought about a re-evaluation of the Aristotelianism of Thomas.

This book continues and develops the historical Thomism of the fourth generation and the Fregean-Geachean theoretical Thomism in its Aristotelian orientation.

Notes

1. For example, James Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d’Aquino. His life, thought and works* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1983). Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas, II ed* (Fribourg-Paris: Cerf, 2002). Pasquale Porro, *Tommaso d’Aquino. Un profilo storico-filosofico* (Roma: Carocci Editore, 2012).
2. For example, Paul O’Grady, *Aquinas’s Philosophy of Religion* (Basingstoke-New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Christopher Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of A Simple God. An Investigation in Aquinas’ Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Christopher Hughes, *Aquinas on Being, Goodness, and God* (London: Routledge, 2015).
3. On “compulsory” Thomism: Augustin Laffay, “Un renouveau Thomiste après Pascendi (1907–1914)? Aux Sources de l’antithomisme contemporain”, *Revue Thomiste* 108 (2008): 281–299; Benoît (Bernard) Montagnes, “La réception du Thomisme compromise par ses défenseurs”, *Revue Thomiste* 108 (2008): 253–280.
4. It is not only for their own works that these authors are to be remembered, but also for the series, the reviews, and the study centres that they inaugurated in the field of the history of medieval philosophy: for example, the series “Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie

des Mittelalters”; the series “Bibliothèque thomiste”; the series “Études de Philosophie Médiévale”; the review “Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen-Age”; the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies attached to the University of Toronto, with its review “Medieval Studies”. Today they are still some of the best research tools in the field of medieval philosophy.

5. Fran O’Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Leiden-New York-Köln: Brill, 1992).
6. Cristina D’Ancona Costa, “Saint Thomas lecteur du Liber de Causis. Bilan des recherches contemporaines concernant le De Causis et analyse de l’interprétation thomiste”, *Revue Thomiste* 92 (1992): 611–649.
7. Cornelio Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo san Tommaso d’Aquino* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1939); Louis-Bertrand Geiger, *La participation dans la philosophie de saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1942); Robert John Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism. A Study of the “Plato” and “Platonici” Texts in the Writings of St. Thomas. 2e* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970²); Klaus Kremer, *Die neuplatonische Seinsphilosophie und ihre Wirkung auf Thomas von Aquin* (Leiden: Brill, 1966); Cristina D’Ancona Costa, “Historiographie du platonisme médiéval: le cas de Saint Thomas”, in *Saint Thomas au XXe siècle. Actes du Colloque du Centenaire de la “Revue Thomiste”, 25–28 mars 1993, Toulouse*, ed. Serge-Thomas Bonino (Paris: Saint-Paul, 1995), 198–217; Wayne J. Hankey, “Aquinas and the Platonists”, in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages. A Doxographic Approach*, eds Stephen Gersh, and Marteen J. F. M. Hoenen (Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 2002), 279–324.
8. Jules L Janssen, *An Annotated Bibliography on Ibn Sina (1970–1989)* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1991), 244–250; Jules L. Janssen, *An Annotated Bibliography on Ibn Sina: First Supplement (1990–1994)* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fidem 1999), 137–161; John F. Wippel, “Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna on the Relationship between First Philosophy and the Other Theoretical Sciences: A Note on Thomas’s Commentary on Boethius De Trinitate, q. 5, a. 1, ad 9”, *The Thomist* 37 (1973): 133–154; Pasquale Porro, “Immateriality and Separation in Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas”, in *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna’s “Metaphysics”*, eds Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Amos Bertolacci (Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 2012), 275–307.

9. Avital Wohlmann, *Thomas d'Aquin et Maimonide. Un dialogue exemplaire* (Paris: Cerf, 1988); Ruedi Imbach, "Alcune precisazioni sulla presenza di Maimonide in Tommaso d'Aquino", *Studi* 2 (1995): 48–63; Ruedi Imbach, "Ut ait Rabbi Moyses'. Maimonidische Philosopheme bei Thomas von Aquin und Meister Eckhart", *Collectanea Franciscana* 60 (1990): 48–63.
10. Jean-François Courtine, *Inventio analogiae. Métaphysique et ontothéologie* (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 271–278.
11. Giovanni Ventimiglia, *Differenza e Contraddizione: L'essere secondo Tommaso d'Aquino. Esse, diversum, contradictio* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1997).
12. Porro, *Tommaso d'Aquino*.
13. Henry de Lubac, *Mémoire sur l'occasion de mes écrits*, quoted in Montagnes "La réception du Thomisme compromise par ses défenseurs", 274 (trans. Myself).
14. The experience of Louvain was also the inspiration for Italian neoscholasticism, whose mouth-piece was the "Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica" founded by Agostino Gemelli in 1909 in his Catholic University of Milan.
15. From his enormous production I cite here only Emmanuel Mounier, *Humanisme integral* (Paris: Fernand Aubier, 1936).
16. "Who am I then? A professor? I do not think so. I taught out of necessity. A writer? Perhaps. A philosopher? I hope so. But also a kind of romantic about justice, all too ready to imagine, in every conflict, that among men there will certainly arise the day of justice and of truth. Perhaps I am also a kind of diviner with my ear glued to the earth, to catch the murmur of hidden springs, the imperceptible rustle of invisible germinations. Perhaps too, like any Christian, despite the paralysing weaknesses and wretchednesses, and all the graces of whose betrayal I am becoming conscious in the evening of my life, I am also a mendicant from heaven disguised as a man of our century, a kind of secret agent of the King of Kings in the territories of the prince of this world." Jacques Maritain, *Carnet de Notes* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer 1965). (trans. Myself).
17. See John Haldane, "Thomism, analytical", in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy. New Edition*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 918. John Haldane, "Afterword: Analytical Thomism: How We Got Here, Why It Is Worth Remaining and Where We May Go to Next", in *Analytical Thomism. Traditions in Dialogue*, eds Craig Paterson and Matthew S Pugh (Burlington-Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006),

- 303–310. Enrico Berti, “Il ‘tomismo analitico’ e il dibattito sull’Esse ipsum”, *Giornale di Metafisica* 31, no. 1 (2009): 5–23. Giovanni Ventimiglia, *To be o esse? La questione dell’essere nel tomismo analitico* (Roma: Carocci editore, 2012).
18. Peter T. Geach, “Form and Existence”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 55 (1954–1955): 251–272.
 19. Anthony Kenny, “Aquinas and Wittgenstein”, *The Downside Review* 77 (1959): 217–235. Later, Kenny disowned some of the ideas in the article, and refused to republish it. Instead, he wrote another one “Intentionality, Aquinas and Wittgenstein”, which he included in his well-known *The Legacy of Wittgenstein*. Anthony Kenny, *The Legacy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).
 20. Peter T. Geach, *Mental Acts* (London: Routledge, 1957).
 21. Gertrude Elizabeth M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957).
 22. Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London: Routledge, 1994).
 23. Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy, Volume 2: Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 82. Italics mine.
 24. Serge-Thomas Bonino, “Le thomisme de 1962 à 2012. Vue panoramique”, *Nova Et Vetera* 87, no. 4: 419–446 (2012): 421.
 25. Cristoph Schönborn, “Preface”, in *Thomistes ou de l’actualité de saint Thomas d’Aquin*, eds Cristoph Schönborn, and Georges Cottier, et al. (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2003), 5.
 26. Norman Kretzmann, and Eleonore Stump, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
 27. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
 28. For example, Albert Zimmermann, *Thomas lesen* (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Fromann-Holzboog, 2000); John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000). Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas, II ed*, also available in English: Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Vol. 1. The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005); David Berger, *Thomas von Aquin begegnen* (Augsburg: Sankt Ulrich Verlag, 2002); Brian Davies, *Aquinas* (London-New York: Continuum, 2002); Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003); Ralph McNerny, *Aquinas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shields, *The Philosophy of Aquinas* (Boulder-Oxford: Westview Press, 2004); Maximilian Forschner, *Thomas*

- von Aquin (München: Beck, 2006); Sofia Vanni Rovighi, *Introduzione a Tommaso d'Aquino* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1973; 2007¹³); Ruedi Imbach, and Adriano Oliva, *La philosophie de Thomas d'Aquin. Repères* (Paris: Vrin, 2009); Fergus Kerr, *Thomas Aquinas. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Volker Leppin, *Thomas von Aquin* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2009); Edward Feser, *Aquinas. A Beginner's Guide* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2009); Porro, *Tommaso d'Aquino*, also available in English: Pasquale Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, trans. Joseph G. Trabbic, and Roger W. Nutt (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016); Rolf Schönberger, *Thomas von Aquin zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius 2012); Denys Turner, *Thomas Aquinas. A Portrait* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2013); Stephen Brock, *The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. A Sketch* (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2015); Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas. A very brief history* (London: SPCK, 2017).
29. McInerney, *Aquinas*.
 30. Giovanni Ventimiglia, "L'analogia dell'essere da Jacques Maritain a Barry Miller", *Aquinas* 68, no. 1,2 (2015): 91–116. Ventimiglia, *Differenza e contraddizione*.
 31. Jacques Maritain, "Coopération philosophique et Justice intellectuelle", *Revue Thomiste* 46, no. 3–4 (1946): 452; Jacques Maritain, *Court Traité de l'Existence et l'Existant* (Paris: Hartmann, 1947). (Trans. Myself).
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 34. Sofia Vanni Rovighi, "Edmund Husserl e la perennità della filosofia", in *Edmund Husserl 1859–1959, Recueil commémoratif publié à l'occasion du centenaire de la naissance du Philosophe*, eds Henri Leo Van Breda and Jacques Taminiaux (La Haye: Nijhoff, 1959), 185–194 (trans. Myself).
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- “Socrates est/‘There is not such thing as Pegasus’: Zur Logik singularärer Existenzaussagen nach Thomas von Aquin und W. Van Orman Quine”, *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 86 (1979): 42–59.
37. Norbert Bathen, *Thomistische Ontologie und Sprachanalyse* (Freiburg-München: Alber, 1988).
 38. Christopher Martin, “The Notion of Existence used in Answering an est?”, in *Thomas Aquinas. God and Explanations*, ed. Christopher Martin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 50–79.
 39. Alejandro Llano, “The Different Meanings of ‘Being’ According to Aristotle and Aquinas”, *Acta Philosophica* 10, no. 1 (2001): 29–44; Llano, *Metaphysics and Language*; Llano, “Metafisica tommasiana e filosofia analitica del linguaggio”.
 40. Gyula Klima, “Aquinas’s Theory of the Copula and the Analogy of Being”, in *Philosophiegeschichte und logische Analyse. Schwerpunkt: Philosophie des Mittelalters – Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy. Focus: Medieval Philosophy*, eds Uwe Meixner, and Albert Newen (Paderbon: Mentis, 2002), 159–176.
 41. David Braine, “Aquinas, God and Being”, in *Analytical Thomism. Traditions in Dialogue*, eds Paterson and Pugh (Burlington-Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 1–24.
 42. Stephen Brock, “Thomas Aquinas and What Actually Exists”, in *Wisdom’s Apprentice. Thomistic Essays in Honor of L. Dewan O. P.*, ed. Peter A. Kwasniewski (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 13–39.
 43. Ventimiglia, *To be o esse?*. On the theme of the senses of being, rediscovered foremost thanks to an analytical perspective, the criticisms came thick and fast, as was to be expected: John F. X Knasas, “Haldane’s Analytic Thomism and Aquinas’s Actus Essendi”, in *Analytical Thomism. Traditions in Dialogue*, eds Paterson and Pugh, 233–252; Gaven Kerr, “Thomist Esse and Analytical Philosophy”, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2015): 25–48.
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 45. Étienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 144 ff; Étienne Gilson, *Le Thomisme* (Paris: Vrin, 1942⁴).

46. Contrary to this interpretation see Giovanni Ventimiglia: “Ist Gott das Sein Selbst, Von Platon zu Anthony Kenny (über Thomas von Aquin und Gottlob Frege)”, *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 63, no. 2 (2016): 320–245.
47. Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo san Tommaso d'Aquino*; Cornelio Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità secondo san Tommaso d'Aquino* (Torino: SEI, 1961).
48. Albert Keller, *Sein oder Existenz? Die Auslegung des Seins bei Thomas von Aquin in der heutigen Scholastik* (München: Hueber, 1968).
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52. Wayne J. Hankey, “Aquinas' First Principle: Being or Unity?”, *Dionysius* 4 (1980): 133–172.
53. David Bradshaw, “Neoplatonic Origins of the Act of Being”, *The Review of Metaphysics* 53 (1999): 383–401.
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55. Carlo Maria Mazzucchi, “Damascio, autore del Corpus Dionysiacum, e il Dialogo ΠΕΡΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΗΣ”, *Aevum* 80, Nr. 2 (2006): 299–344.
56. Porro, *Tommaso d'Aquino* (trans. Myself).
57. Sofia Vanni Rovighi, “Studi tomistici dal 1945”, in *Studi di filosofia medioevale, vol II: Secoli XII e XIV*, ed. Sofia Vanni Rovighi (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1978), 213–214 (trans. Myself).
58. Sofia Vanni Rovighi, “Le novità di Tommaso d'Aquino”, in *Studi di filosofia medioevale, vol II: Secoli XII e XIV*, ed. Vanni Rovighi, 202 (trans. Myself).
59. René Antoine Gauthier, “Introduction” in Anonymi, *Magistri Artium* (c. 1245–1250), *Lectura in librum de anima a quodam discipulo reportata*

- (Ms. Roma Naz. V. E. 828), (ed. René Antoine Gauthier, Grottaferrata 1985), 22 (trans. Myself).
60. De Libera, Alain. *Storia della filosofia medievale*, trans. Filadelfo Ferri (Milano: Jaca Book, 1995), 336 (trans. Myself).
 61. Rudi Te Velde, and some other scholars with him, argued exactly the opposite: according to them within a fundamentally Aristotelian framework, Thomas would have included some Platonic innovations. Rudi Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Brill, Leiden 1995), Xi; 61. It seems to me that this interpretation confuses the thirteenth century with the Thomism of the first generation of the twentieth century (see the section on the first generation above). It is true that within the interpretative Aristotelian trend of the neo-Thomism, new studies have been inserted since 1939 and it is true that these have discovered and enhanced neo-Platonic aspects of Thomas's thought, as we have seen. However, at the time of Thomas, that is in the thirteenth century, the novelties could not come from the neo-Platonists *De divinis nominibus* and *De causis* already known at that time, but on the contrary could only come from the naturalist books of Aristotle (*Metaphysics* and *Physics*), then recently translated.
 62. Ventimiglia, *Differenza e contraddizione*.
 63. Michel Bastit, *Les principes des choses en ontologie médiévale. Thomas d'Aquin, Scot, Occam* (Bordeaux: Bière, 1997). Michel Bastit, "Le thomisme est-il un aristotelisme?", *Revue Thomiste* 101 (2001): 101–106.
 64. Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae 1a 75–89* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Pasnau and Shields, eds. *The Philosophy of Aquinas*.
 65. Ralph McNerny, *Praeambula fidei. Thomism and the God of the Philosophers* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 306.
 66. Stephen Brock, "On Whether Aquinas's Ipsum Esse is 'Platonism'", *The Review of Metaphysics*, 2006: 269–303. A first version of this article appeared two years earlier in Italian: Stephen Brock, "L'ipsum esse è platonismo?", in *Tommaso d'Aquino e l'oggetto della metafisica*, ed. Stephen Brock (Roma: Armando, 2004).
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- Thomistic Doctrine of God as ‘Ipsum esse Subsistens’ Consistent?’, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4 (2018): 161–191.
68. Braine, “Aquinas, God and Being”.
 69. Craig Paterson and Matthew S. Pugh, eds, *Analytical Thomism. Traditions in Dialogue* (Burlington-Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).
 70. Mark D. Jordan, *The Alleged Aristotelianism of Thomas Aquinas* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1992).
 71. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, “Editor’s Preface”, in *Aristotle in Aquinas’s Theology*, eds Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), xi.
 72. Étienne Gilson, *L’Être et l’Essence* (Paris: Vrin, 1948), 372 (trans. Myself).
 73. Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità secondo san Tommaso d’Aquino*, 42.
 74. Johannes Baptist Lotz, “Dibattito congressuale: allocuzioni introduttive al dibattito”, *Sapienza* 26 (1973): 363 (trans. Myself).
 75. Johannes Baptist Lotz, “Die Frage nach dem Fundament bei Heidegger und in der Scholastik/Il problema del fondamento in Heidegger e nella scolastica”, *Sapienza* 27 (1973): 325 (trans. Myself). The most interesting text concerning the comparison between Thomas and Heidegger was written by Johannes Baptist Lotz: Johannes Baptist Lotz, *Heidegger und Thomas von Aquin, Mensch-Zeit-Sein*. Pfullingen: Neske, 1975. Contrary to this see John Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics* (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 1982).
 76. Jean-Luc Marion, “Saint Thomas et L’onto-théo-logie”, *Revue Thomiste* 95 (1995): 31–66.
 77. 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, no. 4 (1989): 157–188.
 78. Gertrude Elizabeth M. Anscombe and Peter T. Geach, eds, *Three Philosophers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961).



2

Being

In manuals of ontology or metaphysics operating within the realm of analytic philosophy one of the compulsory topics is that of existence. Compulsory also in that regard is a discussion of the thesis that “existence is simply the denial of the number zero”, a thesis originated, as is well known, by Frege. On the other hand, in manuals of ontology or metaphysics operating within the realm of Thomistic philosophy, especially in those in use in catholic faculties, these themes are still mainly regarded as taboo: if they are ever mentioned it is only to the extent necessary to subject them to criticism. The themes that are treated instead are the old favourites of catholic metaphysics: being as *actus essendi*, the real distinction in creatures between essence and being, God as pure subsistent being. These themes are still addressed in accordance with the interpretations of Gilson, Fabro, and Wippel. In the following section of this book, the question of existence or of being will be treated from both viewpoints, namely that of analytic philosophy and that of classical Thomistic philosophy.

2.1 Senses of Existence (Frege), Senses of Being (Aquinas)

Frege

Let us see further how subtler differences in the subject matter are smudged over by the psychological logicians. The point was already made in the case of characteristic mark and property. This is connected with the distinction I have emphasised between object and concept, as well as that between concepts of first and second level. Naturally, these differences are indiscernible by psychological logicians; for them everything is idea. For this reason, the proper conception of those judgements which we express in English by 'there is' (*es gibt*) also eludes them. This existence (*Existenz*) is mixed up by Mr. B. Erdmann (*Logik* I, p. 311) with actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), which, as we saw, is also not clearly distinguished from objectivity. Of what are we in fact asserting that it is actual (*wirklich*) when we say, there are (*es gebe*) square roots of Four? Is it Two or—2? But neither the one nor the other is in any way named. And if I wanted to say that the number Two acted or was active or actual (*wirke oder sei wirksam oder wirklich*), then this would be false and quite different from what I want to say with the proposition "There are (*es gibt*) square roots of Four". The confusion here before us is almost as bad as can be; since it does not involve concepts of the same level, but rather collapses a concept of the first level with a concept of the second. This is the hallmark of the obtuseness of psychological logic.¹

It is customary to regard Frege as the originator of a line of contemporary ontology whose best known later representatives are Russell and Quine. According to this line of thought, existence is nothing other than the negation of the number zero, and, like number itself, it is a second level predicate, the one expressed by the existential quantifier.

However, in the works of Frege there are also passages like the one just quoted in which it seems that he distinguishes two senses of existence: one which is the "there is sense" of existence ("es-gibt-Existenz") and one which is actuality ("Wirklichkeit").

That is the interpretation which is offered, in contrast to Russell's, by a profound student of Frege, namely Peter Geach.

Existence in the sense of actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) is several times over emphatically distinguished in Frege's works from the existence expressed by 'there is a so-and-so' (*es gibt ein-*). Indeed, he says that neglect of this distinction is about the grossest fallacy possible—a confusion between concepts of different level. Actuality is attributable to individual objects; the existence expressed by 'there is a-' is not. When we ask whether there is a so-and-so, we are asking concerning some kind of objects whether anything at all is that sort of thing; and we cannot ever sensibly affirm or deny existence, in this sense, of an individual object, any more than we can sensibly ask whether a thing, rather than a kind of things, is frequent or infrequent. This doctrine of Frege's seems to me clear and certain; and attacks on it seem to me to contain obvious fallacies, and often, to show an aversion to the clarity that logic can bring. I shall in this paper take it for granted that Frege was right. Frege had less to say about existence in the sense of actuality; for he was interested in the foundations of mathematics; and the objects of mathematics, as we shall see, if they are objects, are not actualities.²

In another place Geach expressly laments the fact that Russell considered the "there is" sense as the only one.

Frege was clear as to this distinction, though he rightly had no special interest, as a mathematical logician, in assertions of present actuality. It is a great misfortune that Russell has dogmatically reiterated that the 'there is' sense of the 'substantive' verb 'to be' is the only one that logic can recognize and legitimate; for the other meaning—present actuality—is of enormous importance in philosophy, and only harm can be done by a Procrustean treatment which either squeezes assertions of present actuality into the 'there is' form or lops them off as non-sensical.³

The question whether Russell's or Geach's is the more correct interpretation of Frege's ontology is outside the scope of the present book. Undoubtedly, however, passages such as that just quoted seem to favour Geach, and certainly he has brought out clearly the difference between the two senses of "exist".

In the article *Form and Existence* he offers three examples:

- (A) Cerberus does not exist
- (B) Dragons do not exist
- (C) “Joseph is not and Simeon is not”.

The last sentence is taken from Genesis 42,36 which in the authorized version, runs as follows:

And Jacob their father said unto them “Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me”.

According to Geach, the first two existential propositions can and should be rewritten, according to Frege’s instructions, as follows:

- (A) There is no such thing as Cerberus
- (B) There is no such thing as a dragon

In neither case do we have any intention to attribute (or in this case to deny) the property of existence to an individual.

In the first case, we intend to speak not of the individual Cerberus, who in fact does not exist, but of the name “Cerberus” and of its use. All that we want to say is that we have here a name that has a reference only in appearance:

The (A) statement that I gave as an example might typically be used to comfort a child who had been frightened by hearing Greek myths and thought Cerberus would come and bite him. ‘Cerberus’, we might say ‘doesn’t exist (is not real) like Rover’. Here we are not pointing out any trait that Cerberus has and Rover lacks.⁴

Also in the case of dragons, we are not speaking of individuals, but of what Frege calls a concept-word (“Begriffswort”), and we mean that such concept word is empty, unlike the concept-word “cow” which has a non-zero number of instantiations.

Summing up: in both cases, according to Frege, existence is not a predicate of individuals and in each case we are concerned with a number, zero or non-zero.

None of this, according to Frege, can be applied to proposition C, “Joseph is not and Simeon is not”.

It would be quite absurd to say that Jacob in uttering these words was not talking about Joseph and Simeon but about the use of their names. Of course, he was talking about his sons; he was expressing a fear that something had happened to them, that they were dead. We have here a sense of ‘is’ or ‘exists’ that seems to me to be certainly a genuine predicate of individuals; the sense of ‘exist’ in which one says that an individual came to exist, still exists, no longer exists.⁵

Accordingly, in this case it is not possible to rewrite C as “there is no such thing as Joseph”.

Geach called the existence involved in the first two examples the “there is” sense of existence, and the existence involved in the third example the “present actuality” sense.

Geach’s last example, however, seems to me not altogether fortunate, because instead of the verb “to exist” which is at the centre of the discussion, it uses the verb “to be”. This may give the impression that the present actuality sense can be expressed only by the verb “to be” which moreover is, in its existential sense, somewhat archaic in English.

In the present discussion the examples proposed by Kenny are more appropriate.

- (a) Black swans exist, but extra-terrestrial intelligences do not
- (b) The Great Pyramid still exists, but the Library of Alexandria does not.⁶

It is evident that in (a) there is no reference to individual black swans or individual extra-terrestrial intelligences, but only to the concept or property *being a black swan* and *being an extra-terrestrial intelligence*. In the case of black swans we mean that the concept is exemplified in a non-zero number of cases, while in the case of extra-terrestrial intelligences the number of exemplifications is zero. So far, all is as Fregean as it can possibly be.

Kenny remarks that matters are different in the case of (b): here we refer to an individual object that *still exists*, while the Library of Alexandria *no longer exists*.

In other words, the first (a) is a specific existence or “*anitas*” as Kenny calls it, expressed by the quantifier, but with a temporal prefix: at time *t* the property *being a black swan* is instantiated at least once, whereas the property of *being an extra-terrestrial intelligence* has zero instantiations. By contrast, that of the Great Pyramid is an individual existence, an item being identified as an individual, and with a temporal predicate attached.

Something similar can be said of, for example, the individual Julius Caesar: “when we say ‘Julius Caesar is no more’ or ‘Julius Caesar no longer exists’, we are not talking about a species: we are talking about a historic individual, and saying that he is no longer alive, no longer among the inhabitants of the universe”.⁷

It is important to note that here the temporal qualification is attached to the predicate “exists”, expressing the inevitably temporal dimension of his existence. While in the case of concepts or properties a tense-operator can enter “both on the side of the quantifier and on the side of the predicate”,⁸ in the case of individual existence, at least in the case of existential propositions, the tense-operator would make no sense on the side of the quantifier. The phrase “it was once the case that for some *x*, *x* is Julius Caesar and it is not now the case that for some *x*, *x* is Julius Caesar” would only make sense if “Julius Caesar” were a property and not a proper name.

Aquinas

The distinction just explained between the *there is sense* and the *present actuality sense* of existence, or in Kenny’s terms between *anitas* and individual existence, makes it possible to rediscover the value of certain fundamental pages of Thomas Aquinas on being. There is, for example, a passage of the *Summa Theologiae*, cited by Geach, about the being of evil. An objection on the topic runs as follows:

‘Being’ and ‘thing’ are convertible terms. If evil then is a reality it follows that it is also a thing, which denies what has already been decided.

Here is Thomas’s reply:

As noted in the *Metaphysics*, the word ‘being’ is used in two senses. In the first to signify the entity of a thing, and so taken it is divided into the ten categories, and is equivalent to what is real (*uno modo, secundum quod significat entitatem rei, prout dividitur per decem praedicamenta, et sic convertitur cum re*). And in this sense no privation is a being, and consequently not evil either. Second, to signify the truth of a proposition, a uniting of Subject and Predicate marked by the verb ‘is’; this is the being that answers to the interrogative ‘is it?’ (*Alio modo dicitur ens, quod significat veritatem propositionis, quae in compositione consistit, cuius nota est hoc verbum est, et hoc est ens quo respondetur ad quaestionem an est*). In this sense can we speak of blindness being in the eye, and likewise of any other privation being in its subject. So also, can evil be called a being. It was because they did not advert to this distinction, and were influenced by language which calls some objects bad (*aliquae res dicuntur malae*) and refers to evil existing in the world, that some have believed that evil was a positive reality.⁹

There are many passages like this in Thomas’s works. I have counted at least thirteen.¹⁰ What do they say?

For Thomas too there are two senses of “ens” or “esse”. In the first sense “est” is equivalent to “is real” and it applies to an individual substance and its properties, listed according to the Aristotelian categories. The example given by Thomas is *Socrates est*, Socrates exists, in the sense that he still exists, he is alive. This is the sense which, according to Geach, Kenny, and me, corresponds more or less to the Fregean sense of existence as actuality (“Wirklichkeit”). I will return to this topic later.

The second sense is more complicated to understand. For Thomas provides in his works different definitions and characterizations. First of all he refers to a sense of being which corresponds to the “truth of the proposition” as we have seen also in the text cited. We shall discuss this sense in detail in Chap. 4. You will observe that the “est” refers not to an individual, or a concept, but to an entire proposition.

On certain occasions Thomas, while discussing being as the truth of a proposition, adds a note referring to the copula.¹¹ At other times he adds that this second sense refers to anything about which one can formulate an affirmative proposition.¹² Neither of these last characterizations is free of problems, as Kenny has well brought out.¹³

Lastly, as we have seen in the text quoted above, he makes reference, in connection with this second sense of being, to “*est*” as an answer to the question “*an sit?*” For example: does blindness exist? Yes, it exists (*est*).

I maintain that such divergent characterizations do not constitute a comprehensible and coherent thesis, but on the contrary contain theses which are problematic and differ from each other.

It is interesting to note that in connection with this second sense of being, Thomas in some cases speaks simply in terms of “*esse ut verum*” or “*quasi verum*” (especially when commenting on works of Aristotle), and in other cases speaks only in terms of the answer to the question *an sit*, and lastly, in other texts like the one quoted, he unites the two characteristics. This is perhaps an indirect indication that Thomas himself did not regard the various characterizations of this sense of being as necessarily connected with each other.

As we shall see in detail in the fifth chapter, Thomas seems to limit himself to simply adopting different traditions, such as the Aristotelian tradition, on the one hand, and the Averroist tradition on the other (which in this case differs from the Aristotelian tradition), without paying too much attention to whether the various positions are consistent or can coexist consistently.

For the remainder of this text I will treat this sense of being as the answer to the question *an sit*, and I will postpone the interpretation of being in terms of the truth of a proposition until Chap. 4.

Let us return then, to the sense of the passage from Thomas quoted above. A propos of the question of the being of evil, Thomas argues that if “being” is taken in the sense of real being, then evil does not have being. If on the other hand it is taken in the sense of the answer to the question *an sit*, then evil does indeed exist, in the sense that something exists that is called evil. In modern terminology: “evil exists” does not signify that the individual “evil” has the first-level property of existence,

but that the concept or property “being evil” or better “lacking the requisite goodness” is instantiated at least once.

The parallel passage of the *De malo* is even clearer on the topic, partly because it does not contain the misleading reference to “truth of the proposition”:

We speak of being in two ways. We speak of being in one way as it signifies the natures of the ten genera, and then neither evil nor any privation is a being or an entity. We speak of being in the second way as a response to the question “Does evil exist?” and then evil, just like blindness, exists. Nonetheless, evil is not an entity, since being an entity signifies both the response to the question “Does it exist?” and the response to the question “What is it?”¹⁴

Geach offers an enlightening commentary on passages such as these, linking them to sense (B), that of the proposition “Dragons do not exist”.

The importance of B statements is that what Aquinas calls the question *an est?* has to be answered with an affirmative or negative B statement. Aquinas realised the logical peculiarity of B statements: that the B statement ‘an F exists’ does not attribute actuality to an F, but F-ness to something or other; e.g., ‘there is evil’ does not mean ‘evil has actual existence’ but ‘some things have defects’.¹⁵

As can be seen, Frege here turns out to be very useful in helping us to better understand the sense of certain assertions of Thomas with regard to propositions such as “evil exists” or “blindness exists”.

The same is true of another important existential proposition, perhaps one of the most important for theology, namely “God exists”. How should it be understood? In the same sense as we say that “Socrates exists”? Thomas thinks not.

In the disputed question *De potentia* the following objection is raised:

Whether God exists and what he is are quite different questions, to one of which we know the answer and to the other of which we don’t, as is clear from the authority already quoted. So what responds to the question whether God exists is not the same as what responds to the question what

he is. But God's existing answers to the whether question, and his substance or nature to the what question.

Thomas's answer is as follows:

To 1: According to Aristotle, we use the verb "to be" in two ways: sometimes to signify the essence of a thing, its act of existing (*actum essendi*) sometimes to signify the truth of a proposition, even where there is lack of existence, as when we say that blindness exists since it is true that some men are blind (*sicut dicimus quod caecitas est, quia verum est hominem esse caecum*). When Damascene says it is clear that God exists he uses 'exist' in the second way and not the first. Used in the first way God's existing is his substance and as unknown to us as his substance is. But used in the second way we know that God exists, since that is a proposition we can conceive in our mind through his effects.¹⁶

Thomas's answer is clear and probably surprising for a believer.

The sense of the proposition "Socrates est" is different from the sense of the proposition "Deus est". In the first case, as we know, the topic is the act of being of the individual Socrates. In the second case, however, despite appearances, the topic is the concept or property "being god", and what is asserted is that the concept or property "being god" (I use lower case because the word is not the name of a person but of a property) is not empty, or that "there is" someone or something who is god. In modern terms: "For some X, there is an X which has divine being."¹⁷

The very same thing—and Thomas himself points it out—occurs with the proposition "blindness exists". All that means is that "some men are blind". He states this even more clearly in commenting on *Metaphysics*, Book V: "For blindness is said to be in the second way on the grounds that the proposition in which something is said to be blind is true."¹⁸

Once more, Geach's commentary is illuminating:

The same logical status is expressly ascribed to 'God exists', or 'there is a God' (Ia. q. 3 art. 4 ad 2); and Aquinas expressly denies that this statement relates to what he calls God's *esse* or *actus essendi*. (This most important negative indication as to how we must understand the term *esse* has often been overlooked). In "God exists" we are not predicating something of

God, but predicating the term “God” itself; “God exists” means “something or other is God”.¹⁹

Summing up: even those who believe without doubt in the existence of God cannot be said to know God’s being, but should simply confine themselves to saying that the concept “being god” is instantiated. The actual being of God, his *actus essendi*, no less than his essence, remains unknown to human beings, whether they are unbelievers or believers (including existentialist Thomists).

Frege Better Than Heidegger on the Topic of Thomistic Metaphysics

One of the identifying features of the so-called existential Thomism, and indeed of the Thomism of the second and third generation,²⁰ is the importance accorded to the notion of being as *actus essendi*.

Of the two senses of being to which we have just referred, there is no doubt that all existential Thomists have privileged—and often still privilege, without even being aware of their debt to Heidegger—being as actuality. “Actus essendi” was and still is a kind of password for entry into the exclusive circles of the Thomists, and is a bulwark against any “existentialist” accusation of essentialism: for Thomas being is not an essence, but precisely an act of being.

It is interesting to note that the texts of Thomas quoted in support of the metaphysics of *actus essendi* were precisely some of the thirteen that I cited above in which Thomas speaks of the two senses of being. For example, Gilson in his *Christian Philosophy An Introduction* quotes the following passage of Thomas “‘to be’ [...] signifies [...] act of existing”.²¹ In fact, this is a brief extract from the more extensive passage quoted above in which Aquinas in addition to this sense of being speaks also about the other sense of being, namely being as *anitas* or as *verum*.

Already this should be sufficient to show how reading Thomas’s ontology in the light of Frege allows us to enlarge our vision and to read his texts on the topic as a whole, instead of leaving out a part, as happens under the banner of existentialism. It is significant that Gilson,

commenting on a passage of Thomas about the two senses of being, wrote expressly: “we eliminate [this sense] which does not concern real being unless indirectly”.²²

Certainly, it is true that being as *anitas* or as *verum* concerns real being only indirectly, but it is a serious mistake to eliminate it from the list of questions worth raising when we are considering the ontology of Thomas. *Esse ut verum* or *anitas* is of fundamental importance—and Thomas says so explicitly—for the understanding of metaphysical and theological topics such as being in general, the being of the divine relations, the being of God, the being of evil, the being of the human nature of Jesus Christ. As is clear, these are not marginal themes, but central pillars of a Christian metaphysics.

As Alejandro Llano has observed:

The plurality of the senses of being becomes one of the most prolific topics in order to compare and bring them together [Thomistic and analytic metaphysics]. It is a central point of Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics, that have surprisingly passed almost entirely unnoticed in contemporary neo-Thomism. Not only is it missing from the most used scholastic manuals in the 20th Century, but it fails to appear even in the works of important authors, such as Gilson and Maritain, while Cornelio Fabro only mentions it in passing.²³

There is another important point in favour of a Fregean reading of Thomas rather than an existentialist one: it concerns God’s being and the possibility of human knowledge of it. All the existentialists have considered the *actus essendi* as the name of God, corresponding to the “Qui est” of Exodus 3,14. Indeed they were led to this interpretation by certain texts of Thomas.

For instance, Fabro highlights a passage in the Commentary on the *Sentences* where Aquinas responds to the question “Utrum esse proprie dicatur de Deo” with the following:

In reply: ‘He who is’ (qui est) is, among the other names, the most proper name of God [...]. The fourth reason can be found in the words of Avicenna [...] This name ‘He who is’ or ‘being’ comes from the *actus essendi*. But because it is the case that in every created thing its essence is distinct from its *esse*, that thing is properly denominated on the basis of its quiddity and

not of its *actus essendi*, as a man is denominated on the basis of his humanity. But in God, His very *esse* is His quiddity; hence the name that comes from *esse* properly denominates Him, and is His proper name, just as the proper name of a man is that which comes from his quiddity.²⁴

Another relevant and famous passage of Thomas points in the same direction:

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” (Ex. 3: 13,14). By this our Lord showed that His own *proper name* is He Who Is. Now, names have been devised to signify the nature or essence of things. It remains, then, that the divine being is God’s essence or nature.²⁵

Gilson’s comment on this is significant:

Exodus lays down the principle from which henceforth the whole of Christian philosophy will be suspended. From this moment, it is understood once and for all that the *proper name* of God is Being [...] There is but one God and this God is Being, that is the corner-stone of all Christian philosophy and it was not Plato, it was not even Aristotle, it was Moses who put it in position.²⁶

However, as Courtine has shown, in the course of his life Thomas expanded, or rather, corrected this thesis, making much clearer than he had previously done that “Qui est” or the very word “God” is a name not in the sense that it denotes the individual God but only in the sense that it refers to his nature. Instead, it is the Tetragrammaton which becomes, under the influence of the *Guide of the Perplexed* of Maimonides, according to Aquinas, the proper name of God, an ineffable and mystical name, a name beyond all other names:

This name ‘He Who Is’ is the name of God more properly than this name “God,” as regards its source, namely, existence; and as regards the mode of signification and consignification, as said above. But as regards the object

intended by the name, this name “God” is more proper, as it is imposed to signify the divine nature; and still more proper is the Tetragrammaton, imposed to signify the substance of God itself, incommunicable and, if one may so speak, singular.²⁷

The answer to the question of the sense of the proposition “God exists” that we have been able to analyse above belongs to this mystical line of Thomas’s thought.

Thanks to the distinction between *esse ut actus essendi* and *esse as anitas*, Thomas has been able to clarify that for human beings it is not possible to understand the sense of “est” in which they can understand the sense of the proposition “Peter exists”. The very word “God” is not the proper name of God, and nor is the *actus essendi*. The word “God” is what Frege called a concept-word (“Begriffswort”). For only this is the maximum that is given to humans to understand: that this concept-word is instantiated at least once.

Thus, thanks to the Fregean distinction between the *there is* sense of existence, and the *present actuality* sense it has been possible to discover and evaluate Thomas’s doctrine of the senses of being, something forgotten by Thomists. Among other things it has also been possible to clarify from a logico-philosophical viewpoint one of the reasons for the ineffability of God.

2.2 Copula: Not (Frege) or Yes (Aquinas)?

Frege

In the previous section we saw that in some passages Frege seems to distinguish two senses of existence: the “there is” sense (*es-gibt-Existenz*) and the “actuality” sense (*Wirklichkeit*). As two authoritative interpreters of Frege explained, namely Geach and Kenny, the first sense would be at stake in the case of concepts or properties, as in the proposition “Black swans exist, but extraterrestrial intelligences do not.” The second sense, instead, would be at stake in the case of individuals, as in the proposition “The Great Pyramid still exists, but the Library of Alexandria does not.”

However, the same distinction is more difficult to find in the posthumously published essay entitled *Dialogue with Pünier on Existence*. There, Frege in fact seems to blame the predicate “exists” as such, whether it occurs in propositions such as “Men exist” or it occurs in propositions such as “Leo Sachse exists”. For in both cases, “exist” is supposed (by Frege) to be a predicate without content, with which “nothing at all is predicated”:

This word [exist] only contains the form of a predicate as does the copula ‘is’ in the sentence ‘The sky is blue’. Like the ‘it’ in ‘it is raining’, the ‘exist’ in ‘Men exist’ is to be understood as a mere auxiliary. As language, feeling at a loss for a grammatical subject, invented ‘it’, so here, feeling at a loss for a grammatical predicate, it has invented ‘exist’.²⁸

Further on, he continues his argument, coming to make fun of the philosophers of absolute being:

Language has availed itself of a different resource. The copula, i.e. the mere form of a predicate without content, was excellently suited for forming a concept without content. In the sentence ‘The sky is blue’ the predicate is ‘is blue’, but strictly the content of the predicate lies in the word ‘blue’. Leave this out and what remains—‘The sky is’—is a predicate without content. In this way we form a quasi-concept—‘being’—without content, since its extension is unlimited. This makes it possible to say: men = men that have being; ‘There are men’ is the same as ‘Some men are’ or ‘Something that has being is a man’. Thus here the real content of what is predicated does not lie in ‘has being’ but in the form of the particular judgement. Faced with an impasse, language has simply created the word ‘being’ in order to enable the form of the particular judgement to be employed. When philosophers speak of ‘absolute being’, that is really a deification of the copula.²⁹

In other words, saying, for example, “Men exist” would be like saying “The sky is”. Now, “The sky is” is what remains of the sentence “The sky is blue”, when we leave out the content of the predicate, namely “blue”. Hence, the “is”, namely is the copula, is a predicate without content. After all, it turns out to be logically redundant and could very well be

eliminated, since “blue sky” already contains all the content that is needed. “Is” has only the auxiliary function of connecting the (true) predicate to the subject, thus of forming a judgement. The philosophers of the absolute being have therefore done nothing but deify a part of the language that is completely unimportant, indeed superfluous. Similarly, the word “exist” in “Men exist” is redundant, since “Men” already has all the semantic content: as Aristotle said, “‘Human being’ and ‘man’ are the same” (*Met.* IV, 2, 1003 b 29). However, “feeling at a loss for a grammatical predicate, the language has invented ‘exist’”.

The analogy between the copula “is” and the verb “exists” is used by Frege to discredit the predicate “exists”. Just as “is” alone does not mean anything, and is actually redundant, “exists” does not mean anything, and is a predicate without content. In other words, being is nothing but a (deified) copula.

Is there a similar doctrine in Thomas Aquinas? This time not at all. Indeed, Frege and Thomas seem to be poles apart in this case. However, it is interesting to note that it was precisely the analogy—indeed, the identification—between “is” and “exists” that led Thomas to give value to the copula as a predicate. In other words, for Thomas, the copula is nothing but being. We will see it more in detail precisely in this section.

Aquinas

Among the thirteen texts where Aquinas speaks of the senses of being there are two in which three senses are mentioned instead of only two.

The first text, in chronological order, is taken from the Commentary on the *Sentences* in a context of Trinitarian theology where the topic is the being of the divine relations. Thomas’s answer, so far as it concerns the topic of the senses of being, is given in essence in the following:

It should be known that esse is said in three ways. In one sense esse means the quiddity or nature of a thing, as we say that a definition is an expression signifying what the esse is. In the second sense, esse means the actuality of the essence; as living, which is the esse of a living thing, is the actuality of the soul; not its second actuality, which is its operation, but its first actuality.

In the third sense esse means what signifies the truth of composition in propositions, which is why *est* is called a copula; and in this sense it is in the intellect that composes and divides as regards its complement; but it is founded on the being of the thing, which is the actuality of the essence.³⁰

If we compare this with the doctrine commonly upheld by Thomas we find here the addition of the sense of being as quiddity or nature or essence as expressed in a definition. Thomas maintains that since the definition expresses what a thing “is”, and what is expressed by the definition is the nature of the thing, therefore the nature of a thing coincides with what that thing is. Being as actuality, defined as the actuality of the essence, would seem to be different from this sense.

However, even from this definition it is possible to deduce the closeness of this sense to that of being as essence, since being as actuality is nothing other than the actuality of the essence or nature of a thing.

For in the second text in which Thomas seems to maintain the thesis of the three senses of being rather than two, he first of all distinguishes as usual two principal senses of being, and then goes on to subdivide the sense of being as actuality into two sub-species. Here is the text of Thomas, taken from the quodlibetical question which discusses the problem “*utrum in Christo sit unum tantum esse*”:

In reply, *esse* is said in two senses as is evident in the Philosopher’s *Metaph.* V, and in a certain gloss by Origen on the Prologue of John. *In one sense*, in which it is the verbal copula (*uno modo, secundum quod est copula verbalis*) signifying the composition of any proposition that the soul forms: and this *esse* is not something in the nature of things, but just in the soul’s act of composing and dividing. In this way, *esse* is attributed to everything of which a proposition may be formed, whether it has being (*ens*) or is deprived of being; for we say that blindness is. *In another way*, *esse* is said of the act of being insofar as it is a being, namely that in virtue of which any being is said to be a being in actuality in the nature of things (*Alio modo esse dicitur actus entis in quantum est ens, idest quo denominatur aliquid ens actu in rerum natura*). In this sense, *esse* is attributed only to those things that figure in the ten categories; hence being that is said in this sense of *esse* is divided into the ten categories. *But this esse can be attributed to something in two ways (Sed hoc esse attribuitur alicui dupliciter)*. In one way, as to that which properly and truly has

esse or is; and in this way it is attributed only to self-subsistent substance. For this reason, in the first book of the *Physics*, what truly is is said to be substance. But things which are not self-subsistent, but exist in and with something else, whether they are accidents or substantial forms, or any kind of parts, do not have *esse* so that they really are, but *esse* is attributed to them in a different way, that is, as that by which something is. *Thus whiteness is said to be, not because it is subsistent in itself, but because to it something else owes it that it is white (sicut albedo dicitur esse, non quia ipsa in se subsistat, sed quia ea aliquid habet esse album)*. *Esse*, therefore, is properly and truly attributed only to a thing that subsists of itself. Yet *esse* is attributed to it in two ways. One is that in which the *esse* results from that out of which its unity is integrated, which is properly the *esse* of the substantial subject. The other *esse* is attributed to the subject over and above what integrates it, which superadded to *esse*, which is to say accidental *esse*, as when we attribute being white to Socrates: Socrates is white.³¹

The first part of this text is similar to all the others. There are, Thomas says, two senses of being: one is that of the truth of the proposition, even though that expression does not occur this time but is replaced by other descriptions (being as copula, or the being that is attributed to everything of which a proposition may be formed³²). The other is being as act of being, namely “A being in actuality in the nature of things”—a sense we have met before.

This time Thomas adds that this *esse* can be attributed to something in two ways (“*sed hoc esse attribuitur alicui dupliciter*”). The first sub-sense is defined “as that to which properly and truly has *esse* or is”; and in this way it is attributed only to self-subsistent substances. Examples of this offered in other similar passages of Thomas are “*homo est*” and “*Socrates est*”. In this case Thomas says that what is signified is “*ipsum esse simpliciter*”.³³

The second sub-sense refers to the being of substantial and accidental forms. It is clear that here Thomas is referring to a type of being which, like the *actus essendi*, belongs to “the nature of things”. However, it is interesting to observe that the treatment of the corresponding propositions, such as “whiteness exists” (or, in the case of substantial forms, I suppose “humanity exists”) is similar to that reserved to being in the sense

of *anitas*: “whiteness is said to be, not because it is subsistent in itself, but because to it something else owes it that it is white.” In other words “whiteness exists” signifies “something or other is white”.

From this viewpoint there is a certain similarity of logical treatment between the sense of being of forms, whether substantial or accidental, and the sense of being as *anitas*, though it is clear that forms exist, or inhere in, individual substances, while privations have neither the act of being nor essence of itself “in the nature of things”.

However, aside from this similarity of logico-philosophical treatment, the two sub-senses mentioned are much closer to each other than appears from this passage. Fundamentally we do not have two different senses of being, so as to make the total of senses of the word into three, but of a single sense in which the two senses of being as act of being repeat and imply each other.

To exhibit this connection more clearly, we must consider Thomas’s theory of the copula. One of the most significant passages in this sense is the following:

Therefore, he says that the verb ‘is’ consignifies composition, because it does not principally signify it but as a consequence, for it first signifies that which comes into the intellect in the mode of actuality absolutely: for ‘is’, stated just as such, signifies to be actual, and therefore signifies in the manner of a verb (*est, simpliciter dictum, significat in actu esse; et ideo significat per modum verbi*). Because actuality, which this verb ‘is’ chiefly signifies, is commonly the actuality of every form, either substantial or accidental act (*est communiter actualitas omnis formae, vel actus substantialis vel accidentalis*) and that is why when we want to signify some forms or act actually to be in some subject, we signify it by this verb ‘is’, either simply or in a certain respect, in the other tenses. Therefore, this verb ‘is’ signifies composition as a consequence.³⁴

As was observed by Gauthier, the editor of the critical text of Thomas’s commentary on the *Perihermenias* of Aristotle, Thomas is here taking sides in a dispute that was exercising the logicians of his time.

For in the thirteenth century the meaning and nature of “est” was much discussed: is it fundamentally a copula which joins a subject to a predicate (and therefore what was called a syncategorema) or is it a normal predicate like other verbs, analogous, for example, to the predicate “lives”?

Peter of Spain, for example, had maintained that “est” is nothing but a copula, whose only function is to unite subject and predicate.³⁵ But there were other logicians who disagreed with Peter’s opinion. Among these was William of Sherwood, for whom “est” was fundamentally a predicate, as in the case of “Socrates est”. Sure, it can be used as a copula, in propositions “de tertio adiacente”, as, for example, “homo est animal”, but in this case the predicate is simply a specification of the predicate “est” as if it were an adverb. For example, in the proposition “homo est animal” simply specifies the being of man, almost as if one said “man exists animally” or “in the manner of an animal”. Similarly, “Socrates is just” would mean something like “Socrates exists justly”. Thus, according to William, the copulative use of “est” does not replace its proper use, which is predicative, but differentiates and specifies it, or in other words it expresses and specifies the actual being of something.³⁶

Some commentators on the passage of Thomas just cited have maintained that he intended to line up clearly on the side of the logicians, like William, for whom “est” is a predicate and not a copula. They maintained, in addition, that the interpretation of “est” as a verb meaning “being in act” coheres with the fundamental “existentialism” of Thomas.

If on the contrary Thomas believed in “est” as a copula, that would be a sign of “essentialism”, that is to say of the conception which gave priority to essences, in this case to the properties signified from time to time by the predicates that follow the copula (is a man, is an animal, is just, is white). Essentialism of this kind is, according to the interpretations of authors like Maritain, Gilson, and Fabro, totally alien to Thomas.³⁷

However, the “existentialist” interpretation of Thomas does not take account of the very passage of his commentary just quoted. There, immediately after having written “*is said simply, signifies to be in act*”, Thomas adds: “However, the actuality which the verb ‘is’ principally signifies is *the actuality of every form commonly, whether substantial or accidental*. Hence,

when we wish to signify that any form or act is actually in some subject we signify it through the verb ‘is’.

The passage could not be clearer. The actuality signified by “est” as a verb is not isolated, independent and self-standing, but always, as such, the actuality *of* something, or the actuality *of* a form, whether substantial or accidental. Accordingly, “is”, as predicate, as in “Socrates est”, is always “to be something” whether something essential, as in “Socrates is a man”, or something accidental, as in “Socrates is white”. In each case “is” is always “to be so-and-so”. Thus “is” always remains a copula and at the same time a predicate, because when “is” is used as a copula in reality it is a predicate specified by what follows, signifying something as “existing in a certain way”, exactly as William of Sherwood maintained.

Certainly, there are in the works of Thomas passages in which “est” as copula is linked to the “existential” sense of “est” as a predicate, as if the latter were its cause and ground. If there was no Socrates, if he did not exist, then he could not be either man or just or white.³⁸ From this point of view, there would seem to be a difference between “est” as verb and “est” as copula of the same kind as the difference between cause and effect.

Further, there are passages in which Thomas seems to distinguish between *esse simpliciter* (“*homo est*”) and *esse aliquid* (“*homo est albus*”).³⁹

However, there are other passages which seem to me more typical of Thomas, where by contrast the sense of “est” as verb (as in “*Socrates est*”) is explained by the sense of “est” as copula (as in “*Socrates est homo*”) and vice versa.

I consider here some important texts of Thomas on the topic.

But, as it is stated in *On Interpretation* II, the enunciation is formed in two ways: in one way from a name and a verb without an appositive, as when it is stated that man is; in another way when some third item is set adjacent, as when it is stated that man is white.⁴⁰

In this text, which treats of propositions called “de tertio adiacente” for the first time in the history of logic the third element is not “est” as copula, but the predicate, in this case “white”.⁴¹

This means that even in the propositions in which “est” is grammatically a copula, it still remains a predicate. And vice versa “est” as a

predicate is always also a copula. One of the texts that is clear and decisive on the topic is the following:

It is the same thing to say “man” and “one man.” And similarly, it is the same thing to say “human being” and “the thing that is man;” and nothing different is expressed when in speaking we repeat the terms, saying, “This is a human being, a man, and one man.” He proves this as follows. It is the same thing for man and the thing that is man to be generated and corrupted. This is evident from the fact that generation is a process toward being, and corruption a change from being to non-being. Hence a man is never generated without a human being being generated, nor is a man ever corrupted without a human being being corrupted; and those things which are generated and corrupted together are themselves one and the same.⁴²

In this passage, where Thomas is following to the letter the doctrine of Aristotle, it is clear that there is no difference between the actual being of Socrates and the being-a-man of Socrates, or, which is the same thing, between the actual being of a man and his being-a-man. In fact, when a man is generated by that very fact his being is generated and when a man dies, his being dies too (and vice versa).

There are other passages in the works of Thomas that go in the same direction. For example, in the Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book V, he writes clearly:

something is signified to be, ‘in just as many ways’ (or in as many senses) as we can make predications (*quoties ens dicitur, idest quot modis aliquid praedicatur, toties esse significatur, idest tot modis significatur aliquid esse*) [...] ‘being’ is used in as many ways as we make predications (*quot modis praedicatio fit, tot modis ens dicitur*).⁴³

The first predication, in Aristotelianizing texts like these, is not predication *simpliciter*, as in “*Socrates est*”, but substantial predication: “For some things are called beings, or are said to be, because they have being of themselves, as *substances*, which are called beings in the primary and proper sense” (*Alia enim dicuntur entia vel esse, quia per se habent esse sicut substantiae, quae principaliter et prius entia dicuntur*).⁴⁴

Similarly, the being of a threshold “consists *in being placed in such and such a position. Similarly, the being of ice is being condensed in such and such a way*” (*Limen enim est huiusmodi, quia ita ponitur. Et ipsum sic poni est esse ipsius, idest propria eius ratio. Et similiter esse crystalli, est ipsum taliter inspissari*).⁴⁵

From passages such as these we can see clearly that the *esse simpliciter* of a threshold or of a lump of ice is being so-and-so: for the ice its actual being, its existence, consists in its being so-and-so (being condensed), and vice versa being so-and-so (being condensed) is *esse simpliciter*, existence.

All this means that the distinction between three rather than two senses of being, which is found in only two of Thomas’s texts on the topic, does not truly express his typical teaching in this regard.⁴⁶ For the sense of being as substantial or accidental form (“Socrates is a man”, “Socrates is white”) is not another sense, different from the sense of actual being (“*Socrates est*”). For Socrates to exist is for him to be a man, to be white, and so on. Probably Thomas found it necessary to distinguish three rather than two senses for specifically theological reasons, that is to say to resolve the questions “*utrum in Christo sit unum tantum esse*” and the question of the being of the divine relations. His more typical theory, however, remains that of the two senses of being of which we spoke in the previous section.

Naturally, in the meantime it will not have escaped a reader familiar with Frege’s philosophy that Thomas, rather than eliminating “*est*” as a copula in the way Frege did, attached great importance to it.

We will see, however, in the fourth chapter that the theory of being as the act of being, expressed by the copula understood as a predicate specified by a third predicate, is itself not without problems. And that Thomas himself, faced by a choice between being as the act of being of a form, and being as truth, will for this reason opt sometimes for the latter.

2.3 Senses of Unit (Frege), Senses of Being (Aquinas)

What is the difference between the sense of being as “*anitas*” (or “there is” existence or “*es gibt Existenz*”) and the sense of being as actuality or individual existence?

Frege

Geach has proposed actuality as the distinctive criterion, and he explains it thus: “*x* is actual if and only if *x* either acts, or undergoes change, or both”⁴⁷.

As we have seen, Frege maintained that numbers possess only “there is” existence, but not actuality:

Of what are we in fact asserting that it is actual (*wirklich*) when we say, there are (*es gebe*) square roots of Four? Is it Two or—2?⁴⁸

He wrote similarly in *Foundations*:

If we restrict the actual to what acts on our senses or at least produces effects which may cause sense-perceptions as near or remote consequences, then naturally no number of any of these kinds is actual.⁴⁹

Frege and Geach’s argument is quite convincing. However, here I would like to add one more criterion to distinguish the sense of being as *anitas* (or there is existence or “*es gibt Existenz*”) and the sense of being as actuality or individual existence.

I suggest that once more we should start from Frege:

We can now easily solve the problem of reconciling the identity of units with their distinguishability. The word ‘unit’ is being used here in a double sense. The units are identical if the word has the meaning just explained. In the proposition ‘Jupiter has four moons’ the unit is ‘moon of Jupiter’. Under this concept falls moon I, and likewise also moon II, and moon III

too, and finally moon IV. Thus, we can say: the unit to which I relate is identical with the unit to which II relates, and so on. This gives us our identity. But when we assert the distinguishability of units, we mean that the things numbered are distinguishable.⁵⁰

In relation to the concept “moon of Jupiter” the objects I, II, III, and IV are identical. They are four moons of Jupiter. If we started from number IV and asked “how many moons has Jupiter?” the answer would still be: four. From the point of view of a numerical assertion about a concept it does not matter precisely which are the objects I intend to count, but how many there are. To use the language of the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*: “this or that is the same to me” (“questa o quella per me pari son”).

The matter is different if I am considering the objects, the things themselves that are counted: in that case I am interested in what they are, because they are distinguishable and different from each other.⁵¹

On this topic there is an interesting example of Spinoza, quoted by Frege in section 49 of the *Foundations*. If I want to know how many coins I have in my hand, it does not matter whether I start to count with a cent or a dollar, the important thing is that in the end I can respond with a number: two. Whether they are just these coins, or another two or a different kind of coin does not matter. I will always have two coins and so the inquiry into how many coins I have in my hand will be satisfied just as well.

The case of actual existence is totally different. There what I want to know is whether Joseph, he and no other, is still in existence, still alive. If I tried to specify in these terms “the propositional function ‘is the father of John’ is satisfied precisely once” I would only have aggravated the problem. It does not matter to me how often the propositional function is instantiated, but if Joseph, and he alone, just he, is still alive or not.

Pretending the play were not fictitious, when Hamlet asks himself “to be or not to be” I do not think he is posing a mathematical problem: will tomorrow the property of Hamletizing be instantiated just once and only once or only zero times? On the contrary, the question seems existential and could not be more existential: should I, I myself Hamlet, continue to live or should I end my life?⁵²

Barry Miller has clarified the issue by distinguishing the uniqueness of *precisely one individual* from the uniqueness of one *precise individual*: “One is the uniqueness of a precise individual which, while achieved by non-fictional proper names, is unattainable by descriptions or predicates of any kind. The other kind is the uniqueness of precisely one individual, which is the most that predicates and descriptions can achieve.”⁵³

Just as the word “unit” is being used in a double sense depending on whether it refers to a concept or an object, in the same way the word “uniqueness” is used in a double sense. The uniqueness of a unit that represents a concept is a number, precisely a one that is not zero or two or three and so on. How many coins do I have in my hand? On the contrary, the uniqueness of a unit that represents an object, expressed by a proper name, is a one that is not another.

Frege maintained clearly that “a concept does not cease to be a concept simply because only a single thing falls under it”. Similarly, one can say that an object is not a concept under which only a single thing falls. The reason is that the uniqueness of the single thing that falls under the concept—the one that answers to the question “how many?” or “is there?”—is a uniqueness of numerical type, a one that is not zero or two, while the uniqueness of an object is what belongs to something which is unrepeatable and distinguishable, one thing that is a precise individual and not another.

Aquinas

If we now read again some texts of Thomas, we are in a position to rediscover the importance of some of his passages about similar topics.

In the first place, following Averroes, and against Avicenna, he distinguished between a numerical one and a transcendental one, “convertible with being”.⁵⁴

Transcendental unity, which for him is a first-level property of objects, has as its opposite “other” and “different”. It is the one that is not other, not the one that is not zero or two. Even in ordinary language there are two readings of “one”: the one that is not two or three and so on, and the one that is not other.

The key passage of the *De veritate* is the following:

One possibility is that the way of existing attaches to each existent thing as divided off from others, and that is expressed by the word ‘something’ [*aliquid*] which is short for ‘aliud quid’, *some other thing*, so that just as things existing undivided in themselves are called one, so as existing divided off from others they are called *something other* (*et hoc exprimit hoc nomen aliquid: dicitur enim aliquid quasi aliud quid; unde sicut ens dicitur unum, in quantum est indivisum in se, ita dicitur aliquid, in quantum est ab aliis divisum*).⁵⁵

In Thomas’s ontology “other” is synonymous with “diversum”.⁵⁶ Both words express the property of things to be in their individual being “*omnino diversa*” or “*diversa per se ipsa vel seipsis*”.⁵⁷ Concepts, on the other hand, are, according to the Aristotelian terminology, “different” rather than “diverse” that is to say they have something in common and a specific difference added to them (as violet and orange add, respectively, black and yellow to the red they have in common). Things, by contrast, in their individual existence are diverse from the beginning (as if each was a primary colour). They are diverse of themselves. According to Thomas, the logic of concepts is “*idem in alio*” while that of individuals is “*aliud in alio*”.

In this regard there is a very interesting passage, altogether unknown to the Thomists, in which Thomas takes a stand against Platonic logic and in support of the clearly Aristotelian idea of the original diversity of beings from each other.

He first of all asks about species: ‘When is something to be reckoned of a different species from another? Is it only because the same nature is found in different receivers, as Plato held?’ According to the foregoing, this cannot be the case. For it has been said that a genus is not absolutely one; therefore, a difference of species is not reckoned on the basis that some same thing is in one and another, except for the Platonists who posited that a genus is absolutely one. On this account, as though answering the question, Aristotle adds that a species is different (*aliud in alio*), not because the same thing is in a different subject (*quia est idem in alio*), but because a different nature is in a different subject (*sed quia alia natura*

in alio susceptibili) [...]. And ‘other’ may be taken in two ways (*Et hoc quod dico aliud, potest duobus modis accipi*) as before: in one way, as meaning that the white is said to be something other than the sweet, because in the white thing is found a subject nature other than the one in the sweet; in another way, as meaning that they not only differ in subject nature but are wholly not the same (*sed omnino non sunt idem*). These two are the same as the two he mentioned above, when he said: ‘If the same thing is found in things that are other, or if differing things are found in differing things (*si idem in alio, aut si aliud in alio*).’⁵⁸

Here the formula “aliud in alio” applies precisely to the actual existence of individuals. As he writes clearly in the *De ente et essentia*: “*esse est diversum in diversis*”.⁵⁹

In Fregean terms one could say, on the basis of the text quoted above: objects are distinguishable. On the other hand, he himself had written earlier: “An object is not repeatedly encountered, rather, many objects fall under one concept [...]. With respect to a concept the question is always whether anything, and if so what, falls under it. With respect to a proper name such questions are senseless.”⁶⁰

There is a text of Thomas, not often cited by Thomists, where he expresses a similar idea: “It is impossible to think that there could be many of this individual.”⁶¹

It will be observed that once again Frege allows us to rediscover texts of Thomas that have remained unknown to the Thomists and sometimes, in texts left uncommented on by the critics, Thomas appears the best commentator on Frege.

In any case, the result, it seems to me, is that we have learnt what is actually one more criterion (the first being that of Geach, quoted at the beginning of this section) to distinguish the sense of being as *anitas* (or *there is* existence or “es gibt Existenz”) and the sense of being as actuality or individual existence. In *there is* existence the topic is the unity of a concept, of which it is asked whether it is frequent or infrequent, that is to say the question is a numerical one, a one which is not zero and not two. On the other hand, in individual or actual existence what is in question are unities originally distinct from each other, distinguishable, and the topic is a precise individual which is one thing and not another.

Notes

1. Gottlob Frege, *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, trans. Philip A. Ebert, Marcus Rossberg, with Crispin Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), XXV.
2. Peter T. Geach, "What Actually Exists," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 42 (1968): 7.
3. Peter T. Geach, "Aquinas," in *Three Philosophers*, eds Gertrude Elizabeth M. Anscombe and Peter T. Geach (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), 90–91; Peter T. Geach, *God and the Soul*, (London-Henley: Routledge-Kegan Paul, 1969), 263.
4. Geach, "Form and Existence," 264.
5. Geach, "Form and Existence," 266–267.
6. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 43. See also Llano, *Metaphysics and Language*, 218ff.
7. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 42.
8. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 176.
9. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 48, a. 2, ob. 2 ad 2. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. VIII, trans. Thomas Gilby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 115.
10. Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 1; *In I Sent.*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1; *In II Sent.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 1; *In II Sent.*, d. 37, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3; *In III Sent.*, d. 6, q. 2, a. 2; *De ente*, cap. I; *Quodl.* IX, q. 2, a. 2; *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 1; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 19; *Sum. c. Gent.*, III, c. 8; *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2; *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2; *In V Met.*, l. 9.
11. "Tertio modo dicitur esse quod significat veritatem compositionis in propositionibus, secundum quod est dicitur copula" (Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1).
12. "Secundo modo potest dici ens omne illud, de quo affirmativa propositio formari potest, etiam si illud in re nihil ponat" (Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. I).
13. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 3–4; 57–58; 181–182.
14. Thomas de Aquino, *De malo*, q. 1 a. 1 ad 19. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo. On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62.
15. Geach, *God and the Soul*, 265.

16. Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 1. Thomas Aquinas, "On the Power of God," in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. Timothy McDermott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 206. The parallel passage quoted by Geach is the following: Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 3, a. 4 ad 2.
17. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 86.
18. Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co, 1961), nr. 896.
19. Geach, "Form and Existence," 266.
20. See the first chapter in this regard.
21. Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 1. Aquinas, "On the Power of God," 206. Quoted by Gilson, for example, in Étienne Gilson, *Introduction à la philosophie chrétienne* (Paris: Vrin, 1960), 38. Étienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers, II ed. corr. and enl* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952), 159, quotes this famous passage: "nomen ens imponitur ab actu essendi" (Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 2).
22. Gilson, *L'Être et l'essence*, 94. (I quote and translate into English from the third French edition).
23. Llano, "Metafisica tommasiana e filosofia analitica del linguaggio," 348 (trans. Myself). Llano, *Metaphysics and Language*, 141.
24. Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 8, q. 1, a. 1 (trans. Richard Davies and myself). Italics mine. Fabro devotes a long commentary to this passage in Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità secondo san Tommaso d'Aquino*, 179–183.
25. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. c. Gent.*, I, 22. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles, Book one: God*, trans. Anton C. Pegis. (Notre Dame IN-London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 121. Italics mine.
26. Étienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy. Gifford Lectures 1931–1932* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 51. Italics mine.
27. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 3, a. 4. ad 2. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. II, trans. Timothy McDermott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 133. On this point: Courtine, *Inventio analogiae*, 259–290. See also Giovanni Ventimiglia, *Tommaso d'Aquino* (Brescia: La Scuola, 2014), 79–84.
28. Gottlob Frege, *Dialog with Pünier on Existence. Posthumous Writings*, trans. Peter Long, and Roger White, eds Hans Hermes, Friedrich Kambartel, and Friedrich Kaulbach (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1979), 62.

29. Frege, *Dialog with Pünier on Existence*, 64. I use here “deification” instead of “apotheosis”, since the first corresponds to the German word “Vergötterung” in Frege’s original text.
30. Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1 (trans. Richard Davies and myself). Italics mine. The critical edition of this text is not yet ready. The Director of the Commissio Leonina, Adriano Oliva, has however assured me that there are no significant variants of this passage in the manuscript tradition.
31. Thomas de Aquino, *Quodl.* IX, q. 2, a. 2 (trans. Richard Davies and myself). Italics mine.
32. On being as a copula we will discuss later in this same section. With regard to being as what is “attributed to everything of which a proposition may be formed”, an expression that also occurs in *De ente et essentia*, I agree with the critical observation of Kenny: such a sentence can only make sense if Thomas refers here to any “true” affirmative proposition. Otherwise it should be possible to say that even false affirmative propositions refer to some sense of being, which is impossible to defend (Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 4).
33. Thomas de Aquino, *In II Post. Anal.*, 1.1.
34. Thomas de Aquino, *In Peryerm*, I, l. 5, ed. Gauthier, 31. Thomas Aquinas, “Commentary on Aristotle’s On Interpretation 1–5,” trans. Ralph McInerny, in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, ed. Ralph McInerny (London: Penguin 1998), 480–481. Italics mine.
35. “Propositio est oratio verum vel falsum significans, ut ‘homo currit’. Propositionum alia cathegorica, alia ypotetica. Cathegorica est illa que habet subiectum et predicatum principales partes sui, ut ‘homo currit’; in hac enim propositione hoc nomen ‘homo’ est subiectum, hoc verbum ‘currit’ est predicatum, et quod coniungit unum cum altero est copula. Quod patet resolvendo sic: ‘homo currit’: ‘homo est currens’; hoc nomen ‘homo’ subicitur, ‘currens’ vero predicatur, et hoc verbum ‘est’ coniungit unum cum altero” (Petrus Hispanus Portugalensis, *Tractatus called afterwards Summule logicales*, first critical edition from the manuscripts, with an Introduction by L.M. de Rijk (Assen: van Gorcum & Co., 1972), 3–4).
36. “Et primo modo procedentes primo modo determinemus de hoc verbo ‘est’, non quia sit syncategorema, sed quia a multis ponitur esse syncategorema. Et illi nituntur hinc dicto Aristotelis, scilicet quod ‘est’ consignificat quamdam compositionem, quam sine compositis non est intelligere. Credunt enim, quod hoc consignificare sit suum significare,

- et sic solum sit consignificativum et praedicativum, sicut syncategorema. Sed contra: Verbum est nota eius, quod de altero dicitur; hoc autem est praedicatum; ergo omne verbum est nota vel signum praedicati; ergo hoc verbum ‘est’ est signum praedicati et non solum compositionis praedicati cum subiecto. Sed dicit forte, quod ‘est’ non est verbum, sed radix omnium verborum. Sed contra: Ex solo nomine et verbo fit propositio; ergo ipsum ‘est’ est verbum. Dicitur ergo consignificare, non quia cum alia dictione significat et ingrediatur orationem, sed quia cum principali suo significato compositionem significat; ob hoc autem non est syncategorema. Sed videtur adhuc, quod, quando ‘est’ tertium adiacens, non sit ibi praedicatum, sed solum compositio, ut hic ‘homo est animal’, quia in eius conversa ly animal subicitur tantum. Quia ergo converti sit facere de subiecto praedicatum, debemus dicere, quod ly animal praedicabitur. Item sic esset dicere, quod omnes propositiones haberent idem praedicatum, quia, si praedicetur alterum verbum, convenit resolvere ipsum in suum participium et in hoc verbum ‘est’, ut ‘homo currit’, hoc est, ‘homo est currens’; ‘homo ambulat’, ‘est ambulans’, et sic de aliis. Ad primum dicendum, quod, cum dico ‘homo est animal’, res huius verbi ‘est’ specificatur per ly animal; sed haec est natura specificationis, quod specificans et specificatum cedant in ipsum specificantem. Unde res huius verbi ‘est’ cedit in idem cum ly animal, et praedicando suam rem, sicut hic stat ly animal. Unde, licet ly animal praedicetur, nihilominus ly est praedicatur. Ad aliud dicendum, quod, et iam patet, per diversa adiuncta cedit in diversa praedicata. Unde, licet in qualibet propositione praedicetur hoc verbum ‘est’, non tamen idem erit praedicatum in omnibus” (Guillelmus de Shyreswood, *Syncategoremata*, eds Cristoph Kann, and Raina Kirchhoff (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2012), 106, 108).
37. René Antoine Gauthier, ‘Footnotes’, in *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, II, l. 2 (ed. Leonina 1989), 88. Jan Pinborg, “Bezeichnung in der Logik des XIII. Jahrhunderts,” *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 8 (1971): 249. Braakhuis spoke about the “existential import of the verb ‘est’” with regard to William. See Henk A. G Braakhuis, “The Views of William of Sherwood on some Semantical Topics and their Relation to those of Roger Bacon,” *Vivarium* 15 (1977): 121.
38. “[...] fundatur in esse rei, quod est actus essentiae” (Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1). “Iste secundus modus [sc. *esse ut verum*] comparatur ad primum [sc. *substantial esse* or *esse ut actus essendi*], sicut effectus ad causam” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9).

39. “Alterum est cognoscere esse simpliciter, alterum esse in parte, sicut cum cognoscimus quod homo est albus; quia esse album non significat totaliter esse hominis, sed significat ipsum esse aliquid; et ideo cum homo fit albus, non dicitur generari simpliciter, sed generari secundum quid. Sed cum dicitur, homo est, significatur ipsum esse simpliciter; et cum homo fit ens, dicitur generari simpliciter” But in the same *lectio* we read: “Et sicut scientes *quia* hoc est illud, quaerebamus *propter quid*, ita etiam scientes de aliquo *quia* est simpliciter, quaerimus *quid* sit illud, puta quid est Deus, aut quid est homo” (Thomas de Aquino, *In II Post. Anal.*, l. 1. Italics mine). “Sed duplex est esse: *scilicet esse essentialia rei, sive substantiale ut hominem esse, et hoc est esse simpliciter*. Est autem aliud esse accidentale, ut *hominem esse album*, et hoc est esse aliquid” (Thomas de Aquino, *De principiis naturae*, c. 1. Italics mine). See Gyula Klima, “The Semantic Principles Underlying St. Thomas Aquinas’s Metaphysics of Being,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5, no. 1 (1996): 87–144. Klima, “Aquinas’ Theory of the Copula and the Analogy of Being”.
40. Thomas Aquinas, *In II Post. Anal.*, l. 1, ed. Leonina, Gauthier, 174 (trans. Richard Davies and myself).
41. See Gabriel Nuchelmans, *Secundum/tertium adiacens. Vicissitudes of a logical distinction* (Amsterdam: Royal Academy of Netherlands, 1992), 19. Nuchelmans shows that this new interpretation of Aquinas will be found later in Walter Burleigh and William of Ockham.
42. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 2. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 550–551.
43. Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Italics mine. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 890, and 893.
44. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 1. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 539. Italics mine.
45. Thomas de Aquino, *In VIII Met.*, l. 2. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 1694. Italics mine (translation slightly modified by me).
46. On this point I changed my mind. See Giovanni Ventimiglia, “Aquinas on Being: One, Two, or Three senses of Being?”, *Quaestio* 18 (2018): 509–538.
47. Geach, “What actually exists,” in Geach, *God and the Soul*, 65.
48. Frege, *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, XXV.
49. Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logico-Mathematical Enquiry into the Concept of Number*, ed. John Austin (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), § 85, 97.

50. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, § 54.
51. Llano, *Metaphysics and Language*, 205.
52. Nathan Salmon put the question in similar terms: “When Hamlet (pretending the play were non fictitious) agonized over the question of whether to be or not to be, he was preoccupied with weightier matters than the question of whether or not to be the value of a variable.” Nathan Salmon, “Existence,” Vol. 30, *Philosophical Perspectives: Methaphysics*, vol I, ed. James Tomberlin, 49–108. (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1987), 51.
53. Barry Miller, *The Fullness of Being* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 41. See also Barry Miller, “Proper Names and Their Distinctive Sense,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 51 (1973): 201–210.
54. “Ad primum igitur dicendum quod quidam, putantes idem esse unum quod convertitur cum ente, et quod est principium numeri, divisi sunt in contrarias positiones. Pythagoras enim et Plato, videntes quod unum quod convertitur cum ente, non addit aliquam rem supra ens, sed significat substantiam entis prout est indivisa, existimaverunt sic se habere de uno quod est principium numeri. Et quia numerus componitur ex unitatibus, crediderunt quod numeri essent substantiae omnium rerum. E contrario autem Avicenna, considerans quod unum quod est principium numeri, addit aliquam rem supra substantiam entis (alias numerus ex unitatibus compositus non esset species quantitatis), credidit quod unum quod convertitur cum ente, addat rem aliquam supra substantiam entis, sicut album supra hominem. Sed hoc manifeste falsum est, quia quaelibet res est una per suam substantiam. Si enim per aliquid aliud esset una quaelibet res, cum illud iterum sit unum, si esset iterum unum per aliquid aliud, esset abire in infinitum. Unde standum est in primo. Sic igitur dicendum est quod unum quod convertitur cum ente, non addit aliquam rem supra ens, sed unum quod est principium numeri, addit aliquid supra ens, ad genus quantitatis pertinens” (Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 11, a. 1. ad 1). See also *De pot.*, q. 9, a. 7.
55. Thomas de Aquino, *De ver.*, q. 1. a. 1. Thomas Aquinas, “Disputed Questions on Truth,” in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. McDermott, 53 (italics are my modifications).
56. Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. V, *In VII Phys.*, l. 8; *In X Met.* l. 4.
57. Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 8, q. 1, a. 2, ob. 3 et ad 3. Thomas refers to *Metaph.*, X 3; See *In X Met.*, l. 4.

58. Thomas de Aquino, *In VII Phys.*, l. 8. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, Books III–VIII, trans. Pierre H. Conway (Columbus: College of St. Mary of the Springs, 1958–1962) nr. 948.
59. Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. V. Italics mine.
60. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, § 51. This time I did not use the translation of Austin but that of Dale Jacquette, in Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logico-Mathematical Enquiry into the Concept of Number*, trans. Dale Jacquette (Harlow: Longman 2007) because Austin translated the expression “Ein Gegenstand kommt nicht wiederholt vor” with “An object is not found more than once”, so transforming the “unrepeatability” of the object (kommt nicht wiederholt vor) into a matter of number (once).
61. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 13, a. 9. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. III, trans. Herbert McCabe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83.



3

Essence

3.1 Object/Concept (Frege), Universal/Individual (Aquinas)

Frege

Already in the previous chapter we have encountered the difference between concept and object as explained by Frege. It is appropriate to re-read two passages on the topic (one of which has already been quoted):

An object is not repeatedly encountered, rather, many objects fall under one concept [...]. With respect to a concept the question is always whether anything, and if so what, falls under it. With respect to a proper name such questions are senseless.¹

The concept (as I understand the word) is predicative. On the other hand, a name of an object, a proper name, is quite incapable of being used as a grammatical predicate.²

It is true that for Frege concepts can in their turn function as objects for second-order concepts, but it is also true that objects, having a proper

name, cannot be used as predicates and therefore as concepts. An object, like the name that denotes it, is unrepeatable. A concept, on the other hand, is predicable of many things.

As is well known, Frege's notion of concept is quite different from the modern subjective and internalist notion of concept, because for Frege a concept is something extramental, belonging to a third realm, that is to say a world as objective as the world of Platonic ideas.³

However, ironically, his distinction between object and concept has had an anti-Platonic Aristotelian revival in the works of some interpreters of Aquinas, such as Peter Geach:

Understood in this way, the distinction between individual and form is absolutely sharp and rigid; what can sensibly be said of one becomes nonsense if we try to say it of the other. (Aquinas's "subsistent forms" might seem to bridge the gulf; but, as we shall presently see, they do not, nor did Aquinas really think they do.) Just because of this sharp distinction, we must reject the Platonic doctrine that what a predicate stands for is some single entity over against its many instances.⁴

Aquinas

Thanks to Frege's distinction Thomas's criticisms of Platonic metaphysics have regained importance, and this in the middle of the second and third generation's attempts to revalue Thomas's Platonism (see Chap. 1). For Thomas, in fact, the doctrine of Platonic ideas was straightforwardly contradictory. He proclaims this boldly, for instance, in commenting on *Metaphysics*, Book X:

He says, then, that it was proved above in Book VII, where he treats of being, and especially of substance, that *no universal can be a substance which subsists of itself because every universal is common to many*. A universal also cannot be a subsisting substance because otherwise it would have to be one thing apart from the many, and then it could not be common but would be in itself a singular thing. [...] But a universal is common in the sense of something predicated of many things; and thus it must be in some way a one-in-many, and not something subsisting apart from them. But being

and unity must be predicated of all things in the most universal and common way. Hence those things which are called being and unity are not themselves subsisting substances, as Plato maintained.⁵

The text could not be clearer. The universal is common in the sense that it can be predicated of many things. This is an essential, not an accidental feature. A substance, by contrast, is by its nature singular and not predicable of many things. It follows that it is impossible, without contradiction, that something should be at the same time universal and particular, as the ideas of Plato were claimed to be. This is particularly true of being and unity, which are universally predicable of everything. Given the evidence of their universal predicability, they must *a fortiori* find it impossible to be substances. But was not this just what Plato maintained in his so-called “unwritten doctrines” to which Aristotle refers in *Metaphysics* I,6? And was not this just what Thomas himself could read in the *De Divinis Nominibus* and the *De Causis* in the case of God, defined as “esse purum” (pure being) and “esse tantum” (nothing but being). Lastly is not this just what he himself had maintained with his doctrine of God as subsistent being itself? These are questions here merely hinted at, which will be taken up later in the next section.

For the moment it suffices to read a passage of Thomas little known to Thomists, but of great interest. The topic is the question whether the name of God is communicable or is peculiar to God. Among other things Thomas writes:

To understand which nouns properly speaking apply to many things we must first recognize that every form that is instantiated by an individual either is or at least can be thought of as being common to many; human nature can be thought of, and in fact is, common to many in this way (*vel secundum rem vel secundum rationem saltem*); the nature of the sun, on the other hand, can be thought of as being, but in fact is not, common to many (*natura autem solis non est communis multis secundum rem, sed secundum rationem tantum*). The reason for this is that the mind understands such natures in abstraction from the individual instances, hence whether it be in one individual or in many is irrelevant to our understanding of the nature itself; given that we understand the nature we can always think of it as being in many instances.

The individual, however, from the very fact of being individual, is divided from all others. Hence a word that is used precisely to signify an individual cannot be applicable to many in fact, nor can it be thought of as applicable to many. It is impossible to think that there could be many of this individual. (Sed singulare, ex hoc ipso quod est singulare, est divisum ab omnibus aliis. Unde omne nomen impositum ad significandum aliquod singulare, est incommunicabile et re et ratione, non enim potest nec in apprehensione cadere pluralitas huius individui.) Hence no proper name is properly speaking communicable to many, though it may be communicable through some resemblance—as a man may metaphorically be called ‘an Achilles’ because he has the bravery of Achilles.⁶

Thomas’s conception is clear: a form is, by its nature or essence, common to many and “predicable” of many—that seems to me in this context the best translation of “communicabile”. There are forms such as “human nature” which are predicable of many “*vel secundum rem vel secundum rationem*”, that is both in fact and in accordance with their essence or definition. There are other forms, for example, “sun”, which are predicable of many only in accordance with their essence or definition (*ratione*), but not in fact, because in fact there is only one sun; but in theory, taking account of the nature of the sun in so far as it is a “form”, nothing prevents there being more than one: “*for the nature of the sun can be understood as existing in many objects.*”

In contrast to forms there are individuals and the proper names that denote them, such as “Achilles”. These are not predicable of many because the individual by its nature is singular and divided off from all others (“*sed singulare, ex hoc ipso quod est singulare, est divisum ab omnibus aliis*”). As we have seen in the preceding chapter, for Thomas it is characteristic of individual being to be “one and not other”, that is to say originally, and of its nature, divided or distinct from everything else: unique. The consequence is that the name “Achilles” can be used as a predicate only metaphorically, to indicate the courage of Achilles, which is predicable by likeness also of other individuals. Strictly speaking, however, the proper name that denotes an individual cannot ever be a predicate. Thomas adds: “it is impossible to think that there could be many of this individual”.

The likeness of thoughts of this kind to parallel thoughts of Frege is striking. Though in a completely different context, Frege wrote very similar things:

With a concept the question is always whether anything, and if so what, falls under it. With a proper name such questions make no sense. We should not be deceived by the fact that language makes use of proper names, for instance Moon, as concept words, and vice versa. This does not affect the distinction between the two. As soon as a word is used with the indefinite article or in the plural without any article, it is a concept word.⁷

As for Frege, so for Thomas, it is inconceivable that there should be a plurality of a particular individual (*“nec enim potest nec in apprehensione cadere pluralitas huius individui”*), and to ask how many of them there are, as one can with concepts, makes no sense.

Certainly, there are “forms” (in Thomas’s terms) or “concepts” (in Frege’s terms) that are predicated in fact of a single individual and whose names are used as if they were proper names: that is the case with “sun” for Thomas and with “moon” for Frege. But that does not mean that they are individuals. In this case Frege speaks of “concept word”. Further evidence, in Latin as in German or English, is that such bogus proper names can be used in the plural “suns”, “moons”, which would be impossible with proper names. “Achilleses” has no sense.

It is interesting to observe the consequence of this clear division with regard to the question of the predicability of the name “God”. According to Thomas, “God” does not denote an individual but a form which in fact is predicated only of one individual, like the word “sun”. It is in fact a concept word, not a proper name like “Achilles”. In the conclusion of the famous proofs of God’s existence, consequently, on the basis of the analogy between “blindness exists” and “God exists” noticed in the previous chapter, one should say not “ergo Deus est” but something like “there is an x, such that x is a prime mover, and this is god”. In the human condition “God” can be understood at most only as “god”, or as a predicate. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, the only name which comes near to being the proper name of God is the Tetragrammaton, of which the Jews speak, which is incommunicable and ineffable.⁸

Let us return, however, to the topic of Thomas's criticism of the Platonic doctrine of ideas or forms. During the period of the second and third generation of studies (see Chap. 1), Thomas's criticism of the conception of the "Platonists" was based above all on the Platonic and neo-Platonic thesis of the superiority of the One-Good to being (they are all lumped together by Thomas as "Platonists"). Significant in this sense is an article of Aertsen.⁹ This allowed the Thomists of the period to underline the novelty, according to them, of Thomas's concept according to which God was not beyond being but on the contrary was subsistent being itself.

First of all, it has been shown that Thomas himself was perfectly conscious of the fact that the thesis of the identity of God with being and with "He who is" of Exodus 3,14 was not an innovation of his own but was already in the fifth chapter of the *De Divinis Nominibus* and in the *Liber de Causis*,¹⁰ and it is also well known that in the course of his life Thomas discovered the neo-Platonic rather than Aristotelian origin of the *Liber de Causis*. Hence, it is clear, and was probably clear to Thomas himself, that the thesis of identity of God and being was a neo-Platonic thesis taken up by himself, in opposition to another neo-Platonic thesis, that of the superiority to being of the One-Good.

However, it is important to note that the attention given to this criticism of Thomas obscured from view Thomas's other criticism of the Platonic theory of forms. It was Peter Geach and Anthony Kenny who drew attention to that criticism, thanks to suggestions from Frege's distinction between concept and object.

Aristotle and His "Fatal Ambiguity"

It is clear that when Thomas criticizes Plato's ideas he is remaking himself almost literally on the model of Aristotle. The text that provides the background to his commentary is this:

The universal also is thought by some to be in the fullest sense a cause, and a principle; therefore let us attack the discussion of this point also. For it seems impossible that any universal term should be the name of a sub-

stance. For firstly the substance of each thing is that which is peculiar to it, which does not belong to anything else; but the universal is common, since that is called universal which is such as to belong to more than one thing.¹¹

The passage of Aristotle is clear and leaves no room for doubt. In the Middle Ages once again there were authors who were anti-realist in the debate about universals: not only Thomas, but also Ockham who maintained, like Thomas but even more clearly than Thomas, on the basis of this and another passage of Aristotle (*Met.* X, 3), that everything that really exists has the property of being singular, or fundamentally different from everything else, without the addition of anything external. A universal, he continues, is not singular and on the contrary is differentiated by the addition of a differentiating element to one and the same genus; hence a universal is not something really existing.¹²

But is all this Aristotle? Is this the position that marks out Aristotelian metaphysics on the topic of the existence or non-existence of universal forms?

Sadly no. In the *De interpretatione*, for example, a text translated by Boethius and well known in the Middle Ages, one could read:

Now of actual things some are universal, others particular (I call universal that which is by its nature predicated of a number of things, and particular that which is not; man, for instance, is a universal, Callias a particular). So, it must sometimes be of a universal that one states that something holds or does not, sometimes of a particular.¹³

In his magnificent study of the problem of universals, Alain de Libera has spoken of an “incoherence of Aristotelianism” and of a “fatal ambiguity” of Aristotle on the topic of the existence and subsistence of forms. He wrote:

A history based on the authorities shows that the most Aristotelian assertions—even of Aristotle himself—transmit a residual Platonism.¹⁴

And then, commenting on the passage of the *De interpretatione* just quoted:

How can one maintain at the same time that “there are *universal things*” and that “the nature of the universal is to *be predicated* of more than one subject?” Can a thing be affirmed of another thing? Does predication take place “when one thing is affirmed of another thing”? [...]. In reading this definition of universal a medieval philosopher had no choice. If all of Aristotle he knew were the *Categories* and the *De Interpretatione* all he could do was to set off one half of the sentence against the other [...] or remove the incoherence at the cost of a strong adhesion to realism. If, by contrast, he knew the whole of the Aristotelian corpus he could not help asking himself how the definition in the *De Interpretatione* was compatible with the principal anti-Platonic themes of book Z of the *Metaphysics*. How is it possible to assert in the *Metaphysics* that no universal is a substance and to maintain in the *Categories* that genus and species are second substances? How is it possible to say that universals are predicated of many things and to maintain at the same time that universals are universal things? The incoherences of the corpus do not allow us to eliminate the ambiguity of the assertion regarded as fundamental. If there is a problem of universals it is in full bloom in the texts themselves in the formulation of the thesis which is supposed to avoid it.¹⁵

We must remember that within the *Metaphysics* there is not only Book VII, where form is considered as individual and is the only kind of substance. There are also other passages where the form is considered as universal, and where the existence of universals considered as species is not denied. If the interpretation of Frede and Patzig, based on Book VII, seems more Aristotelian and more coherent with Aristotle’s criticism of Plato, it cannot be denied that there is an ambiguity in the totality of Aristotle’s works and that there are residual traces of Platonism with regard to the ontological status of forms.¹⁶

The Ambiguity of Thomas

We should not be surprised, then, if ambiguities similar to those of Aristotle recur in Thomas. Being in good company does not by itself resolve the ambiguities. Indeed, in Thomas they are exaggerated by theological reasons unknown to the Stagirite. It seems in fact that while he

criticizes the existence of separate forms existing in and of themselves, at the same time he admits, explains, and defends the existence of a single separate form, God, which coincides with the “most common forms, goodness, unity, and being”.

Thus, he asserts expressly:

And although, as Aristotle repeatedly proves, the part of this opinion which postulates separate, self-subsistent ideas of natural things appears to be absurd, nonetheless that there exists some first thing called God, good by nature, is absolutely true.¹⁷

In a passage of disarming clarity he asserts expressly that the Platonists were right to posit a first principle which was goodness itself, unity itself, and being itself. Among other things this is a clear indication that Thomas was aware that the thesis of God as subsistent being itself was clearly attributed by him to the Platonists, while at the beginning of his career, when he was commenting on the *Sentences* he thought it partially of Aristotelian origin since he had not yet discovered the authorship of the *De causis*. The passage deserves quoting, I think, for another reason also: it gives the lie to much rhetoric, typical of the second generation (see Chap. 1) about the originality of Thomas’s teaching about God as subsistent being:

The Platonists did not restrict this of abstraction to the ultimate species of natural things but applied it as to the most common, such as good, one and being. For they held that there is a first one that is the very essence of goodness and of unity and of existence, and we call him God and all other things are called good or one or being by derivation from this first. That they named the first good itself or good as such or principal good or supergood or even the goodness of all goods or goodness, essence and substance in the same way that they had spoken of the separate man. This argument of the Platonists is not in harmony with either the faith or truth with respect to what it says of separate natural species, *but it is most true and consonant with the Christian faith with respect to what it says of the first principle of things.*¹⁸

As Anthony Kenny once wrote, Thomas seems to be Aristotelian on earth and Platonic in heaven.¹⁹

The matter seems quite incoherent and contradictory when we consider that the characteristic of a form of being able to be said of many is an essential and not an accidental characteristic. If God, goodness, unity, and subsistent being can be said of many we are immersed in pantheism. Did Thomas not ever see this danger?

Moreover, if it is true, as Thomas himself says, that universal and individual are contradictorily opposed, how is it possible to make an exception to the contradiction in heaven? Could God exempt himself to the principle of non-contradiction that he created himself when he created things? This seems less like a doctrine of Thomas than one of Cusanus, if of anybody.

Yet at least two other groups of texts tell in the direction of the celestial Platonism of Thomas.

First there is the constant comparison of subsistent being with subsistent whiteness.

God is sheer existence subsisting of his very nature. And such being, as we have also noted, cannot but be unique, rather as whiteness would be unique, were it subsistent, for its repetition depends on there being many receiving subjects.²⁰

Now it is true that subsistent whiteness does not, according to Thomas, exist, and it is true that he uses the conditional; but if it did exist it would be single and diversified only by reason of the recipients. Subsistent being, by contrast, evidently exists and is unique, as would be whiteness in itself, if it existed.

The whole line of reasoning is very Platonic, as is the idea that one and the same form is diversified on the basis of “recipients”.

Finally, there are some decisive passages in a small work of his mature period, the *De substantiis separatis*, in which expressions of a neo-Platonic flavour about God seem to contradict what we have read above about the impossibility of a form which is subsistent and common at the same time.

For there can be only one being which is “to be” itself; just as some form, if it should be considered by itself (*si separata consideretur*), can be only one.²¹

Observe how the English translation tries to dePlatonize the typically Platonic expression *forma separata*.

In chapter 14 the expressions are no less explicit: God is defined as “*ipsum esse separatum*” and “*ipse esse abstractum*”.²²

Thomas is naturally anxious to show that *ipsum esse subsistens* is not *esse commune*.²³ But it is difficult not to perceive the tension between the assertions such as we have read above:

But being and unity must be predicated of all things in the most universal and common way. Hence those things which are called being and unity are not themselves subsisting substances, as Plato maintained.

And to read on the other hand that God “is the very essence [...] of existence”, separated being itself (“*ipsum esse separatum*”), abstract being itself (“*ipsum esse abstractum*”).

If being is to be predicated of everything in the most universal and common manner, how can there be a substance, of its nature unique and individual, that is of its essence being itself?

Solutions

I have the impression that Thomas himself was aware of the tension present in the coexistence of a neo-Platonic and an Aristotelian metaphysics. And at least in two places, he recognized the problematic aspect and attempted to offer a solution.

The first problematic aspect recognized by Thomas was the neo-Platonic thesis of the distinction of an identical form by means of various “recipients”. In the Commentary on the *Liber de causis*, written around 1272, Thomas explicitly criticized this neo-Platonic doctrine, for reasons both theological and philosophical.

The text of the *De causis* ran:

And the diversity of reception is due not to the first cause but to the recipient. This is because the recipient is also diversified. Because of that, what is received is therefore diversified.

But Thomas objects:

We should keep in mind that the action of the first cause is twofold: one inasmuch as it establishes things, which is called creation; another inasmuch as it rules things already established. Therefore, what he says here has no place in the first action because, *if all diversity of effects must reduce to the diversity of the recipients, it will be necessary to say that there would be some recipients that are not from the first cause (si oportet omnem diversitatem effectuum reducere in diversitatem recipientium, oportebit dicere quod sint aliqua recipientia quae non sint a causa prima)*, which is contrary to what he said before in Proposition 18: All things have essence through the first cause. So, *it is necessary to say that the first diversity of things, according to which they have diverse natures and powers, is not due to some diversity of the recipients but is due to the first cause (prima diversitas rerum secundum quam habent diversas naturas et virtutes, non sit ex aliqua diversitate recipientium sed ex causa prima)* not because there is some diversity in it, but because it knows diversity, for it is an agent according to its knowledge. Therefore, it produces the diverse grades of things for the completeness of the universe.²⁴

In short, if the diversity of beings derived from the diversity of the essences, and not from God himself, then it would be necessary to accept an independence of the existence of the essences from the creative cause of all that exists: a thesis contrary to the theological doctrine of creation from nothing, and which would confuse the creation (*creatio*) with the government (*gubernatio*) of all things on the part of God.²⁵

It is notable that this anti-Platonic thesis of Thomas in his commentary on the *Liber de Causis* was later expressly criticized by his contemporary and partial follower, Giles of Rome. Hence it seems that it is just this which defines his position on this problem.²⁶

In discussing the same problem Thomas was forced to go even further in an earlier work, maintaining that the multiplicity of creatures, instead of deriving neo-Platonically from the diversity of the receivers, derived directly from the multiplicity of the divine persons in the Trinity,

therefore from the unity in diversity of God himself. This is a thesis, totally contrary to the “dogma” of the neo-Platonic indivisible One, which has been justly evaluated by Gilles Emery as typical of Thomas.²⁷

Finally, with regard to the central problem of this chapter, namely the contradiction between substance, which is by its nature individual, and form, which is by its nature common and universal, there is a most interesting text in Thomas’s commentary on the *Metaphysics*. Thomas shows that he is aware of the problem, the tension, and he tries to give it a solution. Courtine has emphasized the evolution of Thomas’s thought²⁸ on this problem, and this text is representative of Thomas’s last word on the topic:

He [Aristotle] says, then, that it was proved above in Book VII, where he treats of being, and especially of substance, that no universal can be a substance which subsists of itself because every universal is common to many. A universal also cannot be a subsisting substance because otherwise it would have to be one thing apart from the many, and *then it could not be common but would be in itself a singular thing*. [A singular thing] might be said to be common as a cause is (*Nisi forte diceretur commune per modum causae*). But the common aspect of a universal differs from that of a cause; *for a cause is not predicated of its effects*, since the same thing is not the cause of itself. But a universal is common in the sense of something predicated of many things; and thus it must be in some way a one-in-many, and not something subsisting apart from them. But being and unity must be predicated of all things in the most universal and common way. Hence those things which are called being and unity are not themselves subsisting substances, as Plato maintained.²⁹

With a “perhaps” (“*forte*”) that is not rendered in the English translation, Thomas tries, as it were on tiptoe, to resolve the philosophical tension between what is common and the individual substance. If the only way to be “common” is that of the form, which by its nature is predicated of its effects, then it is impossible for an individual substance such as God to be at the same time common because, as we have seen, he would be predicated pantheistically of his effects. If, by contrast, “common” is understood in the manner of the efficient cause, then it is possible for an

individual substance such as God to be at the same time common, because an efficient cause is not predicated of its effects. If I think of the form “dogness”, this is predicated Platonically of Fido, Roger, and others: Fido is a dog, Roger is a dog. If I go on to think of the unmoved first mover, this, though it is the “common” cause of all that happens, it is not predicated of all its effects: we do not say “x is unmoved first mover and y too is unmoved first mover”. An efficient cause, then, is common, but it is not universal in the way a formal cause is. It is an object which has the function of grounding other entities, but it is not at the same time a concept.

Well, this perhaps (“*forte*”), as Thomas writes, could be a way of avoiding the contradictory identification of form and substance, concept and object, while still considering God, who has no proper name, as the common cause of all that exists.³⁰

3.2 Functions (Frege), Forms (Aquinas)

In the previous section, we limited ourselves to treating of the Fregean distinction between concept and object and its reappearance in the interpretation of Thomas’s metaphysics, following some suggestions of Peter Geach. In this section, we will be occupied with the Fregean notion of concept as function and its importance for a new reading of other passages in Thomas’s metaphysics.

Frege

In the *Foundations of Arithmetic* Frege was principally interested in number, and for that purpose the distinction between object and concept sufficed. However, as is well known, already in the *Concept Script*, and in greater depth in *Function and Concept*, he developed the notion of concept, understanding it as a particular type of function (and consequently also expanding the notion of object, interpreting it in general as whatever is not a function).³¹ This is one of his most original and most important contributions.

A function for Frege is something that is of itself unsaturated, in need of “supplementation”.³² That is true also of the particular type of function that is a concept.³³ This means that, as Frege explains, statements can be imagined as composed of two parts: one complete in itself and the other in need of supplementation.³⁴ At this point Frege makes an interesting observation:

We see that here we have undertaken to extend [the application of the term] in the other direction, viz. as regards what can occur as an argument. Not merely numbers, but objects in general, are now admissible; and here persons must assuredly be counted as objects. The two truth-values have already been introduced as possible values of a function; we must go further and admit objects without restriction as values of functions. To get an example of this, let us start, e.g., with the expression ‘the capital of the German Empire’. This obviously takes the place of a proper name, and stands for [bedeutet] an object. If we now split it up into the parts ‘the capital of’ and ‘the German Empire’, *where I count the [German] genitive form as going with the first part, then this part is unsaturated, whereas the other is complete in itself.* So in accordance with what I said before, I call ‘the capital of x’ the expression of a function. If we take the German Empire as the argument, we get Berlin as the value of the function.³⁵

If a concept is a function, and a function is by its nature incomplete, then it is necessary that the form of the genitive is an essential part of the function, so as to express the idea of the function’s essential need to be saturated. It would not make sense to divide the expression in terms of “the capital” and “of the German empire” because that would eliminate the idea of a function.

This explanation of the concept in terms of an unsaturated function seems very close to the Aristotelian conception of form or predicate, which unlike the forms of Plato does not exist in and of itself but is always said of something else.

This aspect did not escape Geach. He remarked that the expressions “the shield of Socrates”, “the statue of Socrates” and “the wisdom of Socrates” are not really equivalent. The first two mean something like “the shield which belongs to Socrates” and “the statue which represents Socrates”, so that we can say “Socrates possesses a shield” and “Socrates is

represented by the statue”. We cannot say anything similar in the case of “the wisdom of Socrates”. Socrates does not possess wisdom in the way a shield is possessed, and he is not represented by wisdom as if it was an image of himself.

This is the reason why the genitive sign “of” always follows the concept-function, whereas this is not so in the case of objects. The divisions in these cases would be “the shield / of Socrates”, “the statue / of Socrates”. It would not make sense to write “the shield of” because the shield is not a concept needing supplementation, but an object. In the case of the wisdom, by contrast, the logical division is this: “the wisdom of / Socrates”. In other words the wisdom, not being a self-subsistent Platonic form but in Fregean terms a concept-function, is not saturated but needs to be completed: “the wisdom of...”: “‘Of’ is a logically inseparable part of the sign ‘the wisdom of ...’ indicating the need to put a name after this sign; and this need is what makes the sign suitable to express a form”.³⁶

Geach explains this further, adopting Frege’s comparison with a mathematical function.

“The square root of 25” does not mean: the root that belongs to 25. The square root does not belong to 25 in the way that the shield belongs to Socrates, nor does 25 possess a square root in the way that Socrates possesses a shield. In this case the “of” is not a sign of the relation of belonging or possessing, but is an integral part of the expression “square root”—“square root of” exactly—to indicate that the square root is a function. The same thing takes place with “wisdom” and other “concepts”: “wisdom” does not exist; what exists is “the wisdom of somebody”.³⁷

Geach: God Is His Own Wisdom

Geach uses Frege’s notion of concept as function to try to make comprehensible Thomas’s doctrine of God as a separate and subsistent form—and indeed to make it consistent with Thomas’s own doctrine (similar to that of *Metaphysics*, Book VII) according to which a universal form cannot at the same time be individual, as we have seen at the beginning of the previous section.

He maintains, then, that expressions like “God is wisdom itself” do not mean that “wisdom” is a proper name of God, but only that both “God” and “the wisdom of God” denote the same thing. In other words, just because wisdom is understood by Geach as a function, and just because according to Geach there is no “wisdom” without an “of”, that is wisdom in and of itself, it follows that the expression “God is wisdom itself” cannot mean that God is identical with a Platonic form whose name is “wisdom”. For wisdom is by its nature always “wisdom of” and in the case of God is “wisdom of God”, and in reality this is God himself. So, the expressions “God”, “wisdom of God”, “power of God” all mean the same thing, expressing different senses (the difference between sense and meaning in Thomas will be addressed in the Appendix).

Is Geach’s reading correct? I do not think so, but I believe that in any case it is useful to read and evaluate unedited and interesting passages of Thomas. In the history of philosophy and elsewhere many errors and many ambiguities have had happy consequences.

From the point of view of Frege’s philosophy I agree with Anthony Kenny that there is a great difference between the concept-functions of Frege and the form-functions of Thomas, if they can be called such. If wisdom does not exist in and of itself but is always “wisdom of”, then in the case of finite realities we always have “the wisdom of Socrates”, “the wisdom of Plato”, and so forth. From the point of view of Frege, these are not objects, because they are not self-subsistent, and are not concepts, because they have a history—the history of Socrates and Plato—and they have an actuality, a *Wirklichkeit*. These are characteristics that Frege’s concept-functions do not have.³⁸

Something similar should also be said in the case of “the wisdom of God”. For, although the wisdom of God has no history, certainly it has actuality (“*Wirklichkeit*”), namely a property which functions, concept-functions of Frege does not have.

For Frege there exists a whole world, a third realm, of objects that do not have actuality, and it is that world that interests him; if we take away that realm, we have, so to say, taken away his job. For Thomas, at least for the Aristotelian Thomas, no such realm exists. Geach has attempted to make

the most of Thomas's Aristotelianism by using categories and distinctions of Frege that are more Platonic and certainly distant from Aristotle.

Aquinas

However, the suggestion of understanding forms as functions brought him and me to discover and value forgotten passages of Thomas of a definitely Aristotelian flavour. Geach mentions, for example, question 45, article 4, of the *prima pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* in which Thomas writes expressly, quoting Aristotle:

As for forms and accidents and the like, you do not speak of them as beings as though they themselves were things, but because something is by them; for instance the reason why you call whiteness real is that by it a subject is white. Hence, to cite Aristotle (*Met.* VII, 1), we say that accident is more fittingly called 'of a being' than 'a being' (*magis proprie dicitur entis quam ens*). As, then, forms and accidents and the like, which do not subsist, are to be said to *co-exist rather than to exist* (*magis sunt coexistentia quam entia*), so they ought to be referred to as *co-created rather than created*. To be down-right, then, it is subsisting things that are created.³⁹

In spite of all the differences we have noted, it cannot be denied that the use of the genitive in connection with forms (more properly said to be "of a being" than "a being") which is given in Latin by the declension (*magis proprie dicitur entis quam ens*) seems close to what we read above in Frege in connection with concept functions: "where I count the [German] genitive form as going with the first part, then this part is unsaturated, whereas the other is complete in itself".

Can we say that the passage of Thomas quoted is Aristotelian? Certainly. The problem is that just in the preceding sentence Thomas has spoken of "things that subsist, whether they be simple, like unembodied substances, or compound, like material substances" (*Quod quidem convenit proprie subsistentibus, sive sunt simplicia sicut substantiae separatae; sive sint compositae, sicut substantiae materiales*). We know that the separate substances called simple, even if they are composed of essence and being, are not forms of, but forms *tout court*. So, Kenny is right to emphasize that here

as elsewhere in his works Thomas seems “Aristotelian on earth, but a Platonist in heaven”.⁴⁰ The problem then is to understand if and when Thomas simply endorses neo-Platonic inheritances consolidated in his time and when he introduces new usually Aristotelian elements as we explained in the first chapter. What is certain is that from time to time, as in this case, Thomas does not seem to care much about the philosophical consistency of his theses.

Nonetheless, Thomas’s response to the first objection of the same question is highly interesting for both exegetical and philosophical reasons. The title ran: “To be created: is this proper to composite and subsisting things?”

The first objection quoted the *De causis* and ran thus:

It would not seem so. For we read in the *De causis*, (prop. iv) *The first of created things is being*. But the being of a created thing, is not subsistent. Therefore, it is not the subsisting and composite thing that is created.

Among believers there is a popular slogan “God creates being”. That was indeed a thesis of the authoritative *De Causis*. Well, at the time when he wrote this part of the *Summa Theologiae* was Thomas aware that the author of the *Liber de Causis* was not Aristotle but an Arabic author deeply influenced by Proclus’s *Elementatio Theologica*? Probably so, because we know that this part of the *Summa Theologiae* was completed in September 1268, and we know that in May of the same year Thomas got to know William of Moerbeke’s translation of the works of Proclus, and would thus have realized the non-Aristotelian origin of the *De Causis*. It is probable therefore that Thomas’s reply to this objection indicates that he is taking sides against a conception which he himself now realizes is neo-Platonic.⁴¹

Thomas’s reply is very Aristotelian:

In the phrase ‘The first of created things is being’, the term ‘being’ refers to the distinctive note creative action strikes not the subject created. For because it is a being, it is something said to be created, not because it is being of a certain sort, since creation is the issuing of the whole of being from universal being, as we have remarked. We use a similar turn of speech when

we say that what is first visible is colour, although that which is seen, properly speaking, is a coloured thing.⁴²

As we are in the habit of saying that we see a colour, while strictly what we see is the coloured thing, so we are in the habit of saying, inaccurately and neo-Platonically, that God creates being, when strictly what he creates are individual beings.

A passage in the juvenile *De ente et essentia* belongs to the same line of thought. It occurs in the last chapter, one that is little known and little valued by Thomists:

Because, as has been said, essence is that which is signified by the definition, accidents will have essence in the same way that they can be defined. But they have an *incomplete definition, because they can be defined only by putting their subject into the definition*. This is so because they do not exist themselves apart from the subject. But just as substantial existence results from form and matter when they are composed, so accidental existence results when the accident advenes to the subject. *Neither substantial form nor matter has a complete essence, because in the definition of substantial form that of which it is the form must be put, and thus its definition is by way of an addition of something outside it, as is the case with the definition of accidental form.*⁴³

It is interesting to see here accidents placed side by side with forms: neither of the two possesses, by itself, a complete definition. Humanity and wisdom are always “of” someone or something: the humanity *of* Socrates, the wisdom *of* Socrates. It is a point which we have explained above, when we saw that for Thomas “forms and accidents and the like, which do not subsist, are to be said to *co-exist rather than to exist*”.

From this passage it is clear that “incomplete” forms, just like accidents, which are said to be “of things” rather than “things”, are the universal modes of being of the forms (whether substantial or accidental) like wisdom, whiteness which for Thomas do not exist in and of themselves but are always “functions”, are always “of” some subject and co-exist with it: the wisdom of... Socrates, the whiteness of... this sheet of paper, the humanity of... Socrates, and so forth. What is “complete” or

“saturated” is the wisdom of Socrates, which is as individual as Socrates is and which can be expressed by saying “Socrates exists wisely” (as we saw in the preceding chapter).

Unlike Geach I prefer to call “the wisdom of Socrates” individual form (in this case accidental form) rather than “individualized form”, because “individualized” makes one think of a form which first exists *simpliciter*—where? In the mind of God?—and which then somehow gets “individualized”—by whom? By God? Or by a Demiurge?

It seems to me that what is needed is to say farewell also linguistically to residual forms of Platonism, even if this in the end involves saying farewell to Frege, and to say that forms *simpliciter* simply do not exist in and of themselves.

As Geach has well explained, even “the wisdom of God” is not a form *simpliciter* identical with God himself, but the individual form “wisdom of God” identical in reference (*Bedeutung*) with God.

God Is Subsistent Being Itself

Finally, what should be said about the famous expression “God is being itself” which has seemed to many and for many years the banner of Thomism?

First of all, it is important to emphasize, with Brock and Berti, the importance of the adjective “his” (*suum*) usually added by Thomas to the expression “subsistent being itself”. From the juvenile *De ente et essentia* and then in all the other works God is defined as *his* own being and not as being itself.⁴⁴ As Kenny has acutely observed, this little particle serves to remove the impression that God is a hypostatized universal Platonic form, and to replace it with the idea that God is an individual substance which is related to his being in the same way as every creature is to his.⁴⁵

Both authors (Brock and Berti) have observed that there are no articles in Latin, and therefore to translate the expression “*ipsum esse subsistens*” by “the being itself” is wrongly and Platonically to substantivize something which of itself is not a substantive.

Just what is this *esse*? Even though libraries have been written on the topic, my impression is that the true nature of this verb, as conceived by

Thomas, has still not been adequately analysed. It seems to me that such an analysis is appropriate here in order to understand how Thomas's conception is far distant from the notion of divine being (and of being in general) as a hypostatized Platonic form.

To do so we must once again start from Aristotle. In *De Anima*, Book II, he distinguishes “*actus primus*” from “*actus secundus*”. Aristotle, in fact, used not these expressions but “*entelecheia*” for what was later translated and known as “*actus primus*” and “*energeia*” for what was later translated and known as “*actus secundus*”. So “act” is used in two ways. Let us consider Thomas's own commentary on the relevant text of Aristotle:

The word actuality has two senses (*actus dicitur dupliciter*), corresponding respectively to the possession of knowledge (*scientia*) and the actual exercise of knowledge (*considerare*). It is obvious that the soul is actuality in the first sense, viz. that of knowledge as possessed, for both sleeping and waking presuppose the existence of soul, and of these waking corresponds to actual knowing, sleeping to knowledge possessed but not employed, and in the history of the individual, knowledge comes before its employment or exercise.⁴⁶

The distinction between first and second act is clear: the first indicates the possession of certain capacities and potentialities, typical of the being in question; the second refers to their active use, exercise, and actuality, or to use Aristotle's term, their *energeia*.

Another text of Thomas taken from the same Commentary explains the difference by reference to the example—also taken from Aristotle—of “grammarian”:

The third division is of act into two kinds, one way as knowledge (*scientia*) is in act, in another as the exercise of knowledge (*considerare*) is in act. The difference between these two acts can be investigated from their corresponding potentialities. For someone is called a grammarian potentially before he acquired the habit of grammar by learning and discovering, and this potentiality is actualized when he acquires the habit of science. But there is also a potentiality with respect to the exercise of the knowledge, before one is actually *considering* it, and this potentiality is realized when

one actually considers (*considerat*). So both knowledge (*scientia*) and the use of it are acts.⁴⁷

It is to be remarked that the difference between first act and second act corresponds linguistically in Latin to the difference between a noun, “*scientia*”, and a verb, “*considerare*”: second act is an activity and hence the best way of expressing it is a verb.

What has all this to do with *esse*? When it is said—and it was said especially in the twentieth century, with more and more emphasis—that being is act, which of the two senses of “act” known to Thomas did this refer to? The answer is: to the second sense of act, which is to say the Aristotelian *energeia*.

We have already seen in the previous chapter that Thomas considers “*esse*” for what it is, namely a verb, because of its actuality. “‘is’ first signifies that which comes into the intellect in the mode of actuality absolutely: for ‘is’, stated just as such, signifies to be actual, and therefore signifies in the manner of a verb.”⁴⁸

In all his following work, with the exception of a passage in a juvenile work,⁴⁹ his doctrine is constant: being is the exercise, the activity, the act of an essence:

That by which one is is the actuality of being (*actus essendi*), that is to say *esse*, just as that by which one runs is the activity of running (*actus currendi*).⁵⁰

Being [...] is the actuality of an entity resulting from its fundamental elements, in the way that illuminating (*lucere*) is the actuality of what is luminous (*actus lucentis*).⁵¹

As is clear, being (*esse*) corresponds to the activity of that which is luminous, or to the activity of running, not to the luminous object or the runner. The gerund which Thomas constantly uses except in some juvenile works, that is to say the act of being (*actus essendi*), has the purpose of emphasizing this: being is not a substantive but a verb.⁵²

It seems, incidentally, that this is the actual conception of Aristotle, and this shows a remarkable exegetical capacity on the part of Thomas.⁵³

At this point all that remains is to take the final step: what consequences with respect to the thesis that God is subsistent being itself has this conception of being as second act, as the activity or actuality of the capacities of a determinate being?

Thomas himself gives the answer in passages not well known to the Thomists. First of all in the *Compendium of Theology*, he himself hastens to clarify that, like the activity of understanding (*intelligere*), the being of God is on the side of the second act, while, like the intellect (*intellectus*), his essence is on the side of the first act:

God must be His own understanding (*intelligere*). Since “to understand” (*intelligere*) is second act (*actus secundus*), for example, to consider (*considerare*), whereas the corresponding first act (*actus primus*) is the intellect (*intellectus*) or knowledge (*scientia*), any intellect that is not its own understanding (*intelligere*) is related to its understanding (*intelligere*) as potency to act [...]. In God, however, who is pure act, there is nothing that is related to anything else as potency to act. Accordingly, God must be His own understanding (*intelligere*). Furthermore, *the intellect (intellectus) is related to its act of understanding (intelligere) as essence (essentia) is related to existence (esse)*. But God understands through His essence, and His essence is His existence (*essentia autem sua est suum esse*). Therefore, His intellect is His act of understanding.⁵⁴

Certainly, the expression “second act” does not seem adequate to express what for Thomas is “the perfection of all perfections” because the term second (absent, I repeat, in Aristotle) suggests the idea of something that is secondary to what is first, namely the essence.

But Thomas himself tries to remove all doubt on the topic: second act is more perfect than first act. Sticking with the example above, it is more perfect to be speaking Italian than merely knowing it, having once taken a course in it. Also, if you do not speak it, the “knowledge” that comes from speaking it atrophies. Speaking Italian comes first, and knowledge of Italian comes second, even if the contrary seems true: if I know Italian, then I speak it. Similarly, the substantive “knowledge” is the substantivation of a verb “to know” or “knowing” and not the reverse.

This is what Thomas says:

The act of understanding (intelligere) is to the intellect (intellectus) as being (esse) is to essence (essentia). But, as we have proved, God's being is His essence. Therefore, God's understanding is His intellect. But the divine intellect is God's essence; otherwise, it would be an accident in God. Therefore, the divine understanding is His essence. Again, *second act is more perfect than first act*, as consideration is more perfect than knowledge. But the knowledge or intellect of God is His essence, if, as we have proved, He is intelligent; for, as is clear from the above, no perfection belongs to Him by participation but rather by essence. If therefore, His consideration is not His essence, something will be nobler and more perfect than His essence. Thus, God will not be at the summit of perfection and goodness and hence will not be first.⁵⁵

Similar considerations are made by Thomas regarding the relationship between God's will and his act of willing and correspondingly between essence and being:

Again, God's will is the same as His intellect and His essence. *But God's intellect is His act of understanding, and His essence is His existing (et essentia est suum esse).* Therefore, His will must be His act of willing. And so we see clearly that God's will is not opposed to His simplicity.⁵⁶

In the texts quoted we have found a proportion which explains how Thomas understands being as second act: "the act of understanding (*intelligere*) is to the intellect (*intellectus*) as being (*esse*) is to essence (*essentia*)". Analogously, the act of willing (*volere*) is to the will (*voluntas*) as being (*esse*) is to essence (*essentia*).

But what is the relationship between the activity of understanding and willing and the "activity" of being? Whatever kind of activity is being in relation to the other activities of a being, whether God or any other being? Is it a minimal activity, "like breathing only quieter", as Ryle once supposed?

There is no doubt that in Thomas there is a line of thought according to which being is a sort of minimum, which would remain if we took away from a being everything that it is doing, a sort of "nothing other than existing", a very thin notion of being.⁵⁷ In that conception being is something outside of which there is everything that a being is and does.

At the same time, however, there is another conception of being, which would today be called “thick”, which includes everything that a being is and does. It is the conception of being as “act of all acts and perfection of all perfections”.⁵⁸

The coexistence of these two different ontologies has been identified and very well documented in an old book of Albert Keller in German and by Anthony Kenny in English.⁵⁹

In this second conception, which seems to me the one most typical of Thomas, being is not a basic and minimal activity but is a name covering the totality of all of the episodes and states of a thing’s history, as once again Anthony Kenny has well explained:

My life consists of many activities: I walk, I eat, I sleep, I think. While I do these things, I am alive; but living is not some other activity which I am performing while doing these things, as breathing is; they are themselves parts of my life, it is in doing them that I am living. [...] Just as my life is not an accompaniment, or component, or highest common factor of all the various things I do during it, but rather the totality of them all, so the *esse* of anything is not something underlying, or constituting, or specifying its characteristic and modifications; it is rather the totality of all the episodes and states of its history. It seems to be in this sense that Aquinas can speak of *esse* as ‘the actualisation of all acts, and the perfection of all perfections’.⁶⁰

If we now apply such a “thick” conception and consider it as the fullness of being, we will understand better the relation between being and the activities mentioned above such as understanding, willing, and loving. The being of God is not “like” these activities but is the totality of them. And the activities are always activities *of* a subject.

It is very difficult, indeed impossible, that being itself, understood as a hypostatized Platonic form, could be the subject of activities of this kind. Only an individual subject, and not a universal form, can be capable of thinking, willing, and loving. Being as a universal form is predicated of everything but does not love anything.⁶¹

Notes

1. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logico-Mathematical Enquiry into the Concept of Number*, trans. Dale Jacquette, § 51.
2. Gottlob Frege, "Concept and Object," in *Translations from the philosophical writings of Gottlob Frege, 3rd Edition*, eds Peter T. Geach, and Max Black (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), 43.
3. See Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 202–203.
4. Geach, "Form and Existence," 254–255.
5. Thomas de Aquino, *In X Met.*, l. 3. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 1963–1965. Italics mine. (translation slightly modified by me).
6. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 13, a. 9. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. III, 83. Italics mine.
7. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logico-Mathematical Enquiry into the Concept of Number*, ed. John L. Austin, § 51.
8. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 13, a. 9. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. III, 85.
9. Jan Aertsen, "The Platonic Tendency of Thomism and the Foundations of Aquinas' Philosophy", *Medioevo* (1992): 53–70.
10. "Contra, secundum Dionysium, divina attributa non innotescunt nobis nisi ex eorum participationibus, quibus a creaturis participantur. Sed inter omnes alias participationes esse prius est, ut dicitur 5 cap. de Div. Nom. his verbis: *ante alias ipsius*, scilicet Dei, *participationes, esse positum est*. Cui etiam dictum philosophi consonat Lib. de causis: *prima rerum creatarum est esse*. Ergo videtur quod, secundum rationem intelligendi, in Deo esse sit ante alia attributa, et *qui est inter alia nomina*" (Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 8, q. 1, a. 3, s. c. 1. Italics mine). In this regard, see the first chapter on the third generation of studies on the metaphysics of Thomas.
11. Aristotle, *Met.* VII, 1038b. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. William D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908).
12. "Est autem tenendum indubitanter quod quaelibet res imaginabilis existens est de se, sine omni addito, res singularis et una numero, ita quod nulla res imaginabilis est per aliquid additum sibi singularis; sed ista est passio conveniens immediate omni re, quia omnis res per se vel est eadem vel diversa ab alia". (Guilelmus Occamus, *Expositio in librum*

- Porphyrii de Praedicabilibus*, Prooemium, § 2, ed. Ernestus A. Moody, St. Bonaventure N.Y.: St. Bonaventure University 1978, 10.)
13. Aristotle, *De interpretatione* 7, 17a, 38–40. Aristotle, *On interpretation*, trans. John L. Ackrill (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1963, 47).
 14. Alain De Libera, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Âge*, II Ed. 2014 (Paris: Vrin. 1996), 33 (trans. Myself).
 15. De Libera, *La querelle des universaux*, 33–35 (trans. Myself). De Libera also considers the following text of Aristotle’s responsible for the ambiguity: “From experience again—i.e. from the universal now stabilized in its entirety *within the soul*, the one *beside the many which is a single identity within them all*—originate the skill of the craftsman and the knowledge of the man of science, skill in the sphere of coming to be and science in the sphere of being” (Aristotle, *Anal. Post.* II, 19). Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. Geoffrey R. G. Mure (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928) (eBooks@Adelaide, University of Adelaide: The University of Adelaide Library, 2014).
 16. Michael Frede and Günther Patzig. *Aristotle. Metaphysik Z. 2 vols* (München: C.H. Beck, 1988).
 17. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 6, a. 4. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. II, 91–93.
 18. Thomas de Aquino, *In De div. nom., proemium*. Thomas Aquinas, “Preface to the Exposition of On the Divine Names”, trans. McNerny, in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, ed. McNerny, 431. Italics mine.
 19. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 165.
 20. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 44, a. 1. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. VIII, 7. See also *Sum. c. Gent.* I, 28.
 21. Thomas de Aquino, *De Subst. Sep.*, cap. 8. Thomas Aquinas, *De substantiis separatis. Treatise on separate substances*, trans. Francis J. Lescoe (West Hartford CN: Saint Joseph College, 1959).
 22. “Sicut igitur eius substantia est ipsum esse separatum, ita etiam eius substantia est ipsum intelligere separatum [...]. Adhuc, id quod abstractum est, non potest esse nisi unum in unaquaque natura. Si enim albedo posset esse abstracta, sola una esset albedo, quae abstracta esset; omnes autem albedines aliae essent participatae. Sic igitur sicut sola Dei substantia est ipsum esse abstractum, ita sola eius substantia est ipsum intelligere omnino abstractum” (Thomas de Aquino, *De Subst. Sep.*, cap. 14).
 23. Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. V; *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 1; *Sum. C. Gent.*, I, 26; *De pot.* q. 7, a. 2, ad 4 et ad 6; *In De div. nom.* 5, l. 2.

24. Thomas de Aquino, *In De causis*, l. 24. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary On the Book of Causes. Thomas Aquinas in Translation*, trans. Vincent A. Guagliardo, Charles R. Hess, and Richard C. Taylor (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 137–138. Italics mine.
25. In the *Disputed Questions on the power of God*, from the years 1262/1266 Thomas had already written similar things, since he had maintained that: “Ex hoc ipso quod quidditati esse attribuitur, non solum esse, sed ipsa quidditas creari dicitur: quia antequam esse habeat, nihil est, nisi forte in intellectu creantis, ubi non est creatura, sed creatrix essentia” (Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 3, a. 5, ad 2). This “new” position of Thomas makes him closer to the theses later maintained by Henry of Ghent rather than to those of Giles of Rome (considered in the past a faithful follower of Thomas): see Catherine König-Pralong, *Avènement de l’aristotélisme en terre chrétienne. L’essence et la matière: entre Thomas d’Aquin et Guillaume d’Ockham* (Paris: Vrin, 2005). A classic essay on the subject of the distinction between essence and existence is Ruedi Imbach, “Averroistische Stellungnahmen zur Diskussion über das Verhältnis von esse und essentia. Von Siger von Brabant zu Thaddäus von Parma”, in *Studi sul XIV secolo in memoria di Anneliese Maier*, eds. Alfonso Maierù and Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (Roma: Storia e Letteratura, 1981), 299–339.
26. Aegidius Romanus, *Super Librum de Causis*, Venetiis 1550 (rist. an. Minerva GmbH, Frankfurt a.M. 1968), prop. 24, 81 vF ff.
27. “Ordo distinctionis potest dupliciter considerari: vel quantum ad quantitatem distinctionis, vel quantum ad dignitatem et causalitatem. Si quantum ad quantitatem distinctionis, sic distinctio divinarum hypostasum est minima distinctio realis quae possit esse, ut supra habitum est. Et ideo tali distinctioni competit ens minimum, scilicet relatio. Sed quantum ad ordinem dignitatis et causalitatis, illa distinctio excellit omnes distinctiones; et similiter relatio quae est principium distinctionis, dignitate excellit omne distinguens quod est in creaturis: non quidem ex hoc quod est relatio, sed ex hoc quod est relatio divina. *Excellit etiam causalitate, quia ex processione personarum divinarum distinctarum causatur omnis creaturarum processio et multiplicatio, ut supra habitum est*” (Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2, Italics mine). See Gilles Emery, *La Trinité créatrice, Trinité et création dans les commentaires aux Sentences de Thomas d’Aquin et de ses précurseurs Albert le Grand et Bonaventure* (Paris: Vrin, 1995).

28. Courtine, *Inventio analogiae*, 259–290.
29. Thomas de Aquino, *In X Met.*, l. 3. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 1963–1965. Italics mine (translation slightly modified by me).
30. Naturally this implies, from a hermeneutic point of view, that one should consider this text, in which God is substance and not form, as more proper and more typical of his metaphysics. By contrast those that consider God as a subsistent, abstract and separate form should be considered as a neo-Platonic residue, typical not of Thomas's position alone. On this point see the first chapter.
31. "When we have thus admitted objects without restriction as arguments and values of functions, the question arises what it is that we are here calling an object. I regard a regular definition as impossible, since we have here something too simple to admit of logical analysis. It is only possible to indicate what is meant [gemeint]. Here I can only say briefly: an object is anything that is not a function, so that an expression for it does not contain any empty place" (Gottlob Frege, "Function and Concept," in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, eds Peter T. Geach, and Max Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), 32.
32. "I am concerned to show that the argument does not belong with a function, but goes together with the function to make up a complete whole; for a function by itself must be called incomplete, in need of supplementation, or unsaturated [ungesättigt]" (Frege "Function and Concept," 24).
33. "We thus see how closely that which is called a concept in logic is connected with what we call a function. Indeed, we may say at once: a concept is a function whose value is always a truth-value" (Frege, "Function and Concept," 30).
34. "Statements in general, just like equations or inequalities or expressions in Analysis, can be imagined to be split up into two parts; one complete in itself, and the other in need of supplementation, or unsaturated. Thus, e.g., we split up the sentence 'Caesar conquered Gaul' into 'Caesar' and 'conquered Gaul'. The second part is unsaturated. It contains an empty place; only when this place is filled up with a proper name, or with an expression that replaces a proper name, does a complete sense appear. Here too I give the name 'function' to the Bedeutung of this unsaturated part. In this case the argument is Caesar" (Frege, "Function and Concept," 31–32).
35. Frege, "Function and Concept," 31–32. Italics mine.

36. Geach, "Form and Existence," repr. in Peter T. Geach, *God and the Soul*, 48.
37. Geach, "Form and Existence," repr. in Geach, *God and the Soul*, 49–50.
38. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 146.
39. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 45, a. 4. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. VIII, 41. Italics mine. I modified the translation slightly when it differed too much from the Latin. See also "Ens enim subsistens, est quod habet esse tamquam ejus quod est, quamvis sit naturae vel formae tamquam ejus quo est: unde nec natura rei nec partes ejus proprie dicuntur esse, si esse praedicto modo accipiatur; similiter autem nec accidentia, sed suppositum completum, quod est secundum omnia illa. Unde etiam philosophus dicit in 2 Metaph., quod accidens magis proprie est entis quam ens" (Thomas de Aquino, *In III Sent.* d. 6, q. 2, a. 2 co.).
40. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 165.
41. See Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 340 ff. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*.
42. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 45, a. 4. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. VIII, 41–42. Italics mine. Again, I slightly modified the translation when it differed too much from the Latin.
43. Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. VI. Thomas Aquinas, "On Being and Essence," trans. McNerny, in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, ed. McNerny, 46. Italics mine.
44. "Ergo patet quod esse est aliud ab essentia vel quidditate, nisi forte sit aliqua res, cuius quidditas sit ipsum *suum* esse" (Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. IV. Italics mine). "Unde relinquitur quod talis res, quae sit *suum* esse, non potest esse nisi una" (Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. IV. Italics mine). "Aliquid enim est, sicut Deus, cuius essentia est ipsummet *suum* esse" (Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. V. Italics mine).
45. Brock, "On Whether Aquinas's Ipsum Esse is 'Platonism.'" Berti, "La critica dei filosofi analitici alla concezione tomistica dell'essere."
46. Thomas de Aquino, *In II De anima*, l. 1. Thomas Aquinas, "Commentary on Aristotle's On the Soul," trans. McNerny, in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, ed. McNerny, 411. Italics mine.
47. Thomas de Aquino, *In II De anima*, l. 1. Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Soul*, 414. Italics mine.
48. Thomas de Aquino, *In. Peryerm.*, I, l. 5, ed. Gauthier, 31. Aquinas, "Commentary on Aristotle's On Interpretation 1–5," 480–481.
49. Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1.

50. Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 8, q. 5, a. 2. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences of Petrus Lombardus*, excerpt translated by Anthony Kenny in Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 59.
51. Thomas de Aquino, *In III Sent.*, d. 6, q. 2, a. 2. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences of Petrus Lombardus*, excerpt translated by Anthony Kenny in Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 59 (translation slightly modified by me).
52. Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 7 a. 2 ad 1; *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2.
53. Aryeh Kosman, *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle's Ontology* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2013). Stephen Menn, "The Origins of Aristotle's Concept of Ἐνέργεια: Ἐνέργεια and δῶναμις", *Ancient Philosophy*, 14 (1994): 73–114.
54. Thomas de Aquino, *Comp. Theol.*, I, c. 31. Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology*, trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis & London: B. Herder Book Co, 1947. Italics mine (translation slightly modified by me).
55. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. c. Gent.*, I, c. 45. Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles, Book one*, 173. Italics mine.
56. Thomas de Aquino, *Comp. Theol.*, I, c. 34. Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology*. Italics mine.
57. For example, Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. IV; *De ver.*, q. 10, a. 12.
58. "Unde patet quod hoc quod dico esse est actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum [...]. Nihil autem potest addi ad esse quod sit extraneum ab ipso, cum ab eo nihil sit extraneum nisi non-ens, quod non potest esse nec forma nec materia" (Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2, ad. 9). See also Thomas de Aquino, *In Peryerm.*, I, l. 5, which we quoted in the previous chapter.
59. Keller, *Sein oder Existenz?*; Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*; Kenny, "Quidditas and anitas after Frege".
60. Kenny, *Aquinas*.
61. The words of a great Italian scholar come to mind. "In the Thomistic concept of creation Gilson has justly and effectively emphasized that aspect by which God is considered as the source of being, of all being [...]. I think it is necessary to emphasize the assertion that God creates consciously and freely. This perhaps should be emphasized and perhaps more so than the earlier aspect, because perhaps the concept of God as source of all being is found also in Plotinus, as K. Kremer

asserts. The latter conception seems to me the presupposition of a religious conception of reality.” Vanni Rovighi, *Introduzione a Tommaso d’Aquino*, 71. “For the theologian intelligence and will have a particular importance: they are the presuppositions for the conception of God as provident and redemptive. Finally, they are the attributes that distinguish a theistic conception from a deistic one.” Vanni Rovighi, *Introduzione a Tommaso d’Aquino*, 66.



4

Transcendentals

4.1 Assertion (Frege), Transcendental Being (Aquinas)

In any classical Thomistically orientated manual of ontology, after the chapter on being which treats of being and essence, there is bound to be a chapter on what are called the transcendental properties of being. Now that we too have discussed being and essence, albeit from an unusual perspective, it is time to address the topic of the transcendentals.

It is a difficult and complex topic, especially if the aim is to view it through the “spectacles” of Frege’s philosophy. For, there is nothing truly analogous in Frege’s philosophy or in analytic philosophy in general. The risk in this case, continuing with our metaphor, is that one may put on spectacles that instead of helping one to focus better on the question, makes it more obfuscated and less intelligible.

Peter Geach made an interesting attempt to interpret the transcendental “good” via the Fregean notion of function, locating it among the “attributive adjectives” (like “big” and “small”) rather than among the “predicative attributes” (like “red”).¹ In brief: attributive adjectives are those in which the predication does not split up logically into a pair of

predications: for example, “x is a small elephant” does not split up into “x is an elephant” and “x is small”, because the sense of “small” is logically linked to that of which it is predicated: a “small ... what”? Without what follows “small” is too vague to have a recognizable sense. By contrast predicative adjectives are those in which the predication splits up into a pair of predications. For example, “x is a red car” splits up into “x is a car” and “x is red”. Geach observes that I can recognize an object in the distance as red before realizing that it is a car. Now “good”, in spite of appearances, is an attributive adjective. The sense of “good” in “a good knife”, that is a sharp knife, is not the same as the sense of “good” in “a good man”: no-one would think that “a good man” was “a sharp man”.

However, Geach’s explanation turns out to be useful only for the understanding of what in Thomistic and before that in Aristotelian philosophy was called the analogical nature of the notion of good. Geach’s targets were the Objectivists, and the Platonists of every era, who want to make “good” a univocal predicate independent of what it is predicated of. But his distinction does not help to understand the transcendental nature of “good”, that is to say the difference, within attributive adjectives between “good” on the one hand and, for example, “big” and “small” on the other. In Thomistic and scholastic philosophy in general, there is a sharp difference between categorical predicates, such as “big” and “small” which are predicated—even though attributively or, in the scholastic jargon, analogically—only of beings of a certain type, and transcendental predicates which are predicated—again even though attributively or in the scholastic jargon analogically—of beings of every type. Geach’s thoughts, in my view, do not provide criteria to do justice to this difference.

By contrast, I think there is a notion within Frege’s philosophy that helps us to better understand the specificity of the concept of the transcendental, and in particular the transcendental nature of being: the notion of assertion.

Frege

Anyone who has the slightest acquaintance with Frege’s philosophy knows that the difference between predication and assertion and a

consequent insistence on the importance of the assertion sign is one of the ideas that run through his thoughts.

But as is well known this is not without problems.² Frege himself displayed oscillation and second thoughts on the topic. In the *Concept Script* he let it be understood that an assertion, that is to say a judgement about the truth of a proposition, referred to a “circumstance”,³ but in *Sense and Reference* he asserts that “Every declarative sentence concerned with the reference of its words is therefore to be regarded as a proper name, and its reference, if it has one, is either the True or the False.”⁴ These last are no longer conceived as “circumstances”, or as we would say today “states of affairs”, but as true genuine objects.

The identification of the functions attributed to the assertion sign is also problematic. Frege speaks both of the “seriousness” with which some sentences are considered, unlike, for example, in a theatrical context, and of the indicative form of the same sentences. As Kenny showed, the two functions are not identical, since it is possible to ask “did you mean that seriously?”, also regarding sentences which are not assertions, for example, regarding sentences expressing a command.⁵

Nonetheless there remains throughout his work, with hardly any variation, the idea that there is a difference between on the one hand a mere complex of ideas or predication and on the other hand an assertion which involves the acceptance of an enunciation as true.⁶

An important passage in *Sense and Reference* points out that the passage from a predication to an assertion involves a move to a higher level “By combining subject and predicate, one reaches only a thought, never passes from sense to reference, never from a thought to its truth value. One moves at the same level but never advances from one level to the next.”⁷

Frege is discussing the hypothesis that “...is true” is simply the predicate of an enunciation that is taken as a whole as the subject. He tries to show by contrast that in an assertion, unlike a simple predication, there is an assertoric “force” which is lacking, for example, in a theatrical context. When, for example, an actor utters the sentence “The thought that 5 is a prime number is true” we are still, according to Frege, in the context of a simple thought, not an assertion; we are still at the level of sense and not of reference, because of the absence of the interior act of judging that

proposition to be true. Hence, even though the interior act concerns truth, the expression "... is true" does not by itself mark the difference between predication and assertion.

However, though it is not a predicate that has the whole proposition as its subject, the assertoric force of the *assertion sign*, which triggers the difference of level, is applied only to complete propositions taken as a whole.

Frege makes a further illuminating observation to explain the "assertoric force", alluding to the "yes" or "no" given to a "sentence-question".

After distinguishing various types of sentences, for example, imperative sentences, sentences expressing desires or requests, exclamations, Frege compares sentence-questions and indicative sentences and writes:

In a word-question we utter an incomplete sentence which only obtains a true sense through the completion for which we ask. *Word-questions* are accordingly left out of consideration here. *Sentence-questions* are a different matter. *We expect to hear "yes" or "no". The answer "yes" means the same as an indicative sentence, for in it the thought that was already completely contained in the interrogative sentence is laid down as true.* So, a sentence-question can be formed from every indicative sentence. An exclamation cannot be regarded as a communication on this account, since no corresponding sentence-question can be formed. An interrogative sentence and an indicative one contain the same thought; *but the indicative contains something else as well, namely, the assertion.*⁸

While the answer to a word-question, for example, "what is a man?" is usually a definition, the answer to a sentence-question—for example, "Is Socrates a man?" is usually a "yes" or "no". Indeed, as is well known, sometimes the verb "to be" is added to the answer: "yes, he is", or in German "Ja so ist es". It is clear here that the verb "to be" and the pronoun do not refer to the subject of the proposition, but to the whole content of the proposition. In other words, the "is" in "yes, he is" refers not to Socrates, but to the "circumstance" that "Socrates is a man".⁹

Sauer suggested transcribing Frege's assertion sign in written language with: "it *is* p" or "Es *ist* so, dass p" where the "is" is given an emphatic position through the italic and the bold characters. We suggest: it ***is*** so [or: the case] that p. This is tantamount to asserting that the content of a sentence

is true. Sauer's example is "It *is* Socrates musical" which follows the Greek "ésti Sokrates mousikos". It is a passage from *Metaphysics*, Book V, of Aristotle that Sauer uses as an example of the "veridical" sense of "einai". It is a documented use in ancient Greek, in which the "is" refers to the whole proposition and expresses the idea of asserting that the content of that proposition is true.¹⁰ In fact, Aristotle knows of this veridical nuance in the use of the verb to be.¹¹ He makes a use of it which seems very similar to Frege's assertion sign.¹² We will see that Thomas, being a commentator of Aristotle, did not miss this veridical nuance in the use of the verb "to be".

In the following of this chapter we will show that (1) the difference between the answer to a "word-question" and the answer to "sentence-questions" seems to explain the Thomistic and medieval notion of "transcendental"; (2) Frege's assertion sign allows us to better understand the notion of transcendental being in Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas

So far as I know it was Anthony Kenny who was the first to observe that the distinction between predication and assertion, expounded and taken seriously in contemporary philosophy thanks to Frege and Brentano, is already present in Thomas Aquinas's theory of judgement.¹³ It was Werner Sauer who showed that some texts of Thomas, not always consistent with each other, lie behind Brentano's text *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*.¹⁴

In what follows I will show the link between the notion of transcendental and in particular of transcendental being and Thomas's thoughts about being as truth, which is expressed in the judgement. Further I will try to show the link between this sense of being, namely being as truth, and the other senses of being that were analysed in the second chapter, that is to say being as act of being and being as *anitas* (namely the answer to the question *an sit*).

The Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book IV

As is well known, Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, Book IV, speaks of a science, which will later be known as “metaphysics” and later still as “ontology”, whose object is being as being and the properties which belong to it as such. Thomas does not diverge at any point from Aristotle’s teaching. It is the philosopher’s job to consider being and the *passiones entis*:

That this is the job of the philosopher and of no one else he proves thus: that science whose office is to consider being as being is the one which must consider the first properties of being (*Eius est considerare primas passiones entis, cuius est considerare ens secundum quod est ens*) [...]. And in a similar way being as being has certain properties, which are the common attributes mentioned above; and therefore the study of them belongs to the philosopher.¹⁵

The expression “*passiones entis*” which is modelled on the Greek, was the one used in the thirteenth century for the transcendental properties of being. The philosopher, then, studies being in the universal and its transcendental properties, namely those properties that are to be found wherever there is being in some form.

Hence, metaphysics, according to Aristotle, is the most universal of all sciences. To explain why this is so, Thomas tells us: “it considers being in universal in so far as it is being” (“*ens universale in quantum huiusmodi*” “*universale ens secundum quod ens*”) rather than being in so far as it is a certain type of being, like mathematics which studies quantifiable being: “the mathematical sciences study one kind of being, quantitative being (*ens quantum*)”.¹⁶

However, Aristotle was faced with the following problem. It is natural that there should be a single science of what is said in a univocal way of everything of which it is predicated, but how is it possible for there to be a single science of that which is predicated of everything not in a univocal way, but in an “equivocal” or “homonymous” way? For example: it is clear that there is a science that concerns animals in general because the predicate “animal” has the same sense whenever it is predicated of

something: a dog is an animal, a cat is an animal, an elephant is an animal, and so on. If we look up in a dictionary the words “cat”, “dog”, “elephant”, and so on, sooner or later we will meet the word “animal”. Animal is predicated according to the same *logos*, or definition, of all the individual animals. Now let us take the noun “lion”: it is used not only of the animal but also of a sign of the zodiac, but it is predicated of them according to quite different senses, and no-one would dream of establishing a science of “leoninity” which would include the animals and the sign of the zodiac. Further proof is that if we look up in a dictionary the word “lion” we would find different entries. Now for Aristotle it is clear that “being” is a “homonymous” term: it is predicated of different subjects in different senses. “Being”, said of Socrates, does not have the same sense of “being” as when it is said of a quantity or a relation. However then can it be possible that there should be a single science whose object is being qua being? To solve this problem Aristotle carves out, among homonymous names, a special subspecies, that of analogous names. These, though they do not have any genus in common, are nonetheless linked by some relation to a prime analogate. The predicate “healthy” for instance, is an example of this type of name: the “being healthy” of a medicine does not belong to the same genus of being as the “being healthy” of a complexion, nor the “being healthy” of a man, but there is a certain relationship between these predicates. In fact, the “being healthy” of the medicine is linked to the “being healthy” of the man by a relation of causality: the being healthy of the medicine is the cause of the being healthy of a man. The being healthy of a complexion is an effect of the being healthy of a man. This common reference is sufficient to justify the existence of a single science, medicine, which concerns the being healthy of a medicine, of a complexion, and above all of the being healthy of a human being.

According to Aristotle being behaves like the predicate “healthy” and the science that concerns it is metaphysics. Everything “is” in different senses, but everything has a common reference to the being of substance. So far, we have Aristotelian doctrine, which Thomas adopts almost literally:

In regard to the first part he uses this kind of argument: those things which have one term predicated of them in common, not univocally but analogously, belong to the consideration of one science. But the term being is thus predicated of all beings. Therefore, all beings, i.e., both substances and accidents, belong to the consideration of one science which considers being as being.¹⁷

At this point Aristotle, followed by Thomas, explains the relation of every kind of being to the being of substance. Thomas writes:

And just as the above-mentioned terms have many senses, so also does the term being. Yet every being is called such in relation to one first thing, and this first thing is not an end or an efficient cause, as is the case in the foregoing examples, but a subject. For some things are called beings, or are said to be, because they have being of themselves, as substances, which are called beings in the primary and proper sense. Others are called beings because they are affections or properties of substances, as the proper accidents of any substance. Others are called beings because they are processes toward substance, as generation and motion. And others are called beings because they are corruptions of substances; for corruption is the process toward non-being just as generation is the process toward substance. And since corruption terminates in privation just as generation terminates in form, the very privations of substantial forms are fittingly called beings. Again, certain qualities or certain accidents are called beings because they are productive or generative principles of substances or of those things which are related to substance according to one of the foregoing relationships or any other relationship. *And similarly the negations of those things which are related to substances, or even substance itself, are also called beings. Hence we say that non-being is non-being (unde dicimus quod non ens est non ens). But this would not be possible unless a negation possessed being in some way.*¹⁸

The last sentence is of great importance, but is not easy to interpret. Thomas says that even negation has being of some kind (“*negationi aliquo modo esse competeret*”). But why, since it seems just the opposite of what exists? The answer of Thomas and Aristotle lies hidden in this remark: “Hence we say that non-being is non-being”.

Whatever does Thomas mean here? And above all: which of the senses of being that he himself has identified can be called upon here in connection with the being of negation? Certainly, the reference cannot be to being as act, which includes the modes of being of the categories, because that sense concerns what exists “in the nature of things”. For it is clear that here we are, by contrast, in the realm of that exists in the mind. Thomas himself writes immediately after:

But it must be noted that the above-mentioned modes of being can be reduced to four. For one of them, which is the most imperfect, i.e., negation and privation, exists only in the mind. We say that these exist in the mind because the mind busies itself with them as kinds of being while it affirms or denies something about them.¹⁹

In the juvenile *De ente et essentia* we find some further indications that are useful to clarify which of the two fundamental senses of being are in question in the case of negations:

Notice therefore that, as the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics V*, being as such is said in two ways: first as it is divided into the ten genera, and second as meaning the truth of propositions. These differ because anything can be called being in the second sense if an affirmative proposition can be formed of it, even if it posits nothing in reality: thus privations and negations are called beings, *as when we say that affirmation is opposed to negation*, and that blindness exists in the eye (*dicimus enim quod affirmatio est opposita negationi et quod caecitas est in oculo*). But in the first sense only that which posits something in reality can be called being; therefore, blindness and the like are not beings in this sense of the term.²⁰

From this passage it is evident that the being of negations and privations is the second and not the first. We also find a brief description of the reason why privations and negations are called being: because we say that affirmation is opposed to negation, and that blindness exists in the eye.

The first proposition (“we say that affirmation is opposed to negation”) is similar to that already met in the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*: “we say that non-being is non-being”.

By contrast, the second proposition (“blindness exists in the eye”) recalls two passages of the *Summa Theologiae* and the *De malo* quoted in the first section of our second chapter: “This is the being that answers to the interrogative ‘is it’? In this sense can we speak of blindness being in the eye, and likewise of any other privation being in its subject”²¹; “We speak of being in the second way as a response to the question ‘Does evil exist?’ and then evil, just like blindness, exists.”²²

It is evident that in this case we are in the realm of being as *anitas* of which we have already spoken in the second chapter.

The two propositions and the two explanations offered by Thomas differ from each other. Can one say that propositions like “affirmation is opposed to negation” or “non-being is non-being” refer to being as *anitas*? Is Thomas perhaps suggesting a positive answer to the question “does non-being exist?” or “does negation exist?” simply because we are able to form propositions of this kind? Obviously not.

We therefore need some further explanation from Thomas. To find it we need to look at some passages in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* subsequent to this problematic one (“we say that non-being is non-being”).

Before moving forward, however, a small but important question should be addressed: some might be tempted to get rid of the problem by a radical route: by affirming that since negations and privations are not items of real being, but only beings of reason, they are not objects of metaphysics but only of logic.²³

This is precisely what Thomas does, following Aristotle, in his commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI.²⁴

His position, however, is not always so uniform and clear-cut. For especially in the Commentary on Book IV, there are equally explicit passages that go in the opposite direction. First of all, he affirms that “speculation about negation and privation belongs to the same science to which belongs speculation about the one and the many”.²⁵

In other words the study of privations and of negations belongs to metaphysics, which deals with being *qua* being and its properties such as unity and plurality.

Furthermore, he states that beings of reason, such as negations and privations, which are the proper object of logic,

are equal in extension to beings of nature, because all beings of nature fall under the consideration of reason. Hence the subject of logic extends to all things to which the expression being of nature is applied. His conclusion is, then, that the subject of logic is equal in extension to the subject of philosophy, which is being of nature (*Et huiusmodi, scilicet ens rationis, est proprie subiectum logicae. Huiusmodi autem intentiones intelligibiles, entibus naturae aequiparantur, eo quod omnia entia naturae sub consideratione rationis cadunt. Et ideo subiectum logicae ad omnia se extendit, de quibus ens naturae praedicatur. Unde concludit, quod subiectum logicae aequiparatur subiecto philosophiae, quod est ens naturae*).²⁶

Therefore, all beings of nature also fall under the consideration of logic, whereas beings of reason seem not to fall under the consideration of philosophy, which, however, declares that it has being in universal as its object.

As can be seen, the interpretation of Thomas's texts remains open, not without internal tensions, and likely to take different developments.

But let us return now to the still open question of the ontological status of negations and privations in Thomas's commentary.

The Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book V

The first additional explanation that we are looking for occurs in the Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book V.

Thomas begins by recalling the distinction between the two senses of being, by now well known to the reader. I observe, in parenthesis, that this text is from a work of Thomas's maturity and so in a certain sense represents his last word on the topic:

Here he [Aristotle] distinguishes between the types of essential being; and in regard to this he does three things. First, he divides the kind of being which lies outside the mind, which is complete being (*quod est ens perfectum*), by the ten predicaments. Second, he gives another type of being, inasmuch as being exists only in the mind ("Again, being, signifies") [...]. He says, first, that all those things which signify the figures of predication are said to be essentially (*dicuntur esse secundum se*).²⁷

The first sense of being, as we know, is that of substance and the categories. Thomas repeats that this sense is said “in just as many ways as we can make predications”. What is in question is what we have already seen in the second section of the second chapter: for Socrates to exist (“*esse*”) is to be something (“*esse aliquid*”): to be a man, to be wise, and so on. And in so far as he is something, he exists. Hence the two sub-species of being in the sense of being as act are closely correlated:

Being must then be narrowed down to diverse genera on the basis of a different mode of predication, which flows from a different mode of being; for “being is signified,” i.e., something is signified to be, “in just as many ways” (or in as many senses) as we can make predications (“*quoties ens dicitur, idest quot modis aliquid praedicatur*”). And for this reason the classes into which being is first divided are called “predicaments”, because they are distinguished on the basis of different ways of predicating. Therefore, since some predicates signify what (i.e., substance); some, of what kind; some, how much; and so on; there must be a mode of being corresponding to each type of predication. For example, when it is said that a man is an animal, it signifies substance; and when it is said that a man is white, it signifies quality; and so on.²⁸

Now let us examine what Thomas writes further on about the second sense of being:

Then he gives another sense in which the term being is used, inasmuch as the terms being and is signify the composition of a proposition, which the intellect makes when it combines and separates. He says that being signifies the truth of a thing, or as another translation better expresses it, being signifies that some statement is true (*Unde dicit, quod esse significat veritatem rei. Vel sicut alia translatio melius habet quod esse significat quia aliquid dictum est verum*). Thus, the truth of a thing can be said to determine the truth of a proposition after the manner of a cause; for by reason of the fact that a thing is or is not, a discourse is true or false. For when we say that something *is*, we signify that a proposition is true; and when we say that something is not, we signify that it is not true (*Cum enim dicimus aliquid esse, significamus propositionem esse veram. Et cum dicimus non esse, significamus non esse veram*). And this applies both to affirmation and to negation. It

applies to affirmation, as when we say *that Socrates is white because this is true*; and to negation, as when we say that Socrates is not white, because *this is true, namely, that he is not white*. And in a similar way we say that the diagonal of a square is not incommensurable [read: commensurable] with a side, because this is false, i.e., its not being [non] incommensurable [read: commensurable].²⁹

The passage is not at all simple, and does not proceed in a straight line, as has been observed.³⁰ I will note here a few important points, some of which will become clearer when we consider what Thomas wrote in his commentary on the following Book, Book VI, of the *Metaphysics*.³¹

First of all, it is obvious that here the second sense of being is that of being as truth, not that of being as *anitas*.

What is being as truth? Obviously, it is not a predicate of an object. Rather, it seems, at least from this text, to be the predicate of a proposition that functions as a subject: “some statement is true”, “that Socrates is white is true”. From this point of view that formula seems to be this: that p is true, where “is true” is simply a predicate, but one having reference to a whole proposition and not an object.

However, there are other indications in Thomas’s work that favour a reading of being as truth rather as if it were an operator, with the entire proposition as its scope. For example, in the *De potentia* he writes on this topic of being as truth.

According to Aristotle we use the verb ‘to be’ in two ways: sometimes to signify the essence of a thing, its act of existing, sometimes to signify the truth of a proposition, even where there is lack of existence, as when we say that *blindness exists* since *it is true that* some men are blind.³²

As you see, here being as truth, understood as the truth of a proposition is read in terms of “it is true that p”.

However, both the “that p is true” formula and the “it is true that p” formula are not enough to make an assertion. If I said, for example, “that some men are blind is true” or “it is true that some men are blind” in a theatrical context I would not be in the realm of what Frege calls assertion.

Now there are in Thomas's work some interesting elements that go in the direction of Frege's notion of assertion.

There is an interesting text in the Commentary on the *Sentences* where he speaks expressly about the assertoric force present in an *enunciatio* or assertion:

I reply to the first question saying that, as Aristotle says in *On the Soul*, III, the operation of the intellect is double. One grasps the simple whatnesses of things; and this operation is called by philosophers 'forming' or 'simple intelligence'; and to this intellectual act corresponds an uncomplex word, which denotes this thing that is understood; whence, as in the uncomplex word there is neither truth nor falsity, in the same way in this operation of the intellect: thus, as the uncomplex word neither concedes nor denies, because there is no truth or falsity in it, in the same way, according to this operation the intellect neither assents nor dissents: for this reason, in this operation, cannot be found faith, whose essence consists in assenting; but in the other operation, thanks to which the intellect composes or divides, the *true* and the false can be found, as in assertion: and on these grounds, the intellect assents or dissents, just as the assertion concedes or denies; and it is in such an operation that faith is to be found, where there is assent.³³

In an *enunciatio*, Thomas observes, it is not simply a matter of attaching a predicate to a subject, nor, one might add, attaching the predicate "is true" to a proposition. What is in question is giving, or failing to give an "assent" regarding the correspondence of the proposition's content with reality: the intellect assents or dissents ("*assentit vel dissentit*").

The Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI

Let us consider finally the Commentary of Thomas on *Metaphysics*, Book VI:

He says, then, that "in one sense being means what is true," (*Dicit ergo quod ens quoddam dicitur quasi verum*) i.e., it signifies nothing else than truth; *for when we ask if man is an animal, the answer is that he is*, by which it is meant that this proposition *is true* (*Cum enim interrogamus si homo est*

animal, respondetur quod est; per quod significatur, propositionem praemissam esse veram). And in the same way non-being signifies in a sense what is false; for when one answers that he is not, it is meant that the statement made is false. Now this being which means what is true, and non-being which means what is false, depend on combination and separation; for simple terms signify neither truth nor falsity, whereas complex terms have truth and falsity through affirmation or negation (*Voces enim incomplexae neque verum neque falsum significant; sed voces complexae, per affirmationem aut negationem veritatem aut falsitatem habent*). And here affirmation is called combination because it signifies that a predicate belongs to a subject, whereas negation is called separation because it signifies that a predicate does not belong to a subject.³⁴

The importance of this passage was noticed by Franz Brentano, who gave an account of it in his *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*.³⁵

Here Thomas, following Aristotle, explains well the meaning of being as truth (“*quasi verum*” as the Latin text has it), with reference to that “est” which is used in response to questions regarding propositions: “when we ask if man is an animal, the answer is that he is, by which it is meant that this proposition is true”.

It is obvious how close we now are to the remarks of Frege quoted earlier about the answer to sentence-questions: “Sentence-questions are a different matter. We expect to hear ‘yes’ or ‘no’. The answer ‘yes’ means the same as an indicative sentence, for in it the thought that was already completely contained in the interrogative sentence is laid down as true.”

It is clear that passages like that of Thomas, totally forgotten by Thomists, can exhibit all their philosophical potential thanks to the thought of Frege and other contemporaries about assertion.

We must also note, in the passage that we have just read, a subtle distinction hardly hinted at here, but well known to Thomas, as Kenny showed long ago—the distinction between simple predication and assertion. The first is a simple connection of concepts linked by the copula: *vox complexa* or simple “*oratio*”. Only in the second, when affirmation or negation are involved, do we have, within the *voces complexae* or sentences, an assertion, and with it the possibility of answering “yes” or “no”, or “it is so” and “it is not so”.

For, in his commentary on the *De interpretatione* of Aristotle, in which Thomas frequently cites *De Anima*, Book III, and *Metaphysics*, Book VI, Thomas makes a distinction between a simple “oratio” and an “enunciatio”. There are, he observes, different types of “oratio”, all expressed in sentences: enunciative, deprecativae, imperative, interrogative, and vocative. Truth and falsehood occur only in the case of the enunciative, which includes affirmation and negation.³⁶

If we return to the text of the Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI, it seems then clear that the sense of this type of “est”, of which Thomas is speaking here, is the same as the assertive force—the “*assensum*” of the Commentary on *the Sentences* quoted above—that is lacking in other types of discourse.

Such “est” regards the correspondence of the proposition’s content with reality. And this correspondence or relationship is what for Thomas is the truth.

I shall use in this case the expression “veridical being”, referring to the “veridical use” of the verb “to be” on which wrote Charles Kahn. In ancient Greek a simple “esti” (*is*) sometimes preceding a proposition, for example: “esti Sokrates mousikos” means something like “It *is* that Socrates is musical.” The same idea, expressed in Latin, comes out as “est” referred to a whole proposition “cum enim interrogamus si homo est animal, respondetur quod *est*, per quod significatur propositionem praemissam esse veram”. As we have seen, quoting Sauer at the beginning of this chapter, the expression “it *is* so [or: the case] that” and the answer to a sentence-question in terms of “so *it* is”, where to the “is” is given an emphatic position, seems to correspond in the written language to Frege’s assertion sign.

At this point it is important to return briefly to Thomas’s theory of the copula. From what we have discovered so far it emerges clearly that the copula cannot always be considered as a predicate with a qualification added. In some of the propositions given as examples of being as truth, it is evident that the “is” cannot in fact be a predicate, for example, in “we say that non-being *is* non-being” or in “we say that affirmation *is* opposed to negation”. In these cases the predicative or “existential” use of the copula is excluded, as we have seen, and what is implied is the veridical sense, that is the reference to “it *is* so [or: the case] that (non-being is non-being)”.

How can we work out when the “is” that is grammatically a copula has a logically predicative sense and when it has instead a “veridical” sense?

It seems to me that we can understand all this better if we take account of certain adverbs in some languages, like “*vere*” in Latin, “really” in English, “*veramente*” or “*davvero*” in Italian and perhaps “*tatsächlich*” in German.³⁷ If I assert that “Socrates est” (Socrates is/exists) the “is” is according to Thomas a predicate that signifies something like “still exists”, “is alive”. If I say “Socrates *vere*/really/*veramente* est” I mean something different: “it *is* so [or: the case] that (Socrates is / still exists)”. Naturally it would be senseless to repeat the “est” twice, and to assert “Socrates *vere*/really/*est est*” with the first “est” being veridical and the second signifying the act of being.

Similarly, if I assert “Socrates is wise” then (according to Thomas’s theory of the copula analysed in the second chapter) I mean “Socrates exists wisely”; if, however, I say “Socrates *vere*/really/*veramente* is wise” I mean something like “It *is* so [or: the case] that (Socrates exists wisely)”. If, however, I say, finally, “non-being is non-being” the only thing I can mean, implicitly, is “It *is* so [or: the case] that (non being is non-being)”, there being no other possible predicative senses of “est”.

Back to the Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book V

At this point we are able to go back to Thomas’s commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book V and perhaps understand it better.

First of all, in the text we quoted in the previous paragraph, we noticed that Thomas makes some kind of connection between being as truth and the verb “to be”: To say “(that Socrates is white) is true” or “it is true that (Socrates is white)” means to say that “he is”. What or who “is”? Does the “is” refer, existentially to Socrates’s act of being, to the actuality of his being white, or does it refer to the entire proposition and the corresponding state of affairs? The text is ambiguous on this point. It can be read, I think, either in the “existentialist” sense, emphasizing Thomas’s interest in actual being, which seems in some places to have the primacy, or in an “Aristotelian” sense, emphasizing the reference to the being true of the whole proposition.

It is also obvious that so far there is no reference in that text to the sense of being as *anitas*. But there is one later on the same page, which we need to re-read now:

Now it must be noted that this second way in which being is used is related *to the first as an effect is to a cause*. For from the fact that something is in reality it follows that there is truth and falsity in a proposition, and the intellect signifies this by the term *is* taken as a verb copula. But since the intellect considers as a kind of being something which is in itself a non-being, such as a negation and the like, therefore *sometimes being is predicated of something in this second way and not in the first*. For *blindness is said to be in the second way on the grounds that the proposition in which something is said to be blind is true*. However, it is not said to be true in the first way; for blindness does not have any being in reality but is rather a privation of some being. Now it is accidental to a thing that an attribute should be affirmed of it truly in thought or in word, for reality is not referred to knowledge but the reverse. But the act of being which each thing has in its own nature is substantial; and therefore when it is said that Socrates is, if the *is* is taken in the first way, it belongs to the class of substantial predicates; for being is a higher predicate with reference to any particular being, as animal with reference to man. But if it is taken in the second way, it belongs to the class of accidental predicates.³⁸

I think that here being as truth is to be understood in the sense of veridical being, that is not (only) in the sense of “it is true that”, but in the sense of “it *is* so [or: the case] that” or, if one prefers, in the sense of “it *is* true that”. For here we are not talking about being on one side and truth on the other but of two senses of being. Furthermore, it is clear that Thomas refers to the judgement and the assertion: “the proposition in which something is *said* to be blind is true”.

We read first of all that the veridical sense stands to the sense of being as act in the relationship of effect to cause. Here obviously it seems right that Thomas is giving the primacy to being as act of being, to the delight of all the existentialists.

However, on the other side Thomas asserts that “sometimes being is predicated of something in this second way and not in the first. For

blindness is said to be in the second way on the grounds that the proposition in which something is said to be blind is true.”

Two things are important to note. First the sense of being as *anitas*—“blindness exists” means that the answer to the question “*an sit?*” is affirmative, because “something or other is blind”—is re-absorbed within veridical being: blindness exists because *it is true* that something is blind.

The second very important thing to note is that *the veridical sense of being is more universal than the sense of being as act of being*. This is not an unimportant matter for a science which has as its essential characteristic that of being the most universal of all, concerning everything that possesses universality, as Thomas himself said earlier. If “sometimes being is predicated of something in this second way and not in the first”, and if too metaphysics is concerned with everything that is, then the primacy would seem to belong to veridical being. The very proposition “Socrates est” which seems to best express the primacy of being as act can be read, we are told by Thomas himself, in the veridical sense of being (which he considers accidental in this respect). It can, in fact be said: “It *is* so [or: the case] that or it *is* true that (Socrates exists).” Certainly, Socrates exists even if no one is formulating true propositions about him and from this point of view veridical being is accidental with respect to the actual being of Socrates. All the same, it is certain that *veridical being has a wider range of application than actual being. It covers the most universal range of beings*. There is a strong tension between the two primacies, that of the act of being and that of veridical being.

At this point we can answer the question what type of being is in play when a metaphysician discusses negations and privations. We can, that is to say, make intelligible assertions such as the ones we met: “hence we say that non-being is non-being”; “privations and negations are called beings, as when we say that affirmation is opposed to negation”. *Privations and negations are called beings in the sense of veridical being, because it is so [or: the case] that or it is true that (affirmation is opposed to negation), and it is so [or: the case] that or it is true that (non-being is non-being)*.

As we shall see in the next chapter, this interpretation is not a stretch of Thomas’s texts here. In fact, other contemporary authors, such as the

so-called Anonymus Lipsiensis and Siger of Brabant, expressly claimed the very same thing: negations and privations are called beings in the sense of being as truth.

Now, the veridical sense of being is certainly more universal than being as act of being, and therefore seems more “transcendental”. If, as we have seen, according to Thomas, at least in some of his texts, the discussion of privations and negations belongs to metaphysics and not only to logic, and if these can be understood only in the veridical sense of being, then it seems that finally this is the sense of being with which metaphysics should concern itself first of all.

Does Thomas affirm it explicitly and uniformly throughout his work? No. As we have seen above in some passages of the Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI, he seems indeed to deny it, following some pages of Aristotle. In other passages, however, especially in the Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book IV, he seems to affirm it. One thing is certain: his position resembles a sort of pluripotent stem cell: it can develop both in the direction of considering being as truth as the object of metaphysics, which includes negations and privations, and this is as extensive as that of logic, or in the direction of considering as object of metaphysics only being as act, which excludes negations, privations and beings of reason in general.

It is no coincidence, therefore, and indeed it is perfectly understandable, that the developments of the discussion on the specific object of metaphysics, especially after Thomas, went in the two opposite directions just mentioned: some argued, in fact, that the object of metaphysics excluded the object of logic, others instead claimed that it included it and that, indeed, both metaphysics and logic, though from different points of views, dealt with the same being in universal.³⁹

Certainly, coming back to Thomas, some problems remain to be solved: assuming that being as truth is the object of metaphysics, due to its greater extension and universality, there is still a problem with Thomas’s earlier assertion that being as truth has as its cause and foundation in being as act of being.⁴⁰ But at this point one may ask oneself: what act of being is the cause of the being as truth expressed by the proposition “non-being is non-being”?

Furthermore, there is another problem: if this were the case, the transcendental of veridical being would seem to depend on the act of assent

of an intellect regarding the correspondence of the proposition's content with reality. And the human intellect would not seem to do the job, since it cannot actually exercise assertions concerning everything and, furthermore, since there is no transcendental Ich in Thomas. Should we therefore turn to the act of a divine intellect? Thomas seems to support this idea, as we shall see also in the next chapter.⁴¹

Sentence-Question and Transcendental Being

The passage of Thomas's commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI, quoted above, contains in addition a distinction worthy of remark between simple terms (*voces incomplexae*) and complex terms (*voces complexae*). Only the second can have anything to do with veridical being. The first do not: "simple terms signify neither truth nor falsity, whereas complex terms have truth and falsity through affirmation or negation". We know from other passages in Thomas that simple terms, or *voces incomplexae* are the "simple conceptions of the intellect", terms that have to do with the quiddity or essence of things and which are explained by a definition: "Hence it is said in *Metaphysics* 4 that the account which the word signifies is the definition."⁴²

We know also from Thomas and Aristotle that there are two operations or activities of the intellect. One of these is the understanding of the non-complex terms or the simple quiddities of things ("*quidditates simplices rerum*"), an activity which Thomas tells us philosophers call "forming" or "simple intelligence".⁴³ The other activity, in which the intellect "composes and divides", is the one that is expressed in an enunciation or judgment or assertion, which as we have seen above is a particular kind of "*oratio*" and in which truth and falsehood are to be found:

It must be understood that one of the two operations of intellect is the understanding of indivisibles, insofar as the intellect understands absolutely the quiddity or essence of a thing in itself, for example *what is man* or *what is white* or *the like*. The other operation of intellect occurs when it composes and divides such simple concepts. He says, then, that it is in the second operation of intellect, that is, in composing and dividing, that truth

and falsity are found, implying that they are not found in the first operation, as indeed is taught in *On the Soul* 3–5.⁴⁴

It is clear from this passage that the question corresponding to a non-complex term, a term expressing a concept such as “man” or “white” is a “word-question”. It asks “what is...?”: “what is man or what is white or the like?” As you will observe, we are in the realm of the predicates (man, white, or the like) which Aristotle classified in the categories.

By contrast the question that corresponds to a complex term, or rather to that particular type of complex term or “oratio” that is an enunciation or judgement, is a sentence-question: “when we ask if man is an animal, the answer is that he is, by which it is meant that this proposition is true”.

We have seen above that such veridical being has a more universal scope, and therefore a more transcendental character than being as act of being, because it includes a set of beings ranging from individual substances to negations. We can formulate the question “*is* it so [or: the case] that p?” or “*is* it true that p?” about “Socrates is still alive” or about “non-being is non-being”. For Thomas himself explains that transcendentalty depends on the extent of applicability: “one’ is a transcendental, it has a wider range of meaning (*communius*) than substance and relation”.⁴⁵

Hence it seems to me first that the difference between the notion of category and the notion of transcendental lies hidden in the difference between word-questions and sentence-questions.

Second, more specifically concerning transcendental being: given that, as we have seen, being as act is always linked to being something, that is to say to being human or being white or being so-and-so, it remains always in the realm of the categories and cannot find any place in the realm of privations and negations, which by definition lack an act of being. By contrast, veridical being can truly be said of everything: it really is a transcendental property of everything that exists in one way or another. It corresponds in a certain way to the expression “It *is* so [or: the case] that”, which according to Sauer translates into a written language Frege’s assertion sign.

If metaphysics is really the most universal of all sciences, shouldn’t it necessarily include also logic and logical items?

The Senses of Being: Summary

At this point all that remains is to summarize Thomas's teaching on the senses of being and their relationships to each other, as revealed by the second chapter and in this section.

Thomas recognizes two fundamental senses of being: being as act of being, and being as truth.

The first is divided by him into two sub-species: being as act of being *simpliciter dictum* (e.g. "*Socrates est*") and being something (e.g. "Socrates is a man" or "Socrates is wise").

Being as act of being *simpliciter* corresponds, in modern terms, to a first-level predicate and for living beings means something like "lives" ("*vivere viventibus est esse*") or "still exists".

This being is conceived of by Thomas as always indissolubly linked to being something, because for Socrates to exist is to be so-and-so, and vice versa.

The second sense of being, or being as truth, is likewise interpreted by Thomas in two ways: the being that responds to the question *an sit*, or *anitas*, and the "veridical" being.

Being as *anitas* in English is expressed by "there is" and as Geach realized it corresponds in modern terms to the existential quantifier. Thomas uses this sense of being in the case of propositions like "blindness exists", "evil exists", "God exists".

Veridical being concerns propositions taken as a whole and corresponds to "est" as an answer to sentence-questions. This sense of being can be expressed in terms of "It *is* so [or: the case] that p" or "it *is* true that p", where p is any proposition whatever: "*Socrates est*", "*Socrates est albus*", "*albedo est*" "non ens est non ens", and so on. The mentioned expression "It *is* that" corresponds to Frege's assertion sign.

What is the relationship between being as *anitas* and veridical being? One can gather from the texts of Thomas that veridical being includes being as *anitas*, because "something is blind", if uttered in the context of an assertive judgement, implies "it *is* true that something is blind". But the reverse implication is not valid. The veridical being expressed in the proposition "it *is* true that non-being is non-being" does not imply any

being as *anitas*, because there is no question here of an answer to the question “*an sit?*”.

Finally, what is the relationship between the two fundamental senses of being, that is to say between being as act of being and being as truth (understood as including the two sub-senses we have explained)? In two passages Thomas maintains that being as act is the cause and foundation of being as truth. That makes it seem as if it is to being as act that preference and primacy belong. However, he himself says that veridical being has a more universal applicability than being as act of being (“sometimes being is predicated of something in this second way and not in the first”) and hence it seems, because of the need for metaphysics to be universal and transcendental, that the primacy should belong to the former.

In the next chapter it will be clear what is the main source of Thomas’s doctrine of the two fundamental senses of being and, moreover, the source of the interpretation of the Aristotelian being as truth in terms of *anitas*.

4.2 Non-Sensible Numbers (Frege), Transcendental Multiplicity (Aquinas)

Accredited Thomists, in almost all of their presentations of Thomas’s teaching on the transcendentals, mention only four: being, one, true, and good. Sometimes beautiful is added to the list, partly because it acquired a certain notoriety in the twentieth century thanks to the work of authoritative scholars like Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, Umberto Eco, and Hans Urs von Balthasar.

This situation is somewhat odd, because in the most complete and best known text of Thomas on the topic there are six transcendentals mentioned: being, thing (*res*), one, something (*aliquid*) true and good. The same is true of the anonymous treatise *De natura generis*, which is a faithful summary of the teaching of Thomas.

As I have shown in a number of my articles, from the historico-philosophical point of view this is a gross and widespread error. The reason is that the four transcendentals mentioned above were already known

to other authors earlier than or contemporary with Thomas, such as Philip the Chancellor, the author of the *Summa Halensis*, and Albert the Great. So, it is the addition of thing (*res*) and something (*aliquid*) that marks the originality of Thomas by comparison with the other contemporary treatises on the same topic, and for that reason it does not make sense to remove them from the list as is commonly done.⁴⁶

The importance of the transcendental something (*aliquid*), in particular, should not be overlooked. It was already present in contemporary treatises of medieval logic and listed among what were called “*nomina infinita*” or “*termini omnia continentēs*” or “*nomina transcendentia*”, along with *ens*, *unum*, and *res*. After the arrival of Avicenna and Algazel, these expressions were joined by that of the “*nomina comitantia*”, which were *ens*, *unum*, *res*, *aliquid*.

Thomas took up this tradition, logical in origin and influenced by the Arabs, adding *res* and *aliquid* to the list (*ens*, *unum*, *verum*, *bonum*) known and established since the time of the treatise of Philip the Chancellor (written between 1225 and 1228).

However, as we shall see better later, he interpreted *aliquid* in terms of “*aliud quid*” (following a hint in Porretanus) and therefore as “*diversum*”, synonymous with “*aliud*”. Consequently, he gave a new importance to what was called “*division*” which underlies another transcendental characteristic of Thomas: transcendental multiplicity (“*multitudo transcendens*”).

In medieval philosophy, and for Thomas, “*transcendens*” or “*de transcendentibus*” is the standard expression to indicate the transcendentals. Now, of the fourteen times that these expressions occur in Thomas’s work, half concern the transcendental *multitudo*. This is a transcendental that is absent from the treatises of other authors on the same topic, and it is an original notion of Thomas which has a central role both in his ontology and in his Trinitarian theology.⁴⁷ Hence, in this section, rather than concerning ourselves with the customary transcendentals *unum*, *verum*, and *bonum*, that are common to other medieval authors, we will attend to two transcendentals that are specific to Thomas: *aliud* and *multitudo*.

Frege

In paragraphs 24 and 25 of the *Foundations of Arithmetic* Frege makes a criticism of Mill's' account of number.

Mill had maintained that numbers should be classified together with properties that can be abstracted from external things, such as colour. Frege objects:

It would indeed be remarkable if a property abstracted from external things could be transferred without any change of sense to events, to ideas and to concepts. The effect would be just like speaking of fusible events, or blue ideas, or salty concepts or tough judgements.⁴⁸

In other words, anything that is essentially linked to natural phenomena, as colours are, can be only metaphorically predicated of something that is not natural. For example, it is only metaphorically, and not in a literal sense, that some ideas can be called blue. Similarly, a concept can be called "salty" but not in any literal sense. What Frege means is this: if number was essentially linked to natural phenomena, as colour is, then it would have to be predicated only metaphorically of what is not natural and material. But the experience of counting gives the lie to this, because we speak naturally and literally of, for example, Aristotle's four figures of syllogism. Speaking of the four figures of syllogism, of the three propositions that go to make a syllogism, of two concepts, ten commandments and other similar abstract things does not produce the same strange effect as speaking of blue ideas, or salty concepts, or tough judgements. On the contrary, it is a natural and appropriate way of speaking.

One might object, Frege continues, that the four figures of syllogism could in any case not exist without symbols, to which in the last analysis they are reducible. He replies:

However, it may be argued that it is enough to see the symbols; their number is identical with the number of the figures. But then, how do we know this? For that, we must have already ascertained the number of the figures by some other means. Or is the proposition "The Number of figures of the syllogism is four" only another way of putting the proposition that "The

Number of symbols for figures of the syllogism is four?” Of course it is not. There is no intention of saying anything about the symbols; no one wants to know anything about them, except in so far as some property of theirs directly mirrors some property in what they symbolize.⁴⁹

Frege then goes on to observe that, for example, the concept of “two” and the concept of “pair” are and remain distinct, even in the case when the objects to which they refer are not physically distinct:

Mill is, of course, quite right that two apples are physically different from three apples, and two horses from one horse; that they are a different visible and tangible phenomenon. But are we to infer from this that their twoness or threeness is something physical? *One* pair of boots may be the same visible and tangible phenomenon as *two* boots. Here we have a difference in number to which no physical difference corresponds; for *two* and *one pair* are by no means the same thing, as Mill seems oddly to believe. How is it possible, after all, for two concepts to be physically distinguishable from three concepts?⁵⁰

Therefore, according to Frege, there is a non-physical distinction between concepts, on which is based the possibility of speaking literally of two or three concepts.

All this means that number is not essentially linked to tangible and visible phenomena, but is applicable “over a far wider range”, that is to say from boots to concepts, from the figures of syllogism to “angels, actions, thoughts” as Frege reminds us, quoting Locke.

Interestingly, Frege remarks, with a favourable quotation of Leibniz:

Leibniz rejects the view of the schoolmen that number is not applicable to immaterial things, and calls number a sort of immaterial figure, which results from the union of things of any sorts whatsoever, for example of God, an angel, a man and motion, which together are four. For which reason he holds that number is of supreme universality and belongs to metaphysics.⁵¹

But is it really true that all the schoolmen maintained the position justly criticized by Leibniz and Frege?

Aquinas

The first to remark a similarity between the teaching of Frege on number and Thomas's notion of multiplicity was Anthony Kenny, who observed that both authors defend the universal applicability of number.⁵² Here we will develop and expand Kenny's intuition.

As we indicated above, in the *De veritate* Thomas inserts "something" (*aliquid*) into the list of transcendentals, interpreting it as "aliud quid".

If however the mode of being is taken in the second sense, namely, insofar as one thing is ordered to another, this can be understood in two ways. First, according to the division of one thing from another (*secundum divisionem unius ab altero*); and the term 'something' (*aliquid*) expresses this, for something means, as it were, 'another what' (*aliud quid*); hence just as a being is called one insofar as it is undivided in itself so it is called something insofar as it is divided from others (*unde sicut ens dicitur unum, in quantum est indivisum in se, ita dicitur aliquid, in quantum est ab aliis divisum*).⁵³

The "another" (*aliud*) of which Thomas speaks here, under the pseudonym of *aliquid* understood as *aliud quid*, has two characteristics which give it every right to be considered a transcendental in Thomas's work.

First of all it is a synonym of "diverse" (*diversum*),⁵⁴ and "diverse" was considered by Thomas and by others before him, as one of what were called "*passiones entis*" or transcendentals,⁵⁵ as we have seen in the third section of the second chapter.

Secondly, the division between one thing and another ("*divisio unius ab altero*") expressed by *aliud* is the basis for *multitudo transcendens* which is certainly considered by Thomas as a transcendental.⁵⁶

In my research on this aspect I showed—what I am still convinced of—that the introduction of the *aliud* among the transcendentals, and even more, the consideration of the *multitudo* as a transcendental constitutes a choice made by Aquinas for Aristotle and against the doctrines of the Platonists, which the Stagirite mentions and criticizes, among other things, in the *Metaphysics* (I, 6; III, 1; III, 3; III, 4; XIV, 2) and in the *Physics* (I, 2–3). Are these the so-called "unwritten doctrines" of Plato? It does not matter that much. What is important is the philosophical

content of Aristotle's critique that certainly did not pass unheard of in the Middle Ages. In short, the core of the argument, which has as its background the *Metaphysics* (X, 3), is the following: for Platonists, entities, namely forms, are fundamentally identical as regards their being and are "different" only by addition of something external to their being. On the contrary, for Aristotle entities are fundamentally and originally "diverse", because being is diverse in diverse things ("*esse est diversum in diversis*"⁵⁷ or "*aliud in alio*"⁵⁸) without the need of the addition of anything external to them, as we saw also in the third section of the second chapter.⁵⁹

At this point we should dwell on the question "do numerical terms posit anything in God?" in which Thomas works out his original notion of transcendental multiplicity. It is one of the philosophically and theologically most interesting questions in Thomas's entire work, but also one of those least studied by Thomists.

First of all his position courageously distances itself from that of "all the teachers of old" ("*omnes antiqui doctores*"),⁶⁰ including even Ambrose and Boethius, followed by the Master par excellence, Peter Lombard, and then in times closer to Thomas's by the author of the *Glossa pseudo-Poitiers*, master Udo, Alan of Lille, master Gandulf of Bologna, Peter of Poitiers, and master Martin.

Thomas's position also distances itself from that of the Parisian masters⁶¹ such as Prepositinus, Peter of Capua, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and even Albertus Magnus, Thomas's master at Paris.

So, we have here a question in which Thomas maintains a thesis contrary to all the positions common in his time, something quite rare for a medieval author.

The question was a delicate one: can number be predicated of God in a literal and positive sense?

The authors of the tradition of the "teachers of old" gave the answer no. They said that number could be predicated of God only "remotively" and negatively, that is to say only in order to deny that God was only one and simple, since he was also perfect and triune. Their position was strongly impregnated with neo-Platonism and was utterly faithful to the neo-Platonic dogma of the internal divine "*indifferentia*" (Boethius's word) and of its impregnable unity.

Theologically, this position was quite risky, as Thomas pointed out: it is not sufficient to say that God is not solely one, it is necessary, for Catholic doctrine, to assert positively the real distinction between the divine Persons and hence to assert positively that God is really triune. Otherwise one would fall into the heresy of Sabellius who denied the reality of the distinction between the divine persons.⁶²

Furthermore, the distinction was to be asserted not only for reasons of faith but also, in a certain sense, for reason's own sake, because a God which was solely one would not be perfect: he would be alone and lonely and every human and angelic community would be more perfect than him. "If plurality of persons did not exist in God, He would be alone or solitary."⁶³

For this reason some masters contemporary with Thomas maintained the thesis that number could be predicated positively of God.

To prove this they pointed to the analogy with certain properties, such as wisdom and goodness, which were widely accepted as being positively predicated of God. In brief, their argument went like this: even though the category of quality is not predicated of God, nonetheless certain species of the genus of quality are predicated of God, such as wisdom and goodness. Similarly, even though the category of quantity is not predicated of God, nonetheless one can predicate of Him a species of the genus quantity, namely number.

Thomas agrees with the conclusion of this reasoning, namely the possibility of predicating number positively of God, but he does not agree with the argument used. He observes that the species of the genus of quantity, such as size or height cannot be predicated of God except metaphorically because they imply materiality: "They would be used of God only metaphorically just as are other properties of bodies, such as width, length and so on." One does not say that God is long or large, save as a *façon de parler* or metaphorically. So, if one were to predicate of God the number that is a species of the genus of quantity, one could only metaphorically say that God was numerous—triune in fact—and this here too one would fall into the heresy of Sabellius.

So, Thomas decides to structure the issue in a completely different way. Here is the core of his argument:

Peter Lombard in his *Sentences* maintained that numeral terms did not affirm anything in God but only denied something. But others hold the opposite view. To clear the matter up, bear in mind that all plurality is the consequence of some division. Now there are two kinds of division. One, material division, which comes about by division of a continuum; from this number results, which is a kind of quantity. Hence number in this sense exists only in material things which have quantity. The other is *formal division, which comes about by the opposition or diversity of forms; from this results that kind of plurality which is in none of the categories but is one of the transcendentals in the sense that being itself is diversified by the 'one' and the 'many'*. (*Alia est divisio formalis, quae fit per oppositas vel diversas formas, et hanc divisionem sequitur multitudo quae non est in aliquo genere, sed est de transcendentibus, secundum quod ens dividitur per unum et multa*). And only this kind of 'many' applies to spiritual realities.⁶⁴

As we read here, Thomas makes a distinction between two types of division, one material and one formal. It is the material one that gives rise to the number that is a species of the genus of quantity and to the corresponding multiplicity. And this cannot be predicated of what is immaterial, such as God. For this reason, the teachers of old, having no notion of number other than this, denied it of God. Again, for the same reason, some theological masters at Paris, such as Bonaventure and Albert of Cologne, having no notion of number other than the material one, attempted, inconsistently, to attribute it to God, on the pattern of certain species of quality, and ended up maintaining an incoherent thesis.

According to Thomas, however, there is such a thing as formal division which occurs when we have opposition or diversity between forms. It is this division that gives rise to the multiplicity that is not in any category, but is transcendental, that is to say is applied universally both to what is material and what is not material, as happens also in the case of other transcendentals, like "one".

So, Thomas can conclude his answer using the first person—something rare in his work:

Our view is that numeral terms, in so far as they enter statements about God, are not based on 'number' taken as a special kind of quantity (Nos autem dicimus quod termini numerales, secundum quod veniunt in

praedicationem divinam, non sumuntur a numero qui est species quantitates). [...] They are taken from the ‘many’ which is transcendental.⁶⁵

In the parallel article in the *De potentia* he goes so far as to use the first person singular to emphasize that what is in question is a theory characteristically and originally his own:

I say then that in speaking of God we do not predicate the unity and plurality which belong to the genus of quantity, but *one* that is convertible with being and the corresponding plurality (*Dico ergo, quod in divinis non praedicantur unum et multa quae pertinent ad genus quantitatis, sed unum quod convertitur cum ente, et multitudo ei correspondens*).⁶⁶

In the *De potentia* too, as in the *Summa Theologiae*, the core of Thomas’s argument is based on the notion of formal division:

Now there is a kind of division which altogether transcends the genus of quantity, and this is division according to formal opposition which has nothing to do with quantity (*Est autem quaedam divisio quae omnino genus quantitatis excedit, quae scilicet est per aliquam oppositionem formalem, quae nullam quantitatem concernit*). Hence the plurality resulting from such a division, and the unity which excludes such a division, must needs be more universal and comprehensive than the genus of quantity.⁶⁷

Formal division and the corresponding multiplicity have a universal applicability which is not shared by material multiplicity. They are applicable “over a far wider range”, to use an expression of Frege’s that we met earlier, by comparison with number as a species of quantity. They are, therefore, “transcendentals”. It seems in particular that division corresponds to the *aliud* of the *De veritate*, and that later on Thomas dropped the transcendental *aliud* in place of the transcendental *multitudo*, continuing however to base it on the *divisio formalis*.

How are we to explain Thomas’s notion of *divisio formalis*, given that Thomas gives neither explanation nor examples?

Here Frege once more turns out to be useful for the better understanding of Thomas: the figures of syllogism and the propositions that constitute them are divided from each other and so are multiple, without

however containing material and measurable parts: “How is it after all that we do become acquainted with, let us say, the Number of figures of the syllogism as drawn up by Aristotle? Is it perhaps with our eyes?”⁶⁸

The similarity between the teachings of Thomas and Frege is sufficiently great that each can be used to cast light on the other. Undoubtedly, Frege would be astonished to see refuted Leibniz’s conviction that the scholastics did not regard number as applicable to immaterial things: the scholastics, yes, Thomas, no.

Divisio and Negatio

Thomas’s notion of *divisio formalis* deserves here particular attention. On the one hand, especially in the *De veritate*, it seems a pseudonym for “aliud”, and thus a transcendental property of things, on the other hand it corresponds to the act of negation, or to an “is not” that has a whole proposition as its scope, directly opposed to the composition or enunciation of which we spoke in the previous section.

Let us proceed step by step. First of all, in all the passages relevant to the *ordo originis* of the transcendentals, that is to say wherever the conceptual and progressive genesis of the first transcendentals is described, division corresponds to negation:

Now division arises in the mind simply by negating being (*negatione entis*). So that the first idea to arise in the mind is being, then that this being is not that being and so we grasp division (*secundo, quod hoc ens non est illud ens, et sic secundo apprehendimus divisionem*), thirdly unity, and fourthly the many.⁶⁹

As you see, the genesis of the transcendentals *unum* and *multitudo* takes place in four stages: *ens, divisio, unum, multitudo*.

Sometimes the ascent is up five steps rather than four—*ens, non ens, divisio, unum, multitudo*. This is because division, or the judgement that this being is not another being, is subsequent to the apprehension of the notion of *non ens*:

But the unity which is interchangeable with being implies the privation of formal division, which comes about through opposites, and whose primary root is the opposition between affirmation and *negation*. For those things are divided from each other which are of such a kind that *one is not the other*. Therefore being itself is understood first, *and then non-being, and then division*, and then the kind of unity which is the privation of division, and then plurality, whose concept includes the notion of division just as the concept of unity includes the notion of undividedness.⁷⁰

All the parallel texts confirm the derivation of the first transcendentals from “*affirmatio*” and “*negatio*”.⁷¹

In the opusculum *De natura generis*, a faithful summary of the doctrine of Aquinas, we find the same genesis.⁷²

The same happens in the treatise *De natura contrariorum* by Theodoric of Freiberg, which depends precisely on this doctrine of Aquinas. In this text we find the same process, the same references to the origin of the “*unum*” and the “*multum*”, namely to the origin which consists in the first opposition between “*affirmatio*” and “*negatio*”, and the same clarification of the “*negatio*” and of the first division—or rather, suggests Theodoric, “*distinctio*” or “*remotio*”—in terms of “*hoc non est illud*”.⁷³

As you see, division is understood in terms of negation, and this in turn is exemplified in the judgement of the intellect, according to which “this being is not that being” or that “one is not the other”.

How can we understand that more exactly? Thomas himself gives us the explanation. First and foremost in this text, quoted years ago by Anthony Kenny:

If we consider what takes place in the mind by itself then there is always combination where there is truth and falsehood; for the mind cannot produce anything true or false unless it combines one simple concept with another. But if the relation to reality is taken into account, then the mind’s operation is called sometimes “combination” and sometimes “division”; “combination” where the mind so places one concept beside another as to represent the combination or identity of the things of which they are the concepts; “division” where it so places one concept beside another as to represent that the corresponding realities are distinct. We talk in the same way of sentences too: an affirmative sentence is called “a combination”

because it signifies that there is a conjunction in reality; a negative sentence is called “a division” because it signifies that the realities are separate.⁷⁴

As you see, division corresponds to negation and combination corresponds to assertion, and these are linked respectively to falsehood (division) and truth (combination).

Even clearer on the same topic is a passage of Thomas, also in his commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI, quoted in the previous section in connection with veridical being, where we read:

He says, then, that “in one sense being means what is true,” (*Dicit ergo quod ens quoddam dicitur quasi verum*) i.e., it signifies nothing else than truth; *for when we ask if man is an animal, the answer is that he is*, by which it is meant that this proposition *is true* (*Cum enim interrogamus si homo est animal, respondetur quod est; per quod significatur, propositionem praemissam esse veram*). *And in the same way non-being signifies in a sense what is false; for when one answers that he is not, it is meant that the statement made is false*. Now this being which means what is true, and non-being which means what is false, depend on combination and separation (consistit circa compositionem et divisionem); for simple terms signify neither truth nor falsity, whereas complex terms have truth and falsity through affirmation or negation (*Voces enim incomplexae neque verum neque falsum significant; sed voces complexae, per affirmationem aut negationem veritatem aut falsitatem habent*). And here affirmation is called combination because it signifies that a predicate belongs to a subject, *whereas negation is called separation because it signifies that a predicate does not belong to a subject* (*Negatio vero dicitur hic divisio, quia significat praedicatum a subiecto removeri*).⁷⁵

Negation is a division, according to Thomas, because in a judgement one asserts that the predicate is divided from the subject: “Socrates is not white” for example, or in general “the one is not the other”. At the same time, Thomas says that negation corresponds to the answer “he *is* not” given to a sentence-question, for example, “Is Socrates white?” “No, he *is* not”. Such a “he *is* not” in its turn corresponds to “it *is* false that p.” just as “he *is*” corresponds to “it *is* true that p.” This means that an internal negation can be rewritten as an external one. So, “Socrates is not white” can be written as “It *is* not [or: not the case] that (Socrates is white)” or “It *is* not true that

(Socrates is white)”. Similarly, the judgement that “the one is not the other”, which is the example of division, can be rewritten, according to Thomas, in terms of “it *is* not true that (one is the other)” or “it *is* not [or: not the case] that (one is the other)”.

The example of Socrates is taken from Thomas’s own words that we met in the previous section, which we should now re-read because at this point they become more comprehensible and more illuminating:

When we say that something is, we signify that a proposition is true; and when we say that something is not, we signify that it is not true (*Cum enim dicimus aliquid esse, significamus propositionem esse veram. Et cum dicimus non esse, significamus non esse veram*). And this applies both to affirmation and to negation. It applies to affirmation, as when we say *that Socrates is white because this is true*; and to negation, as when we say that Socrates is not white, because *this is true, namely, that he is not white*. And in a similar way we say that the diagonal of a square is not incommensurable [read: commensurable] with a side, because this is false, i.e., its not being [non] incommensurable [read: commensurable].⁷⁶

As you see, the transcendental *aliud* and the corresponding *divisio* correspond to what we would nowadays call a logical operator, namely that of negation. According to Frege, it serves to indicate the circumstance that “the content is not the case”, where the content is the content of a whole proposition and not of a simple representation.

The close study of the passages of Thomas that we have been considering proves that such is the case. The textual background is provided by contemporaneous treatises of logic on what were called “syncategoremata”, or, very broadly speaking, those parts of discourse called “consignificative”, such as *est* (copula) *omnis*, *solus*, and indeed *non* which have (also) a syntactic function. It is well known that the syncategoremata are the historical ancestors of the modern logical constants.

All the treatises of logic on syncategoremata agree in considering the particle “not” or its corresponding noun “*negatio*”, as a syncategorema. But what exactly does “not” signify? Medieval logicians have no doubts about this: it signifies the “*divisio*”:

This much, then, having been said about the syncategorematic nouns and verbs, we proceed to treat of syncategorematic adverbs. And first the treatment of such an adverb, namely the word ‘not’. For, as the verb ‘is’ is the first verb, so the adverb that in the first place and principally determines it will be the first adverb; and this is the word ‘not’. The first thing to be asked, therefore, is what the word ‘not’ signifies [...]. *Whence, just as we say that the name ‘is’ signifies some composition, without which the composed words can not be understood, in the same way the word ‘not’ signifies some division, without which the divided words cannot be understood.* For, just as the word ‘is’ is the principle of every composition whatever, so also the word ‘not’ is the principle of every division whatever.⁷⁷

From this passage, which offers these well known to students of the logic of the period, and therefore to Thomas, it is clear that “*est*” and “*non*” correspond respectively to composition and division (or negation), and these in their turn give rise to the transcendentals listed in the *ordo originis* of Thomas’s transcendentals, namely *ens* and *aliud* (or *divisio*).

In conclusion: the transcendental *aliud*, and its correlative division, correspond to the syncategorema *non* and the logical operator of negation, in the same way as being, understood veridically, is expressed by the formula “it *is* so [or: the case] that” or “it *is* true that”, which in its turn corresponds to Frege’s sign of assertion. So, the first transcendentals, interpreted veridically, namely transcendental being *tout court* on one side, and *aliud* or division on the other, are neither concepts or properties of things in a strict sense, nor objects, but a third things which could be called formal concepts. But here though we are still in Thomas’s company, we have gone beyond Thomas and even beyond Frege.

Notes

1. Peter T. Geach, “Good and Evil,” *Analysis* 17, no. 2 (1956): 33–42.
2. See Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1981²), 295–363. Anthony Kenny, *Frege: An Introduction to the Founder of Modern Analytic Philosophy* (London: Penguin Philosophy, 1995), 126–141.

3. This is the whole passage: Gottlob Frege “Begriffsschrift. A formalized Language of pure Thought modelled upon the Language of Arithmetic,” in *Translations from the philosophical writings of Gottlob Frege*, eds Peter T. Geach, and Max Black (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1977), 1–2. Italics mine: “A judgment is always to be expressed by means of the sign |—This stands to the left of the sign or complex of signs in which the content of the judgment is given. If we *omit* the little vertical stroke at the left end of the horizontal stroke, then the judgment is to be transformed into a mere complex of ideas; the author is not expressing his recognition or non-recognition of the truth of this. Thus, let |—*A* mean the judgment: ‘unlike magnetic poles attract one another.’ In that case—*A* will not express this judgment; it will be intended just to produce in the reader the idea of the mutual attraction of unlike magnetic poles—so that, e.g., he may make inferences from this thought and test its correctness on the basis of these. In this case we *qualify* the expression with the words ‘*the circumstance that*’ or ‘*the proposition that*.’ Not every content can be turned into a judgment by prefixing |—to a symbol for the content; e.g. the idea ‘house’ cannot. Hence we distinguish contents that are, and contents that are not, *possible contents of judgment*. As a constituent of the sign |—*the horizontal stroke combines the symbols following it into a whole; assertion, which is expressed by the vertical stroke at the left end of the horizontal one, relates to the whole thus formed*. The horizontal stroke I wish to call the *content-stroke*, and the vertical the *judgment-stroke*. The content-stroke is also to serve the purpose of relating any sign whatsoever to the whole formed by the symbols following the stroke. *The content of what follows the content-stroke must always be a possible content of judgment*.”
4. This is the whole passage: Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Reference,” in *Translations from the philosophical writings of Gottlob Frege*, eds Peter T. Geach, and Max Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), 62; 63; 64: “So far we have considered the sense and reference only of such expressions, words, or signs as we have called proper names. We now inquire concerning the sense and reference for an entire declarative sentence. Such a sentence contains a thought [...]. But now why do we want every proper name to have not only a sense, but also a reference? Why is the thought not enough for us? Because, and to the extent that, we are concerned with its truth value [...]. We have seen that the reference of a sentence may always be sought, whenever the reference of its compo-

nents is involved; and that this is the case when and only when we are inquiring after the truth value. We are therefore driven into accepting the truth value of a sentence as constituting its reference. By the truth value of a sentence I understand the circumstance that it is true or false. There are no further truth values. For brevity I call the one the True, the other the False. Every declarative sentence concerned with the reference of its words is therefore to be regarded as a proper name, and its reference, if it has one, is either the True or the False [...]. One might be tempted to regard the relation of the thought to the True not as that of sense to reference, but rather as that of subject to predicate. One can, indeed, say: 'The thought, that 5 is a prime number, is true.' But closer examination shows that nothing more has been said than in the simple sentence '5 is a prime number.' The truth claim arises in each case from the form of the declarative sentence, and when the latter lacks its usual force, e.g., in the mouth of an actor upon the stage, even the sentence 'The thought that 5 is a prime number is true' contains only a thought, and indeed the same thought as the simple '5 is a prime number.' It follows that the relation of the thought to the True may not be compared with that of subject to predicate. Subject and predicate (understood in the logical sense) are indeed elements of thought; they stand on the same level for knowledge. By combining subject and predicate, one reaches only a thought, never passes from sense to reference, never from a thought to its truth value. One moves at the same level but never advances from one level to the next."

5. Kenny, Frege, 133.
6. I mention here a passage, for example, from "Function and Concept". "Thus this function has as its value the argument itself, when that is a truth-value. I used to call this horizontal stroke the content-stroke (*Inhaltsstrich*)—a name that no longer seems to me appropriate. I now wish to call it simply the horizontal. If we write down an equation or inequality, e.g. $5 > 4$, we ordinarily wish at the same time to express a judgment; in our example, we want to assert that 5 is greater than 4. According to the view I am here presenting, ' $5 > 4$ ' and ' $1 + 3 = 5$ ' just give us expressions for truth-values, without making any assertion. This separation of the act from the subject-matter of judgment seems to be indispensable; for otherwise we could not express a mere supposition—the putting of a case without a simultaneous judgment as to its arising or not. We thus need a special sign in order to be able to assert something.

To this end I make use of a vertical stroke at the left end of the horizontal, so that, e.g. by writing $\perp-2 + 3 = 5$ we assert that $2 + 3$ equals 5. Thus here we are not just writing down a truth-value, as in $2 + 3 = 5$, but also at the same time saying that it is the True" (Frege, "Function and Concept," 34.).

7. Frege, "On Sense and Reference," 63.
8. This is the whole passage: Gottlob Frege, "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry," *Mind* 65, no. 259 (1956): 293–295. Italics mine: "In order to work out more precisely what I want to call thought, I shall distinguish various kinds of sentences. One does not want to deny sense to an imperative sentence, but this sense is not such that the question of truth could arise for it. Therefore I shall not call the sense of an imperative sentence a thought. Sentences expressing desires or requests are ruled out in the same way. Only those sentences in which we communicate or state something come into the question. But I do not count among these exclamations in which one vents one's feelings, groaning, sighing, laughing, unless it has been decided by some agreement that they are to communicate something. But how about interrogative sentences? In a word-question we utter an incomplete sentence which only obtains a true sense through the completion for which we ask. *Word-questions* are accordingly left out of consideration here. *Sentence-questions* are a different matter. *We expect to hear 'yes' or 'no'. The answer 'yes' means the same as an indicative sentence, for in it the thought that was already completely contained in the interrogative sentence is laid down as true.* So a sentence-question can be formed from every indicative sentence. An exclamation cannot be regarded as a communication on this account, since no corresponding sentence-question can be formed. An interrogative sentence and an indicative one contain the same thought; *but the indicative contains something else as well, namely, the assertion.* The interrogative sentence contains something more too, namely a request. Therefore two things must be distinguished in an indicative sentence: the content, which it has in common with the corresponding sentence-question, and the assertion. The former is the thought, or at least contains the thought. So it is possible to express the thought without laying it down as true. Both are so closely joined in an indicative sentence that it is easy to overlook their separability. Consequently we may distinguish: (1) the apprehension of a thought-thinking, (2) the recognition of the truth of a thought-judgment, (3) the manifestation of this judgment-assertion. We

perform the first act when we form a sentence-question. An advance in science usually takes place in this way, first a thought is apprehended, such as can perhaps be expressed in a sentence-question, and, after appropriate investigations, this thought is finally recognized to be true. We declare the recognition of truth in the form of an indicative sentence. *We do not have to use the word 'true' for this.* And even when we do use it the real assertive force lies, not in it, but in the form of the indicative sentence and where this loses its assertive force the word 'true' cannot put it back again. This happens when we do not speak seriously. As stage thunder is only apparent thunder and a stage fight only an apparent fight, so stage assertion is only apparent assertion. It is only acting, only fancy. In his part the actor asserts nothing, nor does he lie, even if he says something of whose falsehood he is convinced. In poetry we have the case of thoughts being expressed without being actually put forward as true in spite of the form of the indicative sentence, although it may be suggested to the hearer to make an assenting judgment himself. Therefore it must still always be asked, about what is presented in the form of an indicative sentence, whether it really contains an assertion. And this question must be answered in the negative if the requisite seriousness is lacking. It is irrelevant whether the word 'true' is used here. This explains why it is that nothing seems to be added to a thought by attributing to it the property of truth."

9. See Kevin Mulligan, "The Truth Predicate vs the Truth Connective. On Taking Connectives Seriously," *Dialectica* 64 (2010): 565–284.
10. Charles H. Kahn, *The Verb 'Be' In Ancient Greek* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 331–370. (chapter VII: *the Veridical Use*); Mauro Antonelli, and Werner Sauer, "Einleitung," XLIX–LV.
11. Ernst Tugendhat, "Die Seinsfrage und ihre sprachliche Grundlage" in Ernst Tugendhat, *Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), 90–107; Ernst Tugendhat, "Der Wahrheit Begriff bei Aristoteles", in Tugendhat, *Philosophische Aufsätze*, 251–260.
12. Werner Sauer, "Being as the True: From Aristotle to Brentano," in *Themes from Brentano*, eds Denis Fisette, and Guillaume Fréchette (Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2013), 193–225; Mauro Antonelli, and Werner Sauer, "Einleitung," in *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles (Franz Brentano-Sämtliche veröffentlichte Schriften, Bd. IV)*, eds Mauro Antonelli, and Werner Sauer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), XI–XCI.

13. Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will* (London-New York: Routledge, 1973), 158: “The plea for a distinction between predication and assertion goes back, in recent times, to Frege and Brentano. Long before this, the distinction was made by Aquinas and explicitly applied to theory of judgement.”
14. Sauer, “Being as the True: From Aristotle to Brentano”; Mauro Antonelli, and Werner Sauer, “Einleitung.”
15. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 4. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 571.
16. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 1. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 532.
17. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 1. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 534.
18. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 1. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 539. Italics mine.
19. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 1. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 540.
20. Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. I. Aquinas, “On Being and Essence,” 31. Italics mine.
21. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 48, a. 2, ob. 2 ad 2. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. VIII, 115.
22. Thomas de Aquino, *De malo*, q. 1 a. 1 ad 19. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo. On Evil*, 62.
23. Brentano will argue that only logic must deal with being as truth, and therefore with negations and privations (Franz Brentano, *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* (Franz Brentano – Sämtliche veröffentlichte Schriften, Bd. IV) (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), chap. III).
24. “Deinde cum dicit quoniam autem excludit ens verum et ens per accidens a principali consideratione huius doctrinae; dicens, quod compositio et divisio, in quibus est verum et falsum, est in mente, et non in rebus. Invenitur siquidem et in rebus aliqua compositio; sed talis compositio efficit unam rem, quam intellectus recipit ut unum simplici conceptione. Sed illa compositio vel divisio, qua intellectus coniungit vel dividit sua concepta, est tantum in intellectu, non in rebus. Consistit enim in quadam duorum comparatione conceptorum; sive illa duo sint idem secundum rem, sive diversa. Utitur enim intellectus quandoque uno ut duobus compositionem formans; sicut dicitur, homo est homo: ex quo

patet quod talis compositio est solum in intellectu, non in rebus. Et ideo illud, quod est ita ens sicut verum in tali compositione consistens, est alterum ab his quae proprie sunt entia, quae sunt res extra animam, quarum unaquaeque est *aut quod quid est*, idest substantia, aut quale, aut quantum, aut aliquod incomplexum, quod mens copulat vel dividit.

Et ideo utrumque est praetermittendum; scilicet et ens per accidens, et ens quod significat verum; quia huius, scilicet entis per accidens, causa est indeterminata, et ideo non cadit sub arte, ut ostensum est. Illius vero, scilicet entis veri, causa est *aliqua passio mentis*, idest operatio intellectus componentis et dividit. Et ideo pertinet ad scientiam de intellectu. Et alia ratio est, quia *utrumque*, scilicet ens verum et ens per accidens, sunt circa aliquod genus entis, non circa ens simpliciter per se quod est in rebus; et non ostendunt aliquam aliam naturam entis existentem extra per se entia. Patet enim quod ens per accidens est ex concursu accidentaliter entium extra animam, quorum unumquodque est per se. Sicut grammaticum musicum licet sit per accidens, tamen et grammaticum et musicum est per se ens, quia utrumque per se acceptum, habet causam determinatam. Et similiter intellectus compositionem et divisionem facit circa res, quae sub praedicamentis continentur. Unde si determinetur sufficienter illud genus entis quod continetur sub praedicamento, manifestum erit et de ente per accidens, et de ente vero. Et propter hoc huiusmodi entia praetermittuntur. Sed perscrutandae sunt causae et principia ipsius entis per se dicti, in quantum est ens. De quo palam est ex his quae determinavimus in quinto libro; ubi dictum est, quoties unumquodque talium nominum dicitur, quod ens dicitur multipliciter, sicut infra in principio septimi sequetur” (Thomas de Aquino, *In VI Met.*, l. 4. Italics mine).

25. “Dicit ergo, quod, cum ad unam scientiam pertineat considerare opposita, sicut ad medicinam considerare sanum et aegrum, et ad grammaticam congruum et incongruum: uni autem opponitur multitudo: necesse est, quod illius scientiae sit speculari negationem et privationem, cuius est speculari unum et multitudinem. Propter quod utriusque est considerare unum; scilicet ex utroque dependet unius consideratio, de cuius ratione est negatio et privatio. Nam sicut dictum est, unum est ens non divisum: divisio autem ad multitudinem pertinet, quae uni opponitur. Unde cuius est considerare unum, eius est considerare negationem vel privationem” (Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 3). Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 564.

26. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 4. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 574 (translation slightly modified by me).
27. Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 889.
28. Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 890.
29. Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 895. Italics mine. It is evident that the term “incommensurable” does not make sense here, although it is reported in the Latin translations of Aristotle’s text and even in the same text by Aristotle. The first to notice the incongruity was Alexander of Aphrodisias.
30. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 181.
31. It seems to me that instead of contrasting what Thomas says here with what he says later in the same work, as Sauer does, it is better to resolve an ambiguity here by reference to what he has to say on the topic in later works (Sauer “Being as the True: From Aristotle to Brentano”).
32. Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 1. Aquinas, “On the Power of God,” 206.
33. Thomas Aquinas, *In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 2, a. 2 qc. 1, co. Italics mine (trans. Richard Davies and myself).
34. Thomas de Aquino, *In VI Met.*, l. 4. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 1223. Italics mine.
35. Sauer, “Being as the True: From Aristotle to Brentano”. However, it seems that Brentano interpreted the veridical being of Thomas only in terms of “that p is true”, namely only in a predicative sense.
36. “Deinde cum dicit: non autem in omnibus etc., ostendit quomodo per hanc diffinitionem differt enuntiatio ab aliis orationibus. Et quidem de orationibus imperfectis manifestum est quod non significant uerum vel falsum, quia, cum non faciant perfectum sensum in animo audientis, manifestum est quod non perfecte exprimunt iudicium rationis, in quo consistit uerum vel falsum. His igitur praetermissis, perfectae orationis, que complet sententiam, quinque sunt species, uidelicet enunciatua, deprecatua, inperatiua, interrogatiua et uocatiua.—Non tamen est intelligendum quod solum nomen uocatiui casus prolatum sit uocatiua oratio, quia oportet aliquid partium significare separatim, ut supra dictum est; sed per uocatiuum reuocatur, siue excitatur animus audientis ad attendendum, non est autem uocatiua oratio nisi plura coniungantur; ut cum dico: ‘O beate Petre!’. Harum autem orationum sola enunciatua est

in qua inuenitur uerum uel falsum, quia ipsa sola absolute significat [intellectus] mentis conceptum, in quo est uerum uel falsum” (Thomas de Aquino, *In I Peryerm.*, l. 7, ed. Gauthier, 37).

37. Mulligan has observed that in English the adverbs “verily” or “truly” will not fit in this case, because they connote rather “sincerity” or “truthfulness” (Mulligan “The Truth Predicate vs the Truth Connective,” 576).
38. Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 895–896. Italics mine.
39. Albert Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik? Die Diskussion über den Gegenstand der Metaphysik im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert. Texte und Untersuchungen* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 348–382. See in particular: Francisci de Marchia Quaestiones in Metaphysicam, Cod. 3490 Bibliothèque Mazarine Paris, f. 2rb-4ra und f. 47ra-rb: *utrum res secundum quod res sit subiectum metaphysicae vel aliquid aliud*, 84–98; Cod. 33, 11 Oriel College Oxford, f. 262rb-263ra, q. 3: *An ens in quantum ens sit subiectum huius scientiae*, 103–108; Richardi de Clive Quaestiones Metaphysicae, Cod. 152 Peterhouse Cambridge, f. 322ra-rb: *utrum ens sit subiectum libri Metaphysicae an Deus secundum quod quidam posuerunt*, 109–112. See also William O’Duba, “Three franciscan metaphysicians after Scotus: Antonius Andreae, Francis of Marchia, and Nicholas Bonet”, in *A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, eds Fabrizio Amerini, and Gabriele Galluzzo (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014), 413–493.
40. “Tertio modo dicitur esse quod significat veritatem compositionis in propositionibus, secundum quod est dicitur copula: et secundum hoc est in intellectu componente et dividente quantum ad sui complementum; sed fundatur in esse rei, quod est actus essentiae, sicut supra de veritate dictum est” (Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 33 q. 1, a. 1, ad 1). “Iste secundus modus [sc. *esse ut verum*] comparatur ad primum [sc. *substantial esse or esse ut actus essendi*], sicut effectus ad causam (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9).
41. “Deus non solum cognoscit ipsas res, sed etiam enuntiabilia et complexa; tamen simplici cognitione per modum suum; quod sic patet. Cum in re duo sint, quidditas rei, et esse ejus, his duobus respondet duplex operatio intellectus. Una quae dicitur a philosophis formatio, qua apprehendit quidditates rerum, quae etiam dicitur indivisibilium intelligentia. Alia autem comprehendit esse rei, componendo affirmationem, quia etiam esse rei ex materia et forma compositae, a qua cognitionem accipit,

consistit in quadam compositione formae ad materiam, vel accidentis ad subjectum. Similiter etiam in ipso Deo est considerare naturam ipsius, et esse ejus; et sicut natura sua est causa et exemplar omnis naturae, ita etiam esse suum est causa et exemplar omnis esse. Unde sicut cognoscendo essentiam suam, cognoscit omnem rem; ita cognoscendo esse suum, cognoscit esse cujuslibet rei; et sic cognoscit omnia enuntiabilia, quibus esse significatur; non tamen diversa operatione nec compositione, sed simpliciter; quia esse suum non est aliud ab essentia, nec est compositum consequens; et sicut per idem cognoscit bonum et malum, ita per idem cognoscit affirmationes et negationes” (Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 38, q. 1, a. 3 co). See Irmgard Habel, *Die Sachverhalts-Problematik in der Phänomenologie und bei Thomas von Aquin* (Regensburg: Josef Habel, 1959).

42. Aquinas, “Commentary on Aristotle’s On Interpretation 1–5”, 463. “Ad quod respondet Boethius quod Aristoteles hic nominat passiones animae conceptiones intellectus, qui numquam decipitur; et ita oportet eius conceptiones esse apud omnes eadem: quia, si quis a vero discordat, hic non intelligit. Sed quia etiam in intellectu potest esse falsum, secundum quod componit et dividit, non autem secundum quod cognoscit quod quid est, idest essentiam rei, ut dicitur in III de anima; referendum est hoc ad *simplices intellectus conceptiones (quas significant voces incomplexae)*, quae sunt eadem apud omnes: quia, si quis vere intelligit quid est homo, quodcunque aliud aliquid, quam hominem apprehendat, non intelligit hominem. Huiusmodi autem simplices conceptiones intellectus sunt, quas primo voces significant. *Unde dicitur in IV metaphysicae quod ratio, quam significat nomen, est definitio*” (Thomas de Aquino, *In I Peryerm.*, l. 2. ed. Gauthier, Italics mine).
43. See the text quoted above: “Respondeo dicendum ad primam quaestionem, quod, sicut dicit philosophus in 3 de anima, duplex est operatio intellectus. Una quae comprehendit quidditates simplices rerum; et haec operatio vocatur a philosophis formatio vel simplex intelligentia” (Thomas de Aquino, *In III Sent.*, d. 23, q. 2, a. 2 qc. 1, co).
44. Aquinas, “Commentary on Aristotle’s On Interpretation 1–5,” 465. Italics mine.
45. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 30, a. 3, ad 1. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. VI, trans. Ceslaus Velevy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 77.

46. See Giovanni Ventimiglia, “The importance of being something. Studies on the transcendentals (1994–2017),” in *Sujet Libre: pour Alain de Libera*, eds Jean-Baptiste Brenet, and Laurent Cesalli (Paris: Vrin, 2018), 333–337; Giovanni Ventimiglia, “Die Transzendente Vielheit des Thomas von Aquin in ihrem theologischen Kontext,” *Rivista teologica di Lugano* 17, no. 1 (2012): 103–118; Giovanni Ventimiglia, “La questione della predicabilità del numero in Dio secondo san Tommaso d’Aquino,” *Rivista Teologica di Lugano* 5, no. 1 (2000): 47–67; Giovanni Ventimiglia, “Die Transzendentalienlehre des Thomas von Aquin: Denktraditionen, Quellen, Eigenheiten,” in *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie au Moyen Age? Actes du Xe Congrès international de Philosophie Médiévale-Erfurt, du 25 au 30 août 1997*, eds Jan Aertsen, and Andreas Speer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998), 522–529; Giovanni Ventimiglia, “Quali sarebbero le novità della dottrina tomista dei trascendentali?,” *Rivista di Filosofia neo-scolastica* 89, no. 2–3 (1997): 407–427; Giovanni Ventimiglia, “Il trattato tomista sulle proprietà trascendentali dell’essere,” *Rivista di Filosofia neo-scolastica* 87, no. 1 (1995): 51–82.
47. On the importance of the notion of transcendental multiplicity in the Trinitarian theology of Thomas see Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*; Piero Coda, “Tomismo,” in *Dizionario del Cristianesimo, vol II*, eds Piero Coda, and Giovanni Filoramo (Torino: Utet, 2006), 1087–1094; especially 1094.
48. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic: a logico-mathematical enquiry into the concept of number*, ed. John L. Austin, § 24, 31.
49. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, § 24, 32.
50. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, § 25, 33.
51. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, § 24, 30.
52. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 199.
53. Thomas de Aquino, *De ver.*, q. I, a. 1. Thomas Aquinas, “De veritate”, trans. McInerny, in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, ed. McInerny, 166–167. Italics mine. I have commented on these passages in detail in Ventimiglia, *Differenza e Contraddizione*, 207–300, and more recently in Giovanni Ventimiglia, “The importance of being something,” 333–337.
54. Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. V, *In VII Phys.*, l. 8; “(diversum) dicitur omne quod est aliud per oppositum ad idem. Sicut enim idem dicebatur omne quod est ipsum, quod est relativum identitatis, ita diversum dicitur esse quod est aliud, quod est relativum diversitatis” (Thomas de Aquino, *In X Met.*, l. 4).

55. “*sicut unum et multa, ita idem et diuersum non sunt propria unius generis, set sunt quasi passionis entis in quantum est ens; et ideo non est inconueniens si aliquorum diuersitas aliorum pluralitatem causet*” (Thomas de Aquino, *In Boet. De trin.*, q. 4, a. 1. Italics mine) “*Quia enim unum et ens dicuntur multipliciter, oportet quod ea quae dicuntur secundum ea multipliciter dicantur; sicut idem et diuersum quae consequuntur unum et multa, et contrarium, quod sub diuerso continetur. Et ita oportet, quod diuersum dividatur secundum decem praedicamentam, sicut ens et unum*” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 12. Italics mine).
56. Apart from the occurrences of this expression that we will quote later (namely *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 30, a. 3; *De pot.*, q. 9, a. 7), the following are the other passages on this topic: “*In Angelis non est numerus qui est quantitas discreta, causatus ex divisione continui, sed causatus ex distinctione formarum, prout multitudo est de transcendentibus, ut supra dictum est* (Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 50, a. 3, ad 1. Italics mine); “*Ad decimumquintum dicendum quod numerus qui causatur ex divisione continui est species quantitatis, et est tantum in substantiis materialibus. Sed in substantiis immaterialibus est multitudo quae est de transcendentibus, secundum quod unum et multa dividunt ens; et haec multitudo consequitur distinctionem formalem*” (Thomas de Aquino, *De spirit. creat.*, a. 8, ad 15. Italics mine); “*Addit enim numerus super multitudinem rationem mensurationis: est enim numerus multitudo mensurata per unum, ut dicitur in X Metaphys. Et propter hoc numerus ponitur species quantitatis discretæ, non autem multitudo; sed est de transcendentibus* (Thomas de Aquino, *In III Phys.*, l. 8. Italics mine).
57. Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. V.
58. Thomas de Aquino, *In VII Phys.*, l. 8.
59. “*Est autem considerandum, quod ponere diuersitatem rerum propter diuersitatem susceptivi tantum, est opinio platonica, quae posuit unum ex parte formae, et dualitatem ex parte materiae; ut tota diuersitatis ratio ex materiali principio proveniret. Unde et unum et ens posuit univoce dici, et unam significare naturam: sed secundum diuersitatem susceptivorum, rerum species diuersificari [...]. Quaerit ergo primo de specie, quando sit iudicanda altera species: utrum ex hoc solo quod eadem natura sit in alio et alio susceptibili, sicut Platonici posuerunt. Sed hoc secundum praemissa non potest esse verum. Dictum est enim quod genus non est simpliciter unum: et ideo differentia speciei non attenditur per hoc quod aliquid idem sit in alio et alio, nisi secundum Platonicos, qui posuerunt genus*

esse simpliciter unum. Et propter hoc, quasi quaestionem solvens, subiungit: aut si aliud in alio; quasi dicat: non propter hoc est alia species, quia est idem in alio; sed quia est alia natura in alio susceptibili. Secundam quaestionem movet de definitione: et est quaestio quid sit terminus, idest, quae sit definitio declarans speciem. Et quia ea quae sunt idem definitione, sunt idem simpliciter, ideo quasi solvens subiungit, quod illud est propria definitio rei, quo possumus discernere utrum sit idem aut aliud, puta album vel dulce. *Et hoc quod dico aliud, potest duobus modis accipi*, sicut et prius: uno scilicet modo ut album dicatur aliud a dulci, quia in albo invenitur alia natura subiecta quam in dulci; alio modo, quia non solum secundum naturam subiectam differunt, sed omnino non sunt idem. Quae quidem duo sunt eadem cum his quae supra posuit: *si idem in alio, aut si aliud in alio* (Thomas de Aquino, *In VII Phys.*, l. 7–8. Italics mine). “Sicut sensibilia constituuntur ex principiis universalibus per participationem specierum, ita species, quas dicebat esse numeros, constituuntur secundum eum, “ex illis”, *scilicet magno et parvo*. Unitas enim diversas numerorum *species constituit per additionem et subtractionem, in quibus consistit ratio magni et parvi*. Unde cum unum opinaretur esse substantiam entis, quia non distinguebat inter unum quod est principium numeri et unum quod convertitur cum ente, videbatur sibi quod hoc modo multiplicarentur diversae species separatae ex una quae est communis substantia, sicut ex unitate diversae species numerorum multiplicantur” (Thomas de Aquino: *In I Met.*, l. 10. Italics mine).

60. Ventimiglia, “Die Transzendente Vielheit des Thomas von Aquin in ihrem theologischen Kontext”; Ventimiglia, La questione della predicabilità del numero in Dio secondo san Tommaso d’Aquino”; Johannes Schneider, *Die Lehre vom dreieinigen Gott in der Schule des Petrus Lombardus* (München: Hueber, 1961).
61. “Et Magister omnino removet; ideo positione sua defecit. Et in isto articulo non sustinetur communiter a magistris Parisiensibus” (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, *In I Sententiarum*, d. 24, a. 2, q. 1, ed. PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Quaracchi).
62. “Videtur quod unitas aliquid positive dicat in divinis, et non remotiorem tantum, secundum opinionem Magistri” (Thomas de Aquino, *Quodl.*, X, q. 1, a. 1): “Numerus sequitur distinctionem. Si ergo unitas et numerus in divinis non dicerent rem aliquam, non esset in divinis realis distinctio, quod est haeresis Sabelliana” (Ibidem).

63. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 30, a. 3, ad 1. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol VI, 77.
64. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 30, a. 3. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol VI, 75. Italics mine.
65. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 30, a. 3. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol VI, 75. Italics mine.
66. Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 9 a. 7.
67. Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 9 a. 7.
68. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, § 24, 32.
69. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 11 a. 2 ad 4. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol II, 163. I have translated “ens” as “being” and not as “existent”.
70. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 3. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 566.
71. “Primum enim quod in intellectum cadit, est *ens*; secundum vero est *negatio entis*; ex his autem duobus sequitur tertio *intellectus divisionis* (ex hoc enim quod aliquid intelligitur ens, et intelligitur non esse hoc ens, sequitur in intellectu quod sit divisum ab eo); quarto autem sequitur in intellectu ratio *unius*, prout scilicet intelligitur hoc ens non esse in se divisum; quinto autem sequitur intellectus *multitudinis*, prout scilicet hoc ens intelligitur divisum ab alio, et utrumque ipsorum esse in se unum” (Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 9 a. 7 ad 15. Italics mine). “Sed divisio cadit in intellectu ex ipsa negatione entis. Ita quod primo cadit in intellectu *ens*; secundo, quod hoc ens non est illud ens, et sic secundo apprehendimus *divisionem*; tertio, *unum*; quarto, *multitudinem*” (Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 11 a. 2 ad 4. Italics mine). “Divisio autem quae praesupponitur ad rationem unius, secundum quod convertitur cum ente, non est divisio quantitatis continuæ, quae praeintelligitur uni quod est principium numeri. Sed est divisio quam causat contradictio, prout hoc ens et illud, dicuntur divisa, ex eo quod hoc non est illud. Sic ergo primo in intellectu nostro cadit *ens*, et deinde *divisio*; et post hoc *unum* quod divisionem privat, et ultimo *multitudo* quae ex unitatibus constituitur. Nam licet ea quae sunt divisa, multa sint, non habent tamen rationem multorum, nisi postquam huic et illi attribuitur quod sit unum” (Thomas de Aquino, *In X Met.*, l. 4. Italics mine). “Sic ergo patet quod *prima pluralitatis vel divisionis ratio sive principium est ex negatione et affirmatione, ut talis ordo originis pluralitatis intelligatur, quod primo sint intelligenda ens et non ens, ex quibus ipsa prima divisa constitu-*

untur, ac per hoc plura” (Thomas de Aquino, *In Boet. De trin.*, pars 2 q. 4, a. 1, co. 3. Italics mine).

72. “Et ideo manifestum est, quod unitas non importat privationem multitudinis, quia, cum privatio sit posterior illo quod privatur, si unum privaret multitudinem, sequeretur quod esset posterius multitudine; et cum habitus sit de definitione privationis, sequeretur quod unitas definiretur per multitudinem: quod est falsum, quia tunc foret circulus in definitione: nam multitudo definitur per unitatem: multitudo enim est aggregatio unitatum. Et ideo unum quod convertitur cum ente, non importat privationem divisionis entis quae est per quantitatem, quia ista divisio pertinet ad unum genus particulare entis, et non posset cadere in definitione unius, cum sit particularius quam ipsum unum quod definitur; sed dicit privationem formalis divisionis, quae est per opposita, cuius *radix prima est affirmatio et negatio*: illa enim sic dividuntur, quod unum non est aliud. In intellectu igitur primo cadit ens; secundo divisio; tertio unum quod divisionem privat: et consequenter multitudo, in cuius definitione cadit unitas, sicut et in ratione unius cadit divisio” (Pseudo-Thomas de Aquino, *De natura generis*, cap. II, ed. Spiazzi. Italics mine).
73. “(13. De primo modo principiandi, videlicet quomodo in genere oppositionum oppositio una est origo causalis alterius, et primo *de affirmatione et negatione*) [...]. In hoc igitur primo modo oppositio, quae est secundum affirmationem et negationem, est principium et origo eius oppositionis, quae est habitus et privationis, et ex ista ulterius oritur oppositio contrarietatis eo modo originis, quo proprium oritur ex communi, immo potius sicut determinatum oritur ex indeterminato, in quo virtualiter continetur [...]. (15. De constitutione primae et absolutissimae oppositionis, quae est affirmatio et negatio). (1) Circa hoc autem considerandum *primo*, quod prima realium et intellectualium intentionum est *ens*. Cadit autem *secundo loco* in intellectu ipsius entis *negatio* sive *non ens*. Hunc enim intellectum, qui est non entis, non antecedit aliqua intentio, quae sit prior ente, quia nulla talis est, ut dictum est; [...] tum etiam quia huius entis determinati intentio non intelligeretur quocumque modo alia a prima nisi praeintellecto eo, in quo est prima ratio distinguendi sive, ut ita dicatur, alietatis, quod est *affirmatio et negatio* [...]. (2) Manifestum est igitur secundum praedicta, quod primo omnium intelligitur *ens*, deinde autem *non ens*. In hoc autem iam consistit ratio oppositionis, cum *non ens* sit formaliter remotio entis, in quo perficitur oppositionis ratio in quibuscumque oppositis. (16. Quomodo

ex huiusmodi oppositione constituitur ratio unius) [...]. (2) Hinc est etiam, quod in huiusmodi oppositione fundatur primo ratio distinctio- nis quorumcumque distinguibilium. Ex his autem iam trahitur ratio unius, inquantum ab aliquo removetur *distinctio, quae fit per ens et non ens*, et hoc est, quod dicunt, quod unum est ens indivisum sive in quo non cadit divisio. *Fortassis autem magis proprie diceretur, in quo non cadit distinctio vel remotio*, si attendatur propria ratio rei. Divisio enim proprie pertinet quantitati [...]. (17. Quomodo per idem genus oppositionis constituitur ratio multi). (1) Constituta autem secundum dictum modum ratione unius ex primo genere oppositionis, hac ipsa ratione unius supposita constituitur ratio multi per idem oppositionis genus. (2) Multim enim unum et unum et *hoc non est illud* et e converso, in qua ratione unum et unum materialiter se habet. Divisio autem, quae importatur per affirmationem et negationem, quoniam hoc non est illud et e converso, formaliter complet rationem multi. Secundum hoc autem affirmatio et negatio directe cadit in ratione multi. Unde dicta oppositio quasi modo positivo complet rationem multi, non sicut in ratione unius, in qua privatur dicta oppositio. (4) Si autem talis oppositio contrahatur ad unum et ad multa, tunc est alterius hinc inde et hoc ratione terminorum, inter quos attenditur. Secundum enim quod cadit in definitione unius, sic est *oppositio entis et non entis*. Unum enim est, in quo non est distinctio per ens et non ens. Secundum autem quod cadit in definitione multi, sic attenditur oppositio inter unum et unum inquantum huiusmodi. Unde huiusmodi oppositioni praesupponitur unum et unum et per consequens illa, quae est entis et non entis inquantum huiusmodi. Et sic non est unius rationis oppositio, quae privatur in ratione unius, et illa, quae ponitur in ratione multi. (18. Quod primum genus oppositionis non clauditur intra aliquod genus entis sic nec unum et multa)” (Theodoricus Friburgensis, *Tractatus de natura contrariorum*, edited by Ruedi Imbach in Dietrich von Freiberg, *Opera omnia*, Tom II: *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Theologie*, mit einer Einl. Von K. Flash, edited by Ruedi Imbach, Maria Rita Pagnoni-Sturlese, Hartmut Steffan und Loris Sturlese (Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi, II, 3). (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983), 93–97. Italics mine.).

74. Thomas de Aquino, *In I Periherm.*, l. 3, trans. Anthony Kenny in Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will*, 159.
75. Thomas de Aquino, *In VI Met.*, l. 4. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 1223. Italics mine.

76. Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 894.
77. Robertus Baconus, *Syncategoremata*, in *De 13de eeuwse tractaten over syncategorematische termen I: Inleidende Studie*, ed. Henricus Antonius Giovanni Braakhuis. (Leiden: Meppel, 1979.) I, 141, 142. Italics mine (trans. Richard Davies and myself).



5

The Senses of Being in Context

In the foregoing chapters, we have taken up some Fregean suggestions to pinpoint some neglected Thomistic themes and texts. We sought to show that these are by no means of secondary importance in the overall economy of Thomas's thought. For instance, we have seen that the distinction between different senses of being plays a fundamental role at various key moments in his works: from the problem of evil to that of Christ's two natures, from the meaning of the proposition "God exists" to the ontological status of the transcendentals, and so on.

The time has come to consider whether or not the Thomistic themes and texts in question are of secondary importance in the historico-philosophical context of his time. Might it not be that those themes and texts only seem important because they are seen from the viewpoint of Frege's philosophy and that of analytic metaphysics, while they did not really attract the attention of Thomas's contemporaries? The present chapter aims to show that this is not so and to place the texts we have been discussing in their historico-philosophical context to allow a better understanding of them. I hope it will become clear that the new agenda of themes and texts from Thomas that we have been drawing up in light of suggestions from Frege is also fertile for the history of medieval

philosophy and can break new ground in historico-philosophical and purely philosophical research, of which the present chapter can only offer preliminary indications.

Among the various themes that we have considered, that of the two senses of being—*esse ut actus* and *esse ut verum*—is the most important. This goes through the foregoing chapters and the various questions it raises can be summarised as follows. (1) Is being as act expressed in propositions like “*Socrates est*” or in those like “*Socrates est homo*” (*De Int.*, IV, 16b23–25)? (2) Even if negations and privations *are* (*Met.*, IV, 2, 1003b4–11), *are* they in the sense of being as act or in that of being as truth (*Met.*, V, 7, 1017a8–35)? (3) Is being as truth a predicate of things or of propositions (*Met.*, VI, 3, 1027b17–1028a6)? As we have already considered the historico-philosophical context of the first question in our second chapter, where we described the debate among medieval logicians about “*est*” as copula or as predicate, we shall concentrate here on the last two questions. It is not by chance that we have been able to refer to specific Aristotelian texts to locate the questions at issue and, in the coming pages, we shall examine how these passages were read by some thirteenth-century authors a little earlier than, contemporary with and a little later than Thomas.

Thomas’s own commentary on the *Metaphysics* was composed between 1268 and 1272.¹ He seems to have written it fairly independently from that of his master Albertus, which dates to between 1264 and 1267.² It is likewise an open question to what extent he depended on earlier commentaries, such as those of Richard Rufus of Cornwall, Adam of Buckfield and Geoffrey of Aspell.³ Nevertheless, an account of those commentaries, as well as of others, such as those of Roger Bacon, the so called Anonymus Lipsiensis, Henry of Ghent and Siger of Brabant, will help us understand better the similarities and differences among them and, so, to locate Thomas’s texts and pick out what is peculiar to it.

One of the first Latin commentaries on the *Metaphysics* is the *Scriptum in Metaphysicam Aristotelis* by Richard Rufus of Cornwall, dating from between 1237 and 1238.⁴

Of this text there is a *redactio brevior*, prepared by the Richard Rufus Project (RRP) available online, at rrp.stanford.edu, and a preliminary unpublished version of the *redactio longior*, excerpts from which I was

able to read thanks to the courtesy of RRP's general editor Rega Wood.⁵ Of particular interest to us is what he writes in commenting on Book V where Aristotle distinguishes four senses or modes of being: *ens per accidens*, *ens per se*, *ens ut verum*, *ens ut potentia et actus*. Rufus reduces these four senses to two, namely *ens per accidens* and *ens per se*. In *ens per se*, Rufus includes being as truth and being in potentiality and actuality as two modes of *ens per se*.⁶ He thinks he can make Aristotle say that being is said in two ways, that of the accidental and that *per se*: "*ens dupliciter dicitur, per accidens et per se*". In turn, *ens per accidens* has two sub-senses (*significationes*),⁷ and two sub-modes.⁸ *Ens per se* (these are the words used in Rufus's translation) has two sub-senses (*significationes*), and three modes.⁹

Rufus distinguishes in fact two significations of the phrases he found in the translation "*ens per se*": a primary, general, signification, which can be called "non proprie" or "generally speaking" and a second signification, which Rufus considers as "proprie".¹⁰ The first signification includes both what is "per se et primo" and what is "per se et non primo". The second, instead, includes only what is "per se et primo", namely the substances or "entia" properly speaking, and not what is "per se et non primo". In fact, signification (or sense) and predication are not synonyms for Rufus: *ens* can be *predicated per se primo* only of substance (a substance is an *ens*), *ens* can be *predicated per se secundo sed non primo* of accidents, since the subjects of accidents are entities (*entia*).

All the ten categories are included as *entia per se* in the primary signification of the phrase,¹¹ but not in the second signification of the phrase, since they cannot be *predicated per se et primo* and are not properly speaking even *entia* but only have *esse*.

Ens per se, generally speaking, has three modes¹²: first, being as substance; second, being as truth¹³ and accident¹⁴; and, third, being as potentiality and actuality.¹⁵

All in all, however, in Rufus's Commentary the principal senses or modes of being are *ens per accidens* and *ens per se*.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that both Adam of Buckfield¹⁶ and a contemporary, or perhaps slightly later,¹⁷ anonymous commentator¹⁸ on the same Book of the *Metaphysics* call on another translation ("*alia translatio*") in defence of this rather stretched reading of

Aristotle. This other translation, known at that time as the *Media*, mentions at the beginning of *Metaphysics* V, 7, the senses of being *secundum accidens* and being *secundum se*: “*ens dicitur hoc quidem secundum accidens illud vero secundum se*”,¹⁹ while Michael Scot’s translation from the Arabic, which was the version most used at the time, mentions at that point in the text only accidental being: “*ens dicitur quodammodo accidentaliter*”; and then proceeds to list the other senses.²⁰

Returning to Rufus, we ought to point out the downgrading of the sense of being as truth. Indeed, he regards this mode as *ens per extensionem*. “*Proprie loquendo*” there are no other modes of being *per se* other than the first, namely that of substance, and to say that “*verum est ens*” involves extending the sense of the word “*ens*” (*dicere quod verum est ens est extendere hoc nomen ‘ens’*). Indeed, properly speaking, the truth is “being” in the sense of “*esse*” and not in the sense of “*ens*”.²¹

Moreover, being as truth is regarded as a close relative of accident. Rufus explains, referring to Averroes, that the truth at stake here is “*quod cadit in cognitione nostra*”, which is necessarily accidental with respect to the thing which means a being: it is accidental for the existence of Socrates that someone formulates a true statement about his existence. The same is not the case for God’s intellect: it is not accidental for the existence of Socrates to be known or not by the divine intellect, since that knowledge has the power to create and keep creatures alive.²² It is good to keep in mind that this being of accidents is not the same as *ens per accidens*.

In his commentary (*redactio longior*) on *Metaphysics*, Book VI, Rufus writes, following Aristotle that both *ens per accidens* and being as truth have a property in common, namely that of not being in truth beings—“*ista non sunt entia in veritate*”—and, following the translation from Arabic (*Metaphysica Nova*) and Averroes’s *Long Commentary*, of belonging to the diminished genus of being (“*ens diminutum*”).²³

The motive for this downgrade of these modes of being is the following: *ens per accidens* does not have a determinate cause and is a casual being, while being as truth does have a cause, but only in the soul and not in the reality of things.²⁴

As regards the fourth sense or mode of being discussed in the *Metaphysics*, namely being as potentiality or actuality, Rufus claims that in this case we do not have, properly speaking, a mode or even a

sub-mode of *ens per se*, but only a distinction within the first mode: *ens per se* can be either in potentiality or in actuality.²⁵

Thus, the four senses or modes of being we find in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* are here reduced to fundamentally two: "*ens dupliciter dicitur, per accidens et per se*".

This account is quite radically reworked by Roger Bacon. In his commentary *per modum quaestionis Quaestiones supra libros prime philosophiae Aristotelis*, datable to the decade 1240–1250,²⁶ he explicitly raises the issue of whether being as truth is being *per se* or *per accidens*. From what we have just seen in Rufus, the question was still open: on the one hand, Rufus had placed being as truth among the (three) modes of being *per se*, and not among the modes of being *per accidens*; on the other, however, he had interpreted it exclusively as an *ens diminutum* in all respects like the accidental.

The arguments that Roger brings forward in the objections to his *quaestio* are telling. The argument in favour of identifying being as truth with being *per accidens* is as follows: in *Metaphysics*, Book VI, Aristotle treats being as truth at the same time as being *per accidens* and seems to interpret them both as *entia diminuta*. Among the arguments against it, the first maintains simply: the mode of being as truth is not placed in Book V among the modes of being *per accidens* but as a mode in its own right. If Aristotle really had thought of it as a sub-mode of being *per accidens*, we would not understand why he did not place it among them.

The second argument against it is rather more philosophical: being and truth convert (*convertuntur*); but being is in common to being *per se* and to being *per accidens*; so truth (or being as truth) is common to being *per se* and to being *per accidens*.²⁷

Roger's reply is surprisingly rich. He begins by noting that each mode of being is either a mode of being *per se* or a mode of being *per accidens*, or a mode that is common to being as *per se* and to being *per accidens*. The modes of being *per se* are the ten categories or *modi* of being, while the modes of being *per accidens* are three (not the two that Rufus had picked out), namely, the *collation* of the accident to the accident, that of the accident to the subject and that of two accidents to their subject. Lastly, there are the modes of being considered in common. In this case, either being is considered in itself, *absolute*, in which case we have the two modes of being in potentiality and in actuality, or being is considered in relation to the soul, in which case we have, in the first place, the truth,

which is common and is convertible with being. This common truth is in turn divided into the *incomplexum* truth, which is not composed by the intellect, and the *complexum* truth, which is composed by the intellect. The former is identical with being *per se* and is declined into the ten categories, while the latter is being *per accidens*.²⁸

Thus, Roger concludes, presumably targeting Rufus and other commentators of the day, “it is not necessary that the being that is the truth should be being *per accidens*, unless the truth is understood as the truth *per accidens*”.²⁹

And he clarifies, relative to the text of Aristotle, that Book V deals both with the common truth, namely that which is convertible with being, and with the *complexum* truth, namely *per accidens*, while VI deals with *incomplexum* truth and, only at the end of the Book, with *complexum* truth.³⁰

Finally, as regards being as potentially and actuality, Roger asserts in the objections that this is a mode that is common to being *per se* and to being *per accidens*, since both of these modes can in their turn be in potentiality and actuality.³¹

It will be seen in this rich and articulated discussion (1) that the senses of being do not seem to be reduced to just two, as in earlier accounts, but rather there are four senses that are articulated and correlated one to the other; and (2) that being as truth takes on a greater importance and dignity, coming to be considered (a) as a transcendental on a par with being considered in general; (b) as a property common to being *per se* and to the categories (*verum incomplexum*); and lastly (c) as indeed accidental but as a not at all banal property of statements (*verum complexum*). This clearly emerges from Roger’s illuminating and detailed commentary *per quaestiones* on *Metaphysics*, Book VI.

He begins by noting that, having dealt with the diminished being (*ens diminutum*) that is being *per accidens* outside the soul (*extra animam*), he now intends to deal with the diminished being (*ens diminutum*) that is the truth in the soul (*in anima*). It is evident that he still follows, like Rufus, the incorrect translation of the *Metaphysics* from Arabic (*Metaphysica Nova*), which reads as “diminished genus of being” instead of “remaining genus of being”.

He then explains that a natural philosopher—whom we would nowadays call a physicist—is concerned with incomplex or simple truth, and that only the metaphysician is concerned with the complex or composite truth. At that point, Roger poses the question of whether the subject of this truth is to be found in reality or not.

He argues that the subject of this truth is not to be found in things inasmuch as they are parts of the world, but in things inasmuch as they are understood (*intellecte*) or, better still, actually (*actu*) understood.

Among the arguments for identifying reality, or things considered as such (*secundum se et absolute*), as the subject of this truth he quotes a well-known Aristotelian thesis that “*ex eo quod res est vel non est dicitur omnino [oratio] vera vel falsa*”. Roger objects to this argument that “thing” (“*res*”) should be taken as “the thing said”. Hence, if the *dictum* of the proposition “Socrates is seated”, namely Socrates’s act of sitting (*sedere*), *est*, namely is/exists,³² then the proposition is true, but if the *dictum* of the proposition is not, then the proposition is false.

This means that Roger actually agrees with the argument in the *sed contra*: truth is a *passio*, namely a property, said of a subject; now “true” in the sense of complex truth is not said of things as such, but only of speech (*oratio*)—obviously not as a sound of a voice but as a meaningful discourse; therefore speech is the subject of complex truth.

Thus the being as truth discussed in Book V is the “is” whose subject is a speech (*oratio*) or a proposition.³³

In fact Roger makes it even clearer in the following question, in which it is explicitly asked whether the complex truth and false are in speech (*in oratione*) as in their subject and not in things. His answer is that truth is a *passio enuntiationis*, which we may render as a property of the judgment. Hence, the complex truth certainly has its subject in speech (*oratio*) and not in things. Yet not in all kinds of speech or propositions but only in that which is meaningful (*oratio significativa*), which is to say a judgment. For there are kinds of speech, such as prayers, that are neither true nor false.³⁴ Being as truth, then, is a property expressed by the predicate “*est*” of a special speech or a special proposition, which is a judgment. Indeed, it is precisely the judgment that we are used to calling true or false.³⁵

The term “*passio*”, deriving from the “*pathos*” of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and corresponding to the modern “property”, was used in the Middle Ages in combination with “*res*”—*passio rei*—to mean the objective property of a thing, or with “*anima*”—*passio animae*—to mean a property of the soul, for instance a concept. Roger combines “*passio*” with *enuntiatio*—*passio enuntiationis*—to mean that property of a judgment that is expressed with the verb “to be” referred to it. Being as truth, then, is the property of a judgement, an “*est*” whose subject is a judgement.

There are striking similarities with the corresponding account offered by Thomas, which we examined earlier: indeed, the expression “*passio enuntiationis*” could be used to explain the Thomistic notion of being as truth. But the point of difference from Thomas seems to be this: while Roger takes what has just been seen as the explanation of one of the modes of being as truth, that of the composite or complex truth, in Thomas the same explanation holds rather for the only mode of being as truth, without citing other types of being as truth. We shall return to the point below.

Albert the Great’s commentary on the *Metaphysics* dates to between 1264 and 1267 and presents some similarities to Roger Bacon’s treatment of the senses of being but few to that of Rufus.³⁶ Commenting on Book IV, Albert notes that not only things are called being but also the so-called “second (or logical) intentions”.³⁷

As regards the senses of being, he says that being is said either *secundum accidens* or *secundum se*.

In the first case, Albert notes that it is said in two or perhaps rather three sub-modes (*secundum autem accidens dupliciter vel forte melius tripliciter*). Here Albert might refer to Rufus, who had spoken of two subsenses, and to Roger, who had mentioned three. Albert cites three examples of being *secundum accidens*: the just is musical, the man is musical, the musician is a man. The explanation Albert offers is based on the notion of accidental happening or befalling (“*accidere*”). It happens to the just to be musical (because both accidents befall the same subject); it happens to a man, who is a complete being in himself, to be musical, it happens to a single subject to be both a man and musical, or both a man and pale.³⁸

As regards being *secundum se*, Albert notes that this is a matter of the categories, when we *predicate* of something “essentially” (“*essentialiter*”) as

of a subject. Albert offers no examples of this, but remarks at the end that “this being varies in accordance with the figures of the categories”.³⁹

Things are rather different as regards the modes of being as truth. Here, Albert makes a distinction like Roger’s between the truth that exists outside the soul and that existing in the soul. Albert notes that the former, which Roger called “*incomplexum*”, corresponds to a predicate of things, and he offers some illuminating examples: true gold, true man, true time, true matter. And then clarifies that the contrast with this sense of true is the mixed or the apparent but not real, which is to say the “false vulgarly so-called” (“*quod vulgariter falsum vocatur*”). To say that the gold in this bracelet is true is to say that it is not alloyed with other metals, that is, pure, authentic, has not been manipulated or counterfeited, and is not false in the sense of non-falsified. Albert proposes that it is in this sense that truth is a transcendental and is convertible with being and the one.⁴⁰

We might and should ask here, though: is this the proper sense of “false”? When, for instance during a debate, we say “this is false!” do we mean that it is in some way mixed, apparent or counterfeit? Surely not. What we mean is that a certain judgment is false, in the sense of not corresponding to reality. This is the proper sense of “false” as against the “vulgar” sense. If so, then the truth (or the true) that contrasts with the vulgarly so-called false will be vulgarly so-called, which is to say not true in the proper sense of the word. So how can a vulgarly so-called truth or true be the transcendental that is convertible with being and one? It may, therefore, not be by chance that Thomas leaves precisely this sense of true and false out of account.

Returning then to Albert’s text, the truth that exists in the soul, he notes, means the truth of composition. This seems to correspond precisely to what Roger had called the truth “*complexum*”. Albert adds that this is not a matter of being an entity or a being (*ens*) but merely of being being, namely of being a “to be” (*esse*), since the composition of the judgment, although it *is*, is not something that is an entity (*ens*).⁴¹

In the Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI, Albert adds—not following the translation from Arabic as Rufus and Roger did—that both being as truth and being *per accidens* belong to a remaining genus of being (*reliquum genus entis*), which is extraneous to what is truly being and which has no true nature of being.⁴²

Albert's explanation of this kind of truth is clear and follows, with useful illustrations, Aristotle's words: "when we say that 'Socrates is musical' we mean to say that this is true, and when we say 'Socrates is not pale' we mean to say that it is not true that he is pale".⁴³ We can see that being as truth here corresponds to "it is true that (Socrates is musical)", or to "it is true that p " while being as false corresponds to the falsity of the judgment, to "it is not true that (Socrates is pale)", or to "it is not true that p ". Even if the negation is internal to p —Socrates is *not* pale—it is in reality external to p : it is *not* true that (Socrates is pale). As we have already seen, this is just what Thomas Aquinas will explain a few years later.

Overall, Albert's proposal is quite similar to that of Roger. Being as truth seems to make gains on the "philosophical market". His distinction between the two types of truth is interesting: there is the truth existing in things and this is the transcendental truth (or true), and then there is the truth existing in the soul, namely the truth as a property of judgments.

In the end, then, how many senses of being does Albert recognise? It is hard to say on the basis of this Commentary. But there are passages elsewhere in his writings where he explicitly states that there are two senses, appealing directly to *Metaphysics*, Book V. Which are these? Not those that Rufus indicated, which we have seen are being *per se* and being *per accidens* but rather being as truth, which expresses the truth of a proposition (better: a judgement) and the being that expresses the essence of things, which is subdivided by the ten categories.⁴⁴ In short, while Rufus had reduced the four senses we find in Aristotle (*ens per accidens*, *ens per se*, *ens ut verum*, *ens ut potentia et actus*) to just the first two, Albert seems to reduce them to the second and the third. In any case, it is clear that we have here a very different reading of the same Aristotelian text.

Thomas's commentary seems to be datable after Albert's, between the autumn of 1268 and the spring of 1272, as already said. We have already examined in earlier chapters the senses of being and the relevant texts of Thomas. Yet we did so by way of a comparison with Fregean notions and texts or rather we read them starting from Frege's philosophy. It will be recalled that the upshot of that enquiry was the identification in the writings of Thomas of two different senses of being, each with its sub-senses. It is now worth re-reading the same texts, with special reference to the

Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, to compare them this time not with Frege but with Thomas's contemporaries.

It will be recalled that one of the key sticking points in the Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book IV, was the inclusion of negations and privations among the modes of being *per se*:

And similarly the negations of those things which are related to substances, or even substance itself, are also called beings. Hence we say that non-being is non-being (*unde dicimus quod non ens est non ens*). But this would not be possible *unless a negation possessed being in some way*.⁴⁵

Well, what in the way in which negations are said to have being?

The answer must be sought in *Metaphysics*, Book V, and specifically in the seventh chapter, where the Philosopher discusses the senses or modes or ways of what is or being and in the corresponding part of Thomas's commentary.

Thomas begins with the classical division of the text, noting, like Rufus and Albert but unlike Roger, that Aristotle here specifies how many ways "ens" is said. He then proceeds noting that Aristotle first distinguishes the modes of being *per accidens* and then the modes of being *per se* or *secundum se*. Then he makes two important points: first, he identifies the distinction between being *per se* (or *secundum se*) and being *per accidens* (or *secundum accidens*) with the distinction between predication *per se* and predication *secundum accidens*; second, he distinguishes between accident considered in itself (*in se consideratum*) and accident understood by comparing it with a substance (*per comparationem accidentis ad substantiam*):

It should be noted that this division of being [sc. between *per se* and *per accidens*] is not the same as that whereby being is divided into substance and accident. This is clear from the fact that he later divides essential being into the ten predicaments, nine of which belong to the class of accident. Hence being is divided into substance and accident insofar as it is considered in an absolute sense (*secundum absolutam entis considerationem*); for example, whiteness considered in itself is called an accident, and man a substance. But accidental being, in the sense in which it is taken here must be understood by comparing an accident with a substance; and this comparison is signified by the term *is* when, for example, it is said that the man

is white. Hence this whole “the man is white” is an accidental being. It is clear, then, that the division of being into being *secundum se* and being *secundum accidens* is based on the fact that one thing is predicated of another either *per se* or *per accidens*. But the division of being into substance and accident is based on the fact that a thing is in its own nature either a substance or an accident.⁴⁶

This text seems easy to interpret but it is not.

It in turn presupposes first of all, *Posterior Analytics* I, 22 (83a1–83a32) commented by Thomas in the same years, and Averroes’s *Long Commentary* on *Metaphysics*, Book V (Comment 14).

Thomas’s statement “the division of being into being *secundum se* and being *secundum accidens* is based on the fact that one thing is predicated of another either *per se* or *accidentally*” cannot be understood as the difference between essential predication and accidental predication, as the English translation erroneously does.

The reason is simple: within the being *secundum se* there are not only examples of *essential* predications of the kind “Socrates is an animal” or “man is an animal”, to use two examples of Thomas himself (respectively in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* and in the Commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*), but also examples of accidental predications of the kind “man is white”.

And it should be reminded that being *secundum se* certainly has something to do with predications, since Thomas himself states later on being *secundum se*: “He says, first, that all those things which signify the figures of predication are said to be *secundum se* [...]. Something is signified to be, ‘in just as many ways’ (or in as many senses) as we can make predications” [...]. ‘Being’ is used in as many ways as we can make predications”.⁴⁷

What distinction between kinds of predication does Thomas refer to here when he speaks of predication *secundum se* and predication *secundum accidens*? It seems to me that he refers to the distinction between predication “simpliciter” and predication “secundum accidens”, of which he himself speaks in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*.

The predication *simpliciter*, or strict predication, occurs when the accident is not predicated in virtue of some other subject and is directly

predicated of its substantial subject, as in the case of “Man is an animal”, “Man is white”, “Wood is white,” or “Man walks”.

On the other hand, the predication *secundum accidens* occurs by reason of another subject, as when an accident is predicated of an accident, that is, “something white is walking” (*album ambulat*) or “the musician is white” (*musicum est album*), or when a subject is predicated of an accident, i.e. “something white is wood” (*album est lignum*). In these cases there is an implicit substantial subject, to which happens to be white and to walk, or to which happens to be white and to be wood.

In the same Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Thomas, referring implicitly but clearly to the *Posterior Analytics*, notes the similarity of these two types of predication *secundum quid*:

And the reason for making the predication is similar in a sense when a subject is predicated of an accident and when an accident is predicated of an accident. For a subject is predicated of an accident by reason of the fact that the subject is predicated of that to which the accident, which is expressed in the subject, is accidental; and in a similar fashion an accident is predicated of an accident because it is predicated of the subject of an accident. And for this reason the attribute musical is predicated not only of man but also of white, because that of which the attribute musical is an accident, i.e., the subject, is white.⁴⁸

And in the parallel passage in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* Thomas says that this is not the case for the previous mode of predication, since “when I say ‘Wood is white’, predicating an accident of the subject, I do not signify, as I did in the previous mode of predication, that there is something else substantially white, such that to be wood happens to it”.⁴⁹

Now, within predication *simpliciter* there are both predications such as “Wood is white” or “Man is white”, and essential predications, such as “Man is an animal”. Nonetheless, they belong both to predication *simpliciter*, since predication *simpliciter* and essential predication are not the same:

Then he clarifies the aforesaid difference with examples, saying that when we say, “Man is white,” the predicate is accidental, because man is not that which white truly is, i.e., to be white is not the essence of man “or anything

of what white truly is,” as was explained above. But, when it is stated, “Man is an animal,” perhaps man is that which animal truly is. For animal signifies the essence of man, because that which is man is essentially animal. And although predicates that do not signify substance are accidents, they are not predicated *per accidens*. For they are not predicated of some subject in virtue of some other subject; for when I say, “Man is white,” “white” is not predicated of man by reason of some other subject’s being white in virtue of which man is called white as was explained above in regard to things predicated *per accidens*.⁵⁰

Everything seems to be working well so far, especially the part of being *secundum se* and the corresponding predication *secundum se*. The problem is that among the examples of being *secundum accidens* and therefore of predication *secundum accidens* in *Metaphysics*, Book V (as well as among the examples of predicates *per accidens* in *Posterior Analytics*, Book I) propositions such as “man is musical” or “wood is white” appear, which clearly refer to the mode of predication *simpliciter* of an accident and not to the mode of predication *secundum accidens* of an accident.

How can this exegetical problem be solved? By making a distinction of Avicennian origin between accident considered in itself (*in se consideratum*), or insofar as it is considered in an absolute sense (*secundum absolutam entis considerationem*), and accident understood by comparing it with a substance (*per comparationem accidentis ad substantiam*), namely between accident as expressed by an abstract term, that is “albedo”, and accident as expressed by an adjective, that is “albus”.

The distinction is typical of Avicenna but I was unable to find the exact source, although it brings to mind the fifth treatise of his *Metaphysics*.⁵¹

It seems to me that it is a purely strategic use by Thomas, aimed only at managing the difficulty of Aristotle’s text, which in any case does not express Thomas’s own philosophy and has no central philosophical importance within his whole metaphysics.

Thomas notes that an accident can be considered either in itself (*in se consideratum*) or by comparing it with substance. If considered in itself, it is expressed by an abstract term, for example “whiteness”, and is called accident (*dicitur accidens*); if instead it is considered in its relationship with the substance in which it exists, then it is expressed by an adjective,

in this case “white”, and is always linked by the copula “is” to its substantial subject (man is white). In this case, there is a whole, namely “the white man”, who is a being *secundum accidens*, because it happens to the man to be white.

However, from the point of view of the philosophical coherence of the comment, something does not seem to work.

First of all, as we have seen, the being *secundum se* has nothing to do with abstract terms and “incomplex” items, considered by themselves and isolated, but it always has something to do with predication, or rather with complex items: “He says, first, that all those things which signify the figures of predication are said to be *secundum se*”.

Hence, also within the predication and the being *secundum se*, and not only within the predication *secundum accidens*, “accident is understood by comparing it with a substance (*per comparationem accidentis ad substantiam*)”.

Indeed it is no coincidence that when Thomas has to give examples of beings *secundum se*, he makes use of propositions: “For example, when it is said that a man is an animal, ‘is’ signifies substance; and when it is said that a man is white, ‘is’ signifies quality; and so on”.⁵²

As you can see, even when the word “white” is used, and therefore even in the case of the proposition “man is white”, it is possible to say that being “white” signifies the accident of quality.

And this is precisely Averroes’s criticism of Avicenna on this point, which Thomas brings up in his commentary.

Avicenna, in fact, had claimed that the denominative term, i.e. “albus”, always signifies the subject in which it exists. However, Thomas points out that, “if it were to signify a subject primarily, then the Philosopher would not put accidental predicates under being *secundum se* but under being *secundum accidens*”.⁵³

In other words, if being *secundum se* has to do with predication, then the proposition “man is white” should be on the side of the predication “simpliciter” and of the predicates “secundum se”, of which Thomas himself speaks in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*.

It is no coincidence that here Thomas avoids using the expressions of Averroes’s *Long Commentary*, in which he contrasted the ways of being “secundum accidens” and the ways in which being is called

“essentialiter”. For the predication, “man is white” is, as a proposition, a proposition “simpliciter”, but it is not a proposition “essentialiter” because the accidental predicate is not essentially predicated of the substantial subject.

It seems therefore that Thomas, in commenting on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, follows the terminology and philosophical notions of Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*, and strategically uses—but not very consistently—a distinction of Avicennian origin, only as far as this helps him to make the text of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* less incomprehensible.

It should not be forgotten, in fact, that from the point of view of Thomas’s overall philosophy, the notion of an accident “considered in itself” without its relationship with a substantial subject does not make much sense. For accident, as we saw in the third chapter of this book, “is more fittingly called ‘of a being’ than ‘a being’ (*magis proprie dicitur entis quam ens*). As, then, forms and accidents and the like, which do not subsist, are to be said to *co-exist rather than to exist (magis sunt coexistentia quam entia)*”.⁵⁴ Furthermore, accidents “have an *incomplete definition, because they can be defined only by putting their subject into the definition*. This is so because they do not exist themselves apart from the subject”.⁵⁵

Returning to Thomas’s commentary we notice that, after having considered the predication *secundum accidens* and the predication *secundum se*, and having distinguished, within the way of being (*modus secundum se*, between substance and accidents, Thomas makes a fundamental distinction, in my opinion the most important of all, between two ways of being: the way of being outside the mind and the way of being in the mind: “First, he divides the kind of being which lies outside the mind, which is perfect being, by the ten predicaments. Second, he gives another mode of being, inasmuch as being exists only in the mind (“Again, being, signifies”).⁵⁶

That being as truth exists in the mind is confirmed later in the Commentary on Book VI, where he writes that: the cause of being as truth “is a certain passion of the mind (*aliqua passio mentis*), i.e., the operation of the intellect combining and separating”.⁵⁷

Regarding this other mode of being, that is, being as truth, he explains, as we already know, that:

Then he gives another sense in which the term being is used, inasmuch as the terms being and is signify the composition of a proposition, which the intellect makes when it combines and separates. He says that being signifies the truth of a thing, or as another translation better expresses it, being signifies that some statement is true (*Unde dicit, quod esse significat veritatem rei. Vel sicut alia translatio melius habet quod esse significat quia aliquod dictum est verum*).⁵⁸

It is clear that being as truth does not concern things, but rather the mind and in particular a *dictum* of a proposition, which is considered to be in the mind.

And this is precisely the reason why Thomas says he prefers the *alia translatio*, which in this case is Moerbeke's. However, Thomas does not quote it literally but paraphrases it, and his paraphrase seems to me to be inspired by Averroes's commentary. For in explaining Aristotle's phrase that contains the verb "significat"—namely: "*Et etiam ens significat essentiam et veritatem rei*"—Averroes had commented (as we shall see): "*Et etiam ens significat essentiam, etc., idest: et hoc nomen ens etiam significat illud quod significat dicere aliquid esse verum*".⁵⁹

As we know, Thomas explains that: "when we say that something *is*, we signify that a proposition *is true*; and when we say that something *is not*, we signify that *it is not true*".⁶⁰

In a certain sense, adopting Roger's expression, being as truth for Aquinas is a *passio enuntiationis*.

That means that, when we *say* that something is, we signify that the proposition—obviously not as a sound of a voice but as a meaningful discourse—*is* or *exists* in the sense of being as truth, that is, the *dictum* of that proposition corresponds to something in reality. In this case, the proposition is true, and that means that the "est" refers to the existence of the relation or "adaequatio" between that *dictum propositionis* and reality. Hence, from the point of view of the theories of state of affairs, it is quite evident that that of Aquinas is a kind of mentalism, where the mental *dictum propositionis* has a cause or a *fundamentum in re* in the case of true propositions.⁶¹

Sticking with the example that he gives immediately afterwards, when we say "Socrates is pale" we mean not only that Socrates has a certain

quality, namely pallor, or even better, that he exists *palely* but also that “it is the case that (Socrates is pale) or it is true that (Socrates is pale)”.

It will be recalled that in the commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI, Thomas writes:

He says, then, that “in one sense being means what is true,” (*Dicit ergo quod ens quoddam dicitur quasi verum*) i.e., it signifies nothing else than truth; for when we ask if man is an animal, the answer is that he is, by which it is meant that this proposition *is true* (*Cum enim interrogamus si homo est animal, respondetur quod est; per quod significatur, propositionem praemissam esse veram*)⁶²

Another important point regarding being as truth is its relation, according to Thomas, to being *secundum accidens*. Although being *secundum accidens* lies outside the mind, whereas being as truth exists only in the mind, there are nevertheless similarities between them.

Thomas does not consider being as truth and being *secundum accidens* as belonging both to a diminished genus of being, and therefore does not follow the translation of the *Metaphysica Nova* and the *Long Commentary* of Averroes, just as Albert did not.

In fact, the expression of being as truth as a diminished being (*ens diminutum*) appears just once in all his writings and in the youthful Commentary on the *Sentences*.⁶³

Nevertheless, he maintains that both these ways of being belong to a “remaining genus of being” (*reliquum genus entis*) according to the Latin translations from Greek, or to “some genus of being” (*aliquod genus entis*), which includes all kinds of being that “do not belong to being *simpliciter per se*, which exists in reality”, namely to substantial being.

Thomas thinks that both of them are, each in their own particular way, accidental.

Indeed, in his commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI, he writes:

Therefore both being in the sense of the accidental and being in the sense of the true must be excluded from this science. For the cause of the former—being in the sense of the accidental—is the indeterminate, and therefore it does not come within the scope of art, as has been shown; and

the cause of the latter—being in the sense of the true—is “some passion of mind,” i.e., the operation of the intellect combining and separating, and therefore it belongs to that science which studies the intellect.

Another reason for excluding them is that, while “both of these,” namely, being in the sense of the true and accidental being, belong to some genus of being, they do not belong to being in the proper sense, which is found in reality. Nor do they designate another kind of being distinct from beings in the proper sense. For it is evident that accidental being is a result of the coincidental connection of beings which exist outside the mind, each of which is a being of itself. For even though the grammatical musical has being only accidentally, nevertheless both grammatical and musical are beings in the proper sense, because each of these taken by itself has a definite cause. Similarly the intellect combines and separates those things which are contained in the categories.⁶⁴

That the complex “grammatical musical” is accidental is clear, since it happens to a substantial subject, which is grammatical, as well as musical. Instead, it is not so clear from this text the reason why being as truth is also to be considered accidental. We thus need a further explanation.

The first explanation is to be found in the same Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book V, where Thomas writes:

Now it must be noted that this second way in which being is used is related to the first as an effect is to a cause. For from the fact that something is in reality it follows that there is truth and falsity in a proposition, and the intellect signifies this by the term is taken as a verb copula [...]. *Now it is accidental to a thing that an attribute should be affirmed of it truly in thought or in word, for reality is not referred to knowledge but the reverse.*⁶⁵

A second and even better explanation can be found in his commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book X:

He [Avicenna] was also deceived by the equivocal use of the term being; for being as signifying the composition of a proposition is predicated accidentally, since composition is made by the intellect with regard to a definite time (*secundum determinatum tempus*). Now to exist at this or at that particular time is to be an accidental predicate. But being as divided by the

ten categories signifies the very nature of the ten categories insofar as they are actual or potential.⁶⁶

From a historico-philosophical point of view, the fact that Avicenna is mentioned means that Thomas is referring to Averroes's criticism. This is a point that we shall look into later on.

What about the accidentality of being as truth?

The first quotation explains quite well that being as truth is accidental to real thing, since "it is accidental to it that an attribute should be affirmed of it truly in thought or in word". The reason lies in the contingency of human intellect:

The truth said of things in comparison to the human intellect is in a certain way accidental to them because, on the supposition that the human intellect never was or ever could be, things in their essences would still remain.⁶⁷

The second quotation explains why being as truth is accidental to the proposition itself and its relation to reality. In fact, that a proposition (or better still, a judgment) is true, namely it corresponds to "something" (that we today would call state of affairs), is accidental. For the judgment is performed by a finite and temporal intellect in a definite time and it is about something, that at least sometimes is an accidental being. That means that the veridical relation between a proposition and something in reality happens at such and such a time; it is not everlasting and is therefore accidental. In other words a veridical relation between a proposition in mind and something in reality, according to Thomas, exists as long as that mind exists and as long as that something is what it is.⁶⁸

Hence, even though man is essentially an animal, nonetheless it is accidentally true that (man is essentially an animal), because it could be the case that "the human intellect never was or ever could be".

Similarly and *a fortiori*, even though Socrates is really pale, not only is he accidentally pale, but it is accidentally true that (Socrates is pale), because both things and intellect change.

Something similar is said by Thomas regarding the proposition "Socrates est", as we saw in Chap. 4:

But the act of being which each thing has in its own nature is substantial; and therefore when it is said that Socrates is, if the *is* is taken in the first way, it belongs to the class of substantial predicates; for being is a higher predicate with reference to any particular being, as animal with reference to man. But if it is taken in the second way, it belongs to the class of accidental predicates.⁶⁹

We are told that the proposition “Socrates est” belongs to the class of substantial predicates as the proposition “man is an animal”. This sounds quite strange, not only because “Socrates est” is not at all a definition as “man is an animal” is, but also because being is not a higher genus, as animal is in comparison to man. Still, Aquinas seems to consider it as if it were a genus, so that he can classify the proposition “Socrates est” among the substantial predications.

It is clear that here Aquinas refers to Averroes, as we shall see, interpreting his difficult text correctly.

On the other hand, we are told that the same proposition “Socrates est” can be seen in the second way, namely in the sense of being as truth, and in this case it belongs to the class of accidental predicates. The motive can be that, for the reasons explained, it is accidentally true, that (Socrates est) or, if you prefer, that *Socrates est* is accidentally true. Indeed, I see no reason here to interpret “Socrates est” in terms of instantiation of a property or a concept, since Socrates cannot be a property or a concept in Thomas’s ontology, as we have seen. Instead, it seems to be plausible to interpret it in terms of veridical being.

I found a very interesting text on the same topic in the *Summa quaestionum ordinarium* by Henry of Ghent. He considers the proposition “Socrates est” as *de re* or as *de dicto*. In the first case it means that being belongs to Socrates (*esse convenit Socrati*). In the second case, namely *de dicto*, means something along the lines of “that Socrates exists is true”. He says that this being as truth is an accident and a diminished being existing only “apud intellectum creatum cognoscente et apprehendente”.⁷⁰

In any case, given the accidentality of being as truth, it is clear that Thomas needs a “deus ex machina”. Indeed, it is not by chance that in the *De veritate* Thomas has to have recourse to the divine intellect to ensure the transcendentalism of truth and its convertibility with being. Each

being is true, in that case, only if each being is one of the two terms of a cognitive relation that has the eternal and immutable divine intellect as its other term:

Truth is found first and properly in the divine intellect, secondarily and properly in the human intellect, secondarily and improperly in things, because only in relation to one of the other two truths [...]. The truth said of things in comparison to the human intellect is in a certain way accidental to them because, on the supposition that the human intellect never was or ever could be, things in their essences would still remain [...]. A thing is said to be true chiefly with reference to the truth of the divine intellect rather than to the truth of the human intellect.⁷¹

We should note at this point an important detail as regards being as truth: unlike Roger and Albert, Thomas makes no mention of a truth that exists outside the soul (*incomplexum*), which would be identical to the transcendental *verum* as a predicate of things as against a truth that exists within the soul (*complexum*). For Thomas, the truth is primarily and essentially the one that exists within the mind.

In the first question of the *De veritate*, immediately after the famous article in which he enumerates all the transcendentals and clarifies the definition of truth as “the adequation of intellect and being” in which “the perfect notion of truth consists”, he asks: “is truth primarily in the intellect rather than in things?”

Promoters of the truth *incomplexum* as transcendental and denigrators of the truth *complexum*, which exists only in the soul as a diminished truth, such as Roger and Albert, would certainly have responded in the negative to this question: for them, truth is primarily in things. Thomas does not see things this way. He replies to the question he poses with a decided positive:

Since the true is said of many according to prior and posterior, it must be said first of that in which the complete notion of truth is first found [...]. The Philosopher says in *Metaphysics VI* that good and evil are in things, but the true and false are in the mind. The thing is called true only insofar as it is adequated to intellect. So, the true is primarily in intellect and secondarily in things.⁷²

It is important to stress that what is at issue here is not just the truth (or the true) that is in the soul, the logical truth as against the truth that exists in the reality of things outside the soul and is transcendental and ontological, as Roger and Albert has maintained. What is at issue is truth (or the true) *tout court*: the transcendental truth that he had referred to in the first article of the *De veritate*, where he listed it as among the transcendentals, is nothing other than the truth understood analogically (“according to prior and posterior”), which is primarily in intellect and secondarily in things. And again, “the complete notion of truth is first found in intellect”.

In the following *quaestio*, Thomas asks more specifically: “Is truth only in the intellect composing and dividing?”. And his reply shines with clarity:

It should be said that just as the true is first in intellect and secondarily in things, so too it is first found in the act of intellect composing and dividing rather than in the act of intellect forming the quiddities of things. The notion of the true consists in the adequation of thing and intellect. A thing is not adequated with itself—it is distinct things that are equal: hence the notion of truth is first found in intellect when it first begins to have something proper to itself that the thing outside the soul does not have, yet something corresponding to it between which an adequation can be expected. The intellect forming the quiddity of things has only the likeness of the thing existing outside the soul, as sense does when it receives the sensible species. But when it begins to judge the thing apprehended, then that judgment of intellect is something proper to it not found outside in things, and when it is adequated to that which is outside in the thing, it is called a true judgment. The intellect judges the thing apprehended when it says that it is or is not, which is the intellect composing and dividing. Hence the Philosopher also says in *Metaphysics* VI, 4 that ‘composition and division are in the intellect and not in things’. And thence it is that truth is first found in composition and in division of intellect.⁷³

This reply can be seen to sum up the Thomistic notion of being as truth (or the true). Together with Thomas’s commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI—“when we ask if man is an animal, the answer is that he is, by which it is meant that this proposition is true”—and with all the text

quoted and commented so far, it does justice to Thomas, I hope, against all interpretations of Thomistic notion of truth in terms of objectual truth, such as that of Wolfgang Künne. Truth as objectual truth was the notion of Roger Bacon or Albert the Great and not that of Thomas, who clearly maintained a notion of truth as “propositional truth”.⁷⁴

Returning finally again to Thomas’s commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book V, it is important to observe how he interprets the modes of being in potentiality and actuality: he does not regard them as an additional mode or sense of being over and above those mentioned but rather as a distinction that applies both to being *per se* and to all the categories, both acts of the intellect and the *entia rationis* such as privations as well as accidents, as both Rufus and Roger had already in part done.⁷⁵

In conclusion, then, how many senses or ways of being does Thomas recognise among the four modes listed by Aristotle?

First of all, being in potentiality and actuality, as has just been said, is not understood as an additional way of being.

Furthermore, the distinction of being into being *secundum se* and being *secundum accidens*, as Thomas says, is a distinction between ways of predication rather than between ways of being.

In his commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book VI, he distinguishes between being *simpliciter per se*, which is substantial being, from a “remaining genus of being”, which includes both accidental being and being as truth.

This distinction is important especially in order to better understand some interesting features of being as truth, namely its special way to be accidental, as we have seen.

Nevertheless, this doesn’t seem to be the most fundamental ontological distinction, since being as truth regards being in the mind, whereas accidental being regards being outside the mind. Indeed, in the end, this is precisely the most fundamental distinction which remains in his commentary: the way of being which lies outside the mind, that of the ten predicaments, and the way of being which exists in the mind, namely being as truth.

Hence, Thomas ultimately seems to reduce Aristotle’s four senses of being to these two ways.

The difference from the first commentaries on the *Metaphysics* is thus evident. For Rufus “ens *dupliciter* dicitur, per accidens et per se”, while

for Thomas, as we saw in the second chapter, being is said in two ways (*dupliciter*): in the sense of being *ut actus*, which is declined in the ten categories, and in the sense of being as truth:

According to Aristotle in V Met. we use the verb ‘to be’ in two ways (*dupliciter*): sometimes to signify the essence of a thing, its act of existing, sometimes to signify the truth of a proposition, even where there is lack of existence, as when we say that blindness exists since it is true that some men are blind.⁷⁶

In particular, the final reference in this passage to what lacks being, namely privations such as blindness and evil, allows us to reply, as we did in the last chapter, to the question we posed earlier about negations, which, like privations, certainly lack being: in what way are negations said to be beings? The reply here seems to be clearly the one we saw in the last chapter: the way is that of being as truth, in the sense of *veridical being*, since we can formulate true judgments about it. For instance, we can say “it *is* true that (a man is blind)”, “it *is* true that (negation is opposed to affirmation)” and “it *is* true that (non-being is non-being)”.

It is precisely on this last point that we find a brief *quaestio* in the *Quaestiones Metaphysicae* by the so-called Anonymus Lipsiensis, composed between 1270 and 1272/4, very likely in the immediate wake of Thomas’s commentary.⁷⁷ The author of this text poses exactly the question of whether, in saying that non-being is non-being we really mean to attribute, as Aristotle does, being to non-being. The reply is not altogether clear, but it tends in much the same direction as Thomas, with a small but significant variant:

We ask whether, in saying non-being is non-being we attribute being to non-being. It seems not: Boethius says in his commentary on *On Interpretation*: this verb ‘is’, when it is predicated as the second adjacent, it signifies what is in itself, namely being in actuality, but when it is predicated as the third adjacent, it signifies what it attributes, but [when we say that non-being is non-being] it attributes non-being, therefore ‘is’ signifies non-being. The Philosopher says the contrary in the text. Indeed, he says that being and privations are beings [...]. I reply saying that, according to the Commentator, being is said in two ways (*dupliciter*): in the first is said the true being that is outside the soul; in the other is said the being that is within the soul (*Dicendum secundum Commentatorem quod esse dicitur*

dupliciter: primo modo de esse vero quod est extra ipsam animam; alio modo de esse dicendo quod esse est in anima). Furthermore, he distinguishes being in the soul, which is said in two ways: in one [the being of the soul] is what comes after the being of the external thing, since that being in the soul is derived from the external thing; in another way the being of the soul is what does not come after the being of the external thing, and is said to be a diminished being, like what is fictional. And negation possesses this being, namely being understood. And in some way it [sc. the being of the soul that does not come after the being of the external thing] is understood after what is intellect, because everything about which we make some statement, must therefore have some being. Thus, doing this in respect of negation [sc. making a statement], since the being of statement is being-understood, negations must have some being. The solution to the objection is clear. The major premise is conceded, namely that being signifies actual being, which is its significance. Yet it does not signify being relative to actuality and when being is predicated as the third adjacent it signifies the being of the statement and not being *simpliciter*.⁷⁸

The text is not altogether clear or smooth, but two things stick out. One is that the being of negations and privations is clearly referred to the being that is in the soul, specifically to the being of statements, namely to what Aristotle in Book VI identifies as being as truth. The other very significant thing is that here for the first time Aristotle is not cited as the source of the claim that being is said in two ways (*dupliciter*), but rather the Commentator, which is to say Averroes.

Is this an error of attribution, given that, as we have seen, virtually all the other medieval writers cite *Metaphysics* V, 7, as the source for the thesis that being is said in two ways? Even the anthology *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, very likely compiled between 1267 and 1325 and edited by Jacqueline Hamesse, carries the passage regarding a distinction very similar to that among the authorities of Aristotle and not among those of the Commentator, though they too are cited.⁷⁹

Fioravanti has observed that in the text of the Anonymus Lipsiensis, there are “several references to Averroes, which lack any counterpart in Averroes’s commentaries. Sometimes the quotations that M(1) ascribes to the Commentator bear deceptively precise, yet fictitious, references to specific books of Averroes’s commentaries. Often one finds other

quotations that refer to actual passage of Averroes. It is a quite puzzling picture [...]. Three different authors are labeled as Commentator (Eustratius and the other Greek commentators by *antonomasia*)”.⁸⁰ In reference to the specific citation of the Commentator in the passage we are considering (“*Dicendum secundum Commentatorem quod esse dicitur dupliciter...*”), Fioravanti writes “Fortasse Averroes, *In libros Metaphysicorum*, V, c. 7 (VIII, f. 117G-H)”,⁸¹ where the “*fortasse*” indicates that he is not entirely convinced of the source. In this light, it is reasonable to ask whether or not the reference to the Commentator is secure. Or might it not be one of the author’s usual imprecise quotations? Should he not instead have quoted Aristotle on the point, as do all the other commentators? Not at all! I think that it is a perfectly correct reference to Averroes and that everyone who has attributed to Aristotle the doctrine of the two senses of being is in error, however one interprets these two senses. For Aristotle cites four and not two senses of being. This is an important point, which we shall examine shortly.

First, however, it is useful to cite the Commentary of Siger of Brabant because it gives an extremely lucid summary of the terms of the question that we have been considering in this chapter and in the last chapter. It will be recalled that, at the beginning of this section, we summarised the issues that had already come to light by asking whether even if negations and privation *are* (*Met.*, IV, 2, 1003b4–11), they *are* in the sense of being as actuality or in that of being as truth (*Met.*, V, 7, 1017a8–35)? Is being as truth a predicate of things or of propositions (*Met.*, VI, 3, 1027b17–1028a6)?

Siger composed his *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam* over the period from 1271/2 to 1275/6 and so slightly after Thomas’s commentary.⁸² Commenting on the second mode of being *per se*, which for Siger is being as truth, he notes that in this case we have a being according to the soul (*secundum animam*), which would not exist if the soul did not exist. And then he adds:

And we must observe that it is to this mode of being that are reduced the beings that Aristotle mentions at the beginning of book IV of the *Metaphysics*, where it is said that negations and privations are said to be beings.

Thus, negations and privations are said to be beings only in the sense of being as truth, which exists in the soul. Then Siger too clarifies, explicitly citing Averroes, that it befalls everything accidentally to be the object of true statements. In this case, we may say that it befalls everything accidentally to have a being that is received in a certain sense by way of the intellect. Hence, everything can be considered in light of two senses of being or of “is”:

The statement “man is” can be a question of accident, taking the word ‘being’ insofar as it expresses being according to the soul, which is not true being; if instead [the word ‘being’] expresses the being that has its own nature, then it is a substantial predicate and a question of genus.⁸³

It can hardly be said that this last passage shines for its philosophical clarity, but it does shine from the point of view of the history of philosophy, because it is a further reference to Averroes.

It is therefore time to transfer to Andalusia, or at least to that daughter of Al-Andalus which was the Sicily where Michael Scot was very likely finishing his Latin translation from the Arabic of Averroes’s *Long Commentary* on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.⁸⁴

Averroes begins his commentary from the “modes of being that are being *per accidens*”.⁸⁵ Here, both the so-called *Nova* translation of Aristotle’s text from Arabic—“ens dicitur quodammodo accidental”—and his commentary do not make the initial general distinction between *ens secundum se* and *ens secundum accidens* which we find in the *Media* translation: “ens dicitur hoc quidem secundum accidens illud vero secundum se” and in the *Novissima* translation of William of Moerbeke. This is a point we have already seen in connection with Rufus, Adam of Buckfield and their contemporary commentator, who for this reason preferred the *Media*.

This situation can help us to understand why, faced with two different sorts of translation, one from the Greek and one from the Arabic, the former alluding to a first general distinction between *ens secundum se* and *ens secundum accidens* while the other did not, Thomas held onto the distinction formally but preferred another to it, one that seems to derive from Averroes’s commentary.

After describing in Comment 13 the various types of predication *secundum accidens*, Averroes passes in Comment 14 to consider the modes by which being is said *essentialiter*, which are the categories. Here he inserts the first criticism of Avicenna, which recurs also in Thomas's commentary.

Avicenna believes that denominative accidental terms, for example "albus", signify the substance in which the accident exists, and not the accident which falls under the category of quality. Averroes, however, objects: if this were so, then the predicate "pale" would really signify "pale body" and thus saying "Socrates is pale" would mean something like "Socrates is a pale body". But again, given that "pale" means "pale body", "Socrates is a pale body" would mean something like "Socrates is a pale body body" and so *ad infinitum*. Instead, Averroes maintains that the denominative accidental terms signify the accidental property in the first instance and the subject secondarily.⁸⁶

Averroes's commentary on being as true is interesting. First off, he notes that "this name 'being' signifies also what is signified by saying that something is true". Here it is important to note, as Thomas does, that, according to Averroes's account, Aristotle does not merely say that being signifies truth but that being signifies *saying* that something is true or that a certain saying is true. Indeed, as Averroes continues: "when we say that something is, we point out that the same thing is true; and when we say that something is not, we point out that the same thing is not, which is to say that the same thing is false". Then he adds a personal note: "and Aristotle meant here by 'being' what sounds true either simply or by way of composition, either in the singular question or in the composite."⁸⁷ In the composite proposition, as when we say 'Socrates is musical' or 'Socrates is not musical'; in the simple question, on the other hand, as when we say 'whether Socrates is' or 'is not'. And universally, this name '*ens*' does not signify other than the true".⁸⁸

Averroes's commentary here is not just a faithful paraphrase of Aristotle's text, since he adds a fresh element, namely an explanation of being as truth not only in terms of the truth of propositions in which "*est*" is in the position of the third adjacent, as in propositions like "Socrates is musical", but also in terms of replies to the question whether he/it is (*an sit*), as in the case of propositions in which the "*est*" is in the

position of the second adjacent, for instance “Socrates is/exists”, which is a reply to the question “whether Socrates is”.

This is the source of the identification—but also of the confusion, in my view—that we have already met several times, and not only in Thomas, between being as truth and being as *anitas*.

Further on, Averroes returns to the point:

But you must know that universally this name ‘being’, which signifies the essence of the thing, is different from the being that signifies the truth (*sed debes scire quod universaliter hoc nomen ens, quod significat essentiam rei, est aliud ab ente quod significat verum*). And for this reason the commentators were divided over the simple question, of ‘whether something is’, which is discussed in the second book of the *Topics*: if this is to be counted among the questions that concern the accident or the genus. Indeed, he who understood the question as concerning the being that is common to the ten categories maintained that it was to be placed among the questions concerning the genus; and he who understood the question as concerning the being that is understood as true (or as truth) maintained that it was to be placed among the questions concerning the accident.⁸⁹

What exactly is being said here? It is not easy to reply on the basis of these few lines by Averroes.

Let us try to interpret in light of Aquinas’s comment on and developments of these passages: that someone or something *is* can be understood in two distinct senses according to whether “being” is understood as the being that is common to the ten categories, as if it were a higher genus common to them, or as being as truth. In the former case, “Socrates exists” will be a question of whether Socrates belongs to the quasi “genus” of being that is common to the ten categories. And vice versa, if “being” is understood as truth, then it will be a question of accident. But what question might this be? If we should interpret being as truth in terms of instantiation of a concept in the mind, namely in terms of *anitas*, as Averroes seems to suggest, then we have at least one problem: precisely with propositions like “Socrates exists”. For in this case what is at stake would be the accident of being instantiated extramentally of the concept in the mind of “being Socrates”. But how can Socrates be conceived as a concept or even a property? As we saw in Chap. 3, a concept is common to many, whereas

an individual is by definition unique. Another possible interpretation is the one in terms of veridical being: does the mental *dictum* of the proposition “Socrates exists” exist extramentally? In other words: is that proposition (accidentally) true? But this doesn’t seem to be Averroes’s interpretation (whereas it *does* seem to be Aquinas’s interpretation).

The text leaves our effort at interpretation without direct confirmation. But one thing is for sure: the source for all the interpretations of being as truth in term of *an sit* or *anitas* is, for good or ill, to be found in this text of Averroes, which was available to the commentators of the thirteenth century.

Averroes then proceeds to explain Aristotle’s examples of being as truth: to say that it is true that the diagonal is not commensurable with a side is being as truth; to say that it is not true that the diagonal is commensurable with a side is non-being as falsity.

He then adds:

And [Aristotle] intended to distinguish this name ‘being’, which signifies the copulation in the intellect, from that which signifies the essence that is outside the intellect” (*Et intendebat distinguere inter hoc nomen ens quod significat copulationem in intellectu et quod significat essentiam quae est extra intellectum*).⁹⁰

So here we have a further assertion that might be the true source of Thomas’s thesis (and not just his) that was erroneously attributed to Aristotle, according to which being is said *dupliciter*:

According to Aristotle in V Met. we use the verb ‘to be’ in two ways (*dupliciter*) sometimes to signify the essence of a thing, its act of existing, sometimes to signify the truth of a proposition.⁹¹

Pulling together the threads of the passages of Averroes already reviewed on the distinction between two senses of being, we have the following:

universaliter hoc nomen ens, quod significat essentiam rei, est aliud ab ente quod significat verum.

Et intendebat distinguere inter hoc nomen ens quod significat copulationem in intellectu et quod significat essentiam quae est extra intellectum.

To which we should add a no less important passage from Averroes's commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book X:

*Et etiam [Avicenna] fuit deceptus quia ignoravit differentiam inter hoc nomen ens quod significat genus, et quod significat verum. Quod enim significat verum est accidens, et quod significat genus significat unumquodque decem praedicatorum multipliciter.*⁹²

This last text is very important. First, a decisive philological detail must be noted: the so-called Juntina edition reads the word “actus”, instead of the word “accidens”! Therefore, in it we read: “Quod enim significat verum est *actus*”,⁹³ whereas here in fact we read: “Quod enim significat verum est *accidens*”. It is clear that it is a mistake due to the expansion of the abbreviation in gothic writing: “acs” can be read both as “actus” and as “accidens”. It seems plausible to me that the abbreviation at the basis of those two different words might have been “acs”. Now, what is the most correct version? Already the fact that Ruggiero's edition, although not yet a critical edition, is based on ten manuscripts and an incunabulum, while the Juntina is based on a single, often manipulated, manuscript, would make us lean in favour of Ruggiero's text. However, there is then another argument: everything that Averroes writes on this topic, as well as in other parts of his work, for example in the Commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book V, goes in the direction of interpreting being as truth as a kind of accidental being, as we have seen. The exact version is thus that which is found in Ruggiero's edition (*accidens*) and not in the Juntina (*actus*). Proof of this is the fact that none of the texts on the topic of senses of being from the authors quoted above, of which Averroes's texts are the background, contains an identification of being as truth with act. In some, however, and especially in those of Thomas, we find the interpretation of accidental being back to being as truth in terms of (a kind of) accidental being, and vice versa. That interpretation indeed has Averroes's text as a source.

At that point, it will be sufficient for Thomas to draw attention to the fact that being in potentiality and actuality does not represent a mode, but only a division of being, to thus come to the conclusion that, in the

end, the modes or senses of being are not really the four quoted by Aristotle, but only these two: on the one hand being as truth, that is a kind of accidental being and is in the mind (*in intellectu*), and on the other hand being *per se* that is divided into the ten categories (which are accidents) and exists outside the mind (*extra intellectum*). It is precisely what Thomas does, as we saw.

Furthermore, Averroes's text quoted above is of particular importance because it gives special weight to the distinction of the two senses of being, since this was a distinction that Avicenna ignored and was the ground for Averroes's criticism of him.

The fact remains, however, that in his commentary on *Metaphysics*, Book V, even Averroes does not speak of two but always of four senses of being, for all that he stresses the overriding importance of two. Yet all the authors we have looked at so far, quoting Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book V, write "*ens et esse dicitur dupliciter*".

In point of fact, there are at least two texts of Averroes that fit the bill as a source for this doctrine, and precisely one of these is a commentary on the *Metaphysics*. Here we present the Latin translation, with the key moments emphasised:

The fifth kind of plurality is the plurality of essence and existence. Existence in the nature of things is a logical concept which affirms the conformity of a thing outside the soul with what is inside the soul. Its meaning is synonymous with the true, and it is this that is meant by the copula in categorical propositions. *The term 'existence' is used in two senses; the first synonymous with the true (Nam dictio est, dicitur dupliciter. Primo id, quod significatur per verum)*, when we ask, for instance, if something exists or not, or whether a certain thing has such and such a quality or not. *The second sense stands in relation to the existing things as their genus*, in the way the existent is divided into the ten categories (*Secundo id, quod ponitur de entibus tamquam genus, ut divisio entis ad decem praedicamenta*) and into substance and accident. When by existent is understood the true, there is no plurality outside the soul: when by existent is understood what is understood by entity and, thing, the term 'existent' is attributed essentially to God and analogically to all other things in the way warmth is attributed to fire and to all warm things. This is the theory of the philosophers.⁹⁴

‘Being’ is predicated in [various] ways. Firstly, [it is predicated] of each of the ten categories (ens dicitur multis modis. Uno modo de quolibet decem praedicamentorum) and, thus, belongs to the kinds of names which are predicated by order and analogy, not to those which are predicated by pure equivocation or univocally. Secondly, it is predicated of that which is true, that is [if] that which is in the mind is in correspondence with that which is outside the mind (Secundo dicitur de vero, quod scilicet ita se habet in intellectu, quemadmodum extra intellectum) as in statements on whether nature exists or on whether the void does not exist. Furthermore, [‘being’] is predicated of the quiddity of all that has a quiddity or essence outside the soul, no matter whether this essence is conceptualized or not. Thus, it applies to the ten categories that both of these two meanings of the term ‘being’ are predicated of them, the one inasmuch as they have an essence outside the soul, the other inasmuch as they signify the quiddities of these [extramental] essences. Accordingly, the term ‘being’ can be reduced to precisely the following two meanings: that which is true, and that which exists outside the soul (Et ideo nomen entis revertitur ad haec duo tantum, scilicet ad verum, et ad id quod est extra intellectum), where the latter is again [divided] into two groups, either species or forms, I mean the forms and quiddities of species.⁹⁵

As we can see, in the *Destructio destructionum* the adverb “*dupliciter*” recurs in relation to “*est*” as truth and “*est*” as divided into the ten categories. In the *Epitome* the distinction into two senses—*de vero* and *de quolibet decem praedicamentorum*—is insistent, but above all we read that the name “being” reduces “*to precisely the following two meanings*” (*ad haec duo tantum*), namely to the sense of being as truth and the sense of the being that is outside the intellect. It would be hard to be any clearer about the reduction of Aristotle’s four senses to two.

In several masterly studies, Stephen Menn has shown that precisely this doctrine of the two senses of being—as truth in the sense of *anitas* and as real being—is typical of Averroes, derives from Al-Farabi and is the reason for one of Averroes’s central complaints against Avicenna: as we saw above, the latter had confused the two senses of being.⁹⁶

Yet there remains an enormous problem: the Latin translations of the texts we have just cited were unknown at the time when the commentaries we examined earlier were written. They would have been perfect as

background for some of the medieval commentaries on *Metaphysics*, Book V, especially Thomas's, but they came later. The translation of the *Destructio destructionum* dates to 1328 and the *Epitome* had to wait until the sixteenth century. There is not much to be said for the idea that these translations circulated in the thirteenth century.

So, the principle of parsimony that ought to rule every historico-philosophical study, namely to try and explain problems on the basis of the available texts without appeal to engaging but improbable hypotheses, means that we should limit ourselves to the three texts from Averroes's *Long Commentary* (the two on Book V and above all the one on Book X) that we cited above. It is better to explain the texts by means of a few certain data, than by means of many uncertain data.

What would be the many (but fascinating) uncertain data in this case? Here they are.

There is a medieval text that clearly betrays its author's acquaintance with Averroes's *Destructio destructionum*. This is the *Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Iudaeos* of Raymond Martin (Raymundus Martinus), which was completed in 1278, but of which parts were certainly in circulation before 1267.⁹⁷ Raymond Martin was a Catalan Dominican, and so a brother of Thomas, who entered the order in 1235, and he could have been the "Magister Martinus" who taught Thomas grammar and perhaps logic in his youthful studies at Naples between 1239 and about 1244.⁹⁸ The General of the order, Ramon de Peñafort, sent Martin to Tunis 1250 with a view to founding a school of Arabic studies.⁹⁹ With a flair for languages, Martin learnt Hebrew, Arabic and Berber. In 1257, he completed his *Explanatio simboli*, which does not yet show an influence from Averroes; but in the next work, the *Pugio fidei*, there is ample evidence of a wide knowledge of the Commentator's works, including those that had not yet been translated into Latin, including the *Destructio destructionum*. According to Madeleine Fletcher it is possible that Raymond, back from Tunis, and Thomas, back from Paris, met in Naples at some point between 1260 and 1264. Thomas arrived in Naples in 1259 after composing the first fifty-three chapters of the first book of the *Summa contra Gentiles* and very likely completed the work in Italy, between Naples and Orvieto, before moving to Rome in 1265.

Now, years ago André Berthier already brought to light at least twenty parallel and almost word-for-word identical chapters in the *Pugio fidei* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*.¹⁰⁰

Most striking of all is that almost all these *loca parallela* are later than the first fifty-three chapters of the first book. It is therefore not impossible to suggest that Raymond and Thomas exchanged ideas in Naples and it is not wild to suppose that Thomas learnt about Averroes's doctrines contained in the Arabic texts that Raymond was acquainted with.

In any case, both the *Pugio fidei* and the *Summa contra Gentiles* formed part of the cultural project shared by the Dominicans and promoted by the Master of the Order of Preachers Ramon de Peñafort to convert the Muslims. It was as part of this project that Raymond with seven other friars—as I have previously mentioned—had been sent in 1250 to found the *Studium* of Arabic studies in Tunis, where some Dominicans had resided since 1230.¹⁰¹ It was for the same project that the same Master, Ramon de Peñafort, asked Thomas to compose the *Summa contra Gentiles*.

It is not, then, a stretch of the imagination to think that Raymond or others of the Tunis's convent, all belonging to the same working group could have supplied Thomas with what they knew directly from the Arabic texts.

For sure, the chronology suggests that it was Raymond who copied from the *Summa contra Gentiles* rather than the reverse.¹⁰² Furthermore, as far as I know there is no documented evidence in Raymond's biography of his stay in Naples between 1260 and 1264.¹⁰³

This notwithstanding, it is not impossible that at some point and in some way Raymond or some of the Dominican friars in Tunis could have told a leading Dominican like Thomas about the content of Averroes's *Destructio destructionum* or *Epitome*.¹⁰⁴

In this context, Thomas could have received oral confirmation from one of them of the reduction made by the Commentator *par excellence* of the four senses of being in Aristotle to two.

All the same, other hypotheses should be put to the test and other paths explored. For instance, it would be interesting to explore in greater depth the writings of Peter of Ireland, who was a teacher of Thomas at Naples and who, along with the translator of Averroes's commentaries on

the *libri naturales*, Michael Scot, certainly possessed and showed a surprising familiarity with Arabic texts and Islamic doctrines.

In any case, it seems to me that already with the few but certain data at our disposal the path from Thomas's doctrine of the two senses of being, which leads to Averroes and Al-Farabi and back, has been opened and can be travelled from now on by all the scholars who do so wish.¹⁰⁵

Notes

1. Gabriele Galluzzo, "Aquinas's Commentary on the *Metaphysics*," in *A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, eds Fabrizio Amerini, and Gabriele Galluzzo, 210. Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 313.
2. Amos Bertolacci, "The Reception of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* in Latin Medieval Philosophy until Albertus Magnus," in *Via Alberti. Texte-Quellen-Interpretationen*, eds Ludger Honnefelder, Hannes Möhle, and Susana Bullido del Barrio (Subsidia Albertina, Vol. 2) (Münster: Aschendorff, 2009), 95.
3. Galluzzo, "Aquinas's Commentary on the *Metaphysics*," 210.
4. Silvia Donati, "English Commentaries before Scotus. A Case Study: The Discussion on the Unity of Being," in *A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, eds Amerini, and Galluzzo, 138.
5. I am very grateful to Rega Wood for sharing the results of her work with me and for all her comments on my text. The texts of the *Redactio longior* that will be provided are provisional.
6. "Et primum nomen quod distinguit est hoc nomen 'ens'. Unde istud capitulum de ente, septimum huius tractatus, dividitur in duas partes, in quarum prima ostendit modos entis per accidens; in secunda, quae ibi incipit, "Et dicuntur entia per se" etc. [1017a22 tc14], modos entis per se. Prima pars dividitur in duas partes: In prima ponit modos entis per accidens; in secunda, quae incipit ibi, "Ista enim dicuntur" etc. [1017a15], ostendit causas modorum entis per accidens. Prima pars dividitur in duas partes, iuxta duos modos quos ponit. Prima incipit ibi, "Ens dicitur quodammodo" etc. [1017a7 tc13]; secunda ibi, "Et quod homo" etc. [1017a9]" (Richardus Rufus Cornubiensis, *Scriptum in Metaphysicam Aristotelis*, *Redactio longior*, ed. Rega Wood, 5.7.D1,

- 49–50). Given the historico-philosophical nature of this chapter, I have inserted the Latin texts in the footnotes. For we are trying to reconstruct here the possible sources and the historical context of Thomas's works, as they appeared in his time, when the texts were not written in English and professors neither spoke nor read the language!
7. "In isto autem capitulo in speciali sic procedit, dicens quod ens dupliciter dicitur, per accidens et per se. 'Ens' autem 'per accidens' duas habet significationes. Quando enim unum accidens impertinens praedicatur de aliquo accidente impertinenti, utpote 'album est dulce', talis compositio est ens per accidens prima significatione eius quod est 'ens per accidens'. Quando autem accidens per accidens praedicatur de aliquo subiecto, vel e converso, talis compositio est ens per accidens una significatione eius quod est 'ens per accidens'. Exemplicat autem de secunda significatione primo cum dicit, Et quod homo est musicus [1017a9], et conversam huius. Consequenter exemplicat de prima significatione cum dicit "Verbi gratia, quod homo musicus aedificat" [1017a10–11]" (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 7.E1, 50–51).
 8. "Consequenter dicit quod talis compositio dicitur ens per accidens cum dico, 'Aedificator musicus', quia unum est subiectum cui accidunt haec ambo. Et similiter ista compositio, 'homo musicus', dicitur ens per accidens, quia accidit homini quod sit musicus" (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 7.E1, 50–51).
 9. "Et primum nomen quod distinguit est hoc nomen 'ens'. Unde istud capitulum de ente, septimum huius tractatus, dividitur in duas partes, in quarum prima ostendit modos entis per accidens; in secunda, quae ibi incipit, "Et dicuntur entia per se" etc. [1017a22 tc14], *modos entis per se*. (Richardus Rufus Cornubiensis, Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 5.7.D1, 49–50). "Consequenter dicit quod ens per se dicitur *tribus modis*" (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 7.E2, 52. Italics mine). Sometimes he speaks of three *significationes*: "Illa autem pars in qua ponit significationes 'entis per se' dividitur in tres partes, iuxta *tres significationes* 'entis' quas ponit, quarum prima incipit ibi, "Et dicuntur entia per se" etc. [1017a22 tc14]; secunda ibi, "Et etiam ens significat essentiam" etc. [1017a31]; tertia ibi, "Et etiam quaedam" etc. [1017a35–1017b1]" (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 5.7.D1, 50. Italics mine).
 10. "Et dicit Commentator quod per illam multipliciter 'entis per se', scilicet quod 'ens' significat quodlibet genus et etiam verum, solvitur

quaestio quae solet esse, quod problema est illud: ‘Estne Socrates? Estne homo?’ Erant enim quidam qui solum comprehendebant *primam significationem* ‘*entis per se*’, et isti dixerunt illud problema esse problema de genere. Erant alii qui solum comprehendebant *significationem secundam* ‘*entis per se*’, et illi dixerunt tale problema esse problema de accidente” (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio brevior, 5.8.Q2D. Italics mine).

11. “Consequenter dicit quod ens per se dicitur tribus modis; quodlibet enim genus praedicamenti et res sub quolibet genere existens dicitur ens per se *prima significatione eius quod est ‘ens per se’*. Unde decem genera comprehenduntur sub ista significatione ‘entis per se’ (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 7.E2, 52).
12. “Illa autem pars in qua ponit significationes ‘entis per se’ dividitur in tres partes, iuxta tres significationes ‘entis’ quas ponit, quarum prima incipit ibi, “Et dicuntur entia per se” etc. [1017a22 tc14]; secunda ibi, “Et etiam ens significat essentiam” etc. [1017a31]; tertia ibi, “Et etiam quaedam” etc. [1017a35–1017b1]” (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 5.7.D1, 50). “Consequenter dicit quod ens per se dicitur tribus modis” (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 7.E2, 52).
13. “Consequenter dicit quod verum vel veritas, sive quod significat essentiam rei, dicitur ens per se alia significatione eius quod est ‘per se’” (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 7.E2, 53).
14. “In speciali sic procedit, dicens quod praedicatum quod ponitur in definitione subiecti dicitur per se primo modo. Consequenter dicit quod accidens in cuius definitione ponitur proprium subiectum dicitur per se secundo modo. Verbi gratia, superficies est subiectum proprium coloris; accipitur enim primo in definitione eius; unde color dicitur in concrezione de superficie per se secundo modo” (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 16.E1).
15. “Consequenter dicit quod illud quod dicitur esse actu dicitur ens per se, et similiter quod est potentia. Unde istae differentiae, ‘actus’, ‘potentia’, sunt differentiae entis per se [...]” (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 7.E2, 53).
16. “Hic (In hac (hoc C) parte CO) distinguit (intendit distinguere CO) modos huius nominis ‘ens’. Et (om. B) quia ens (om. B) prima divisione dividitur (ante prima C) in ens per se et ens per accidens, sicut et unum, propter hoc supponendo hanc divisionem entis, dividit (subdit C, subdividit O) utrumque membrum ipsius. *Alia* tamen *translatio* habet illam divisionem principalem. Est enim *alia translatio* hic (haec

- CO): ‘Ens dividitur (dicitur CO) si (hoc CO) quidem secundum accidens, illud (id C) vero secundum (per O) se. Secundum accidens quidem ut iustum musicum (unicum B) esse (om. B) dicimus.’” (Adam of Buckfield, *In Metaph.* 5 (Bologna 2344, fol. 287r; Cambridge, Gonville & Caius 367, fol. 198rb; Oxford, Balliol 241, fol. 26ra), quoted in Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 50).
17. I am referring here to the notes by the editor Rega Wood to the text of the redactio longior in his preliminary version kindly provided by Wood herself. As for the date of composition: Silvia Donati, “English Commentaries before Scotus”, 158. Peter Schultess, “Textgrundlagen und Themen der Metaphysik,” in *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie/Die Philosophie des Mittelalters 4. 13. Jahrhundert. Zweiter Halbband*, eds Alexander Brungs, Vilem Mudroch, and Peter Schultess (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2014), 1481.
 18. “Hic distinguit modos huius nominis ‘ens’. Et supponendo hanc divisionem entis, ens aliud per se, aliud per accidens, quod plane habetur *in alia translatione*, subdividit utrumque membrum.” (Anon., *In Metaph.* 5 (Oxford, Merton 272, fol. 45rb), quoted in Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 50–51).
 19. Aristoteles, *Metaphysica* (lib. I–X, XII–XIV), translatio anonyma sive media, ed. Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem (Aristoteles Latinus, XXV, 2) (Brill: Leiden 1976), 94–95.
 20. Aristoteles, *Metaphysica* V, in *Averrois in Librum V Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Commentarius*, ed. Ruggero Ponzalli (Bern: Francke, 1971), 125–129.
 21. “Ad obiecta dicendum quod enuntiabile non comprehenditur sub primo modo eius quod est ens, quia neque est genus neque species neque individuum in aliquo praedicamento, ut inferius patebit. Est tamen ens contentum sub secundo modo, scilicet sub vero, et ille modus est ens per extensionem. Unde proprie loquendo non est alius modus quam primus, quia dicere quod verum est ens est extendere hoc nomen ‘ens’. Et quod hoc sit verum patet; esse enim non est ens, et tamen est aliquid. Unde proprie loquendo est haec falsa, ‘esse est ens’, sed per maximam extensionem potest dici aliquo modo.” (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio brevior, 5.8.Q2D).
 22. “Et dicendum quod licet ‘ens’ et ‘verum’ idem significant, ‘verum’ tamen per esse alterum dicit idem quod ‘ens’. ‘Verum’ enim dicit illud in cognitione quod dicit ens extra animam esse. Unde ‘verum’ dicit accidens supra rem quam significat ‘ens’, et ideo potest hoc problema ‘estne

homo' esse problema de accidente, habito respectu ad verum quod cadit in cognitione nostra. Et dico 'verum quod cadit in cognitione nostra' excludendo verum quod cadit in cognitione Primi, quod quidem accidens non est." (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio brevior, 5.8.Q2D).

23. The phrase "ens diminutum" or "esse diminutum" arose from a mistake in the Arabic translation of the last lines of *Metaphysics* VI, 4, which came also into the Latin translation (from Arabic) *Metaphysica Nova* (but is not present in the translations into Latin directly from Greek, namely *Metaphysica Media* and *Metaphysica Novissima*, which have "reliquum genus entis"). See: Armand Maurer, "Ens diminutum: A Note on its Origin and Meaning," *Mediaeval Studies*, 12, no. 1 (1950): 216–222. I owe the indication of this article to Stephen Menn.
24. "Consequenter dicit 'Dimittamus ens per accidens et loquamur parum de ente diminuto alio quod est ens verum' [1027b17–18]. [...]. Unde species sive similitudines rerum sunt in anima [...]. Ex hac igitur solutione patet quod verum et falsum non habent esse nisi in anima sive intellectu. Consequenter dicit 'Dimittamus nunc loqui de ente per accidens et de ente vero' [1027b33]. Ista enim non sunt entia in veritate; unum enim istorum non habet causam terminatam, ut ens a casu, et reliquum non habet causam nisi animam sive intellectum; verum enim et falsum causantur ab anima. Illud expresse significatur a Commentatore et ab auctore, et ideo dicit auctor post [1028a1] quod utrumque istorum collocatur sub genere entis diminuti." (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio longior, 6.4.E2, 629–631).
25. "Tertius autem modus entis per se non est nisi differentia membrorum entis primi modi. Actus enim et potentia sunt differentiae entis primi modi" (Rufus, *Scriptum*, Redactio brevior, 5.8Q2D).
26. Donati, "English Commentaries before Scotus," 139.
27. "Queritur de illo modo entis secundum quod ens dicitur verum, utrum sit ens per se vel per accidens. Quod sit ens per accidens videtur: quia simul determinat in sexto hujus libri de vero cum ente per accidens, scilicet cum ente casuali quod verum est ens diminutum, et dicit ibi quod ens diminutum est ens per accidens. Contra: hic ponit modum entis quod est verum, et non ponit cum aliis modis entis per accidens, ergo verum non est modus entis per accidens [...]. Contra: ens et verum convertuntur; set ens commune est ad per se et per accidens, ergo verum. Item, ens actu erit commune ad ens per se et per accidens et ens in potentia." (Rogerus Baconus, *Quaestiones supra libros prime philosophie Aristotelis. Metaphysica, I–II, V–X*, eds Robert Steele, and

- Ferdinand Delorme (*Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi X*), (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1930), 131).
28. “Probatio, et non solum erit alterum horum, quia tam ens per se quam per accidens, aliquando sunt actu, aliquando in potentia; quare erit commune et non alterum. Quod concedo de vero quod dividitur in ens per se et per accidens, quia omnis modus entis aut est modus entis per se aut per accidens aut modus entis communis ad ens per se et per accidens. Si per accidens: aut est ibi collatio accidentis ad accidens, aut accidentis ad subjectum, aut duorum accidentium ad suum subjectum, et sic tres sunt modi entis per accidens. Si sit modus entis per se tantum, sic dividitur ens per se in x predicamenta et x modi. Si ens communiter: aut consideratur natura entis absolute, et sic facit duos modos, scilicet ens actu et potentia; aut consideratur natura entis per relationem ad animam, et sic verum est ens commune, et dividitur in verum complexum et verum incomplexum; et sic patet solutio rationum. Ad aliud dico, quod obicit de vero, dico quod verum duplex est, complexum et incomplexum, et verum commune ad hoc et illud; sumitur hic verum commune. Quod dicit in sexto quod verum diminutum est ens per accidens, loquitur ibi de vero complexo, quia verum incomplexum dividitur in x predicamenta et est ens per se. Ad aliud dico, quod verum tripliciter; aut commune, aut verum incomplexum, aut verum complexum” (Baconus, *Quaestiones*, 132).
 29. “Ideo non oportet quod ens quod est verum sit ens per accidens, nisi intelligendo de vero per accidens” (Baconus, *Quaestiones*, 132). (Trans. Richard Davies and myself).
 30. “A principio capituli determinat de vero in sui communitate, set in sexto libro determinat de vero incomplexo, de vero complexo quod est ens diminutum determinat in fine sexti. Et quia verum incomplexum non differt ab ente per se nisi per relationem ad animam et ad cognitionem, ideo ubi determinat de ente per se quod dividitur in x predicamenta, determinat de vero incomplexo. [...]. Et ideo in sexto et in quinto determinat de vero per accidens quod est complexum, et hic quod est commune ad verum complexum et incomplexo” (Baconus, *Quaestiones*, 132).
 31. “Ad aliud quod queritur, dico quod ens actu et ens in potentia faciunt modum commune ad ens per se et per accidens” (Baconus, *Quaestiones*, 132).

32. What sort of thing is Socrates's act of sitting? According to Roger, it is not a being (*ens*) properly speaking, but a being *sui generis*, namely "something" (*aliquid*), which doesn't belong to any category but can be reduced to substance: "Queritur de enuntiabili a parte rei significate, e queritur utrum debet dici ens a parte rei, sicut 'hominem esse', quod est quoddam enuntiabile [...]. Solutio: dico quod est aliquid. Ad obiectum respondeo, quod opinio quorundam est 'hominem esse' est idem quod 'homo', tamen suppono oppositum. Dico quod 'hominem esse' non est 'homo', set est aliquid reductum ad hominem magis quam ad aliud, et ideo non formaliter aliquid eorum que continentur in predicamento, nec 'homo', set est solum aliquid reductum ad hominem" (Baconus, *Quaestiones*, 120–121). From this point of view, it seems then that Roger's position is that of "suigenerism". On the other hand, Roger's thesis according to which the complex truth is not a property of things but of speech (*oratio*), which exists in the mind, could be classified as "mentalism" (See: Laurent Cesalli, "States of Affaires," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John Marenbon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 421–444).
33. "Habito de ente diminuto quod est ens per accidens extra anima, queritur de ente diminuto quod est verum in anima [...]. Set naturalis est considerare ens in anima in quantum generatur, et ideo, tertio De Anima, considerat de simplicibus; metaphysici solum est considerare de vero complexo, et ideo de complexo solum determinat. Habito quod metaphysicus solum consideret de vero complexo, quaeritur in quo sit huiusmodi verum tanquam in subiecto. Quod in rebus videtur: quia verum complexum et falsum componuntur ex vero et falso incomplexis; set veritas incomplexa et falsitas in rebus sunt, ergo similiter compositum ex hiis, quare etc. Item: Aristoteles, ex eo quod res est vel non est dicitur omnino vera vel falsa, quare cum loquimur de veritate complexa, ergo etc. Ergo res aut sunt causa efficiens veritatis complexae, aut formalis, aut finalis, aut materialis; set non efficiens, ut patet, nec formalis, nec finalis, ergo materialis, et ita subiectum. Item: veritas est adequatio rerum et intellectuum; set adequatio est in adequatis sicut similitudo in similibus, ergo veritas est in rebus et intellectibus, et ita numquam in oratione sicut in subiecto. Contra: veritas est passio denominans suum subiectum; set res ispe non denominantur vere veritate complexa set oratio, quare oratio erit subiectum veritatis complexae et falsitatis. Solutio: de rebus dupliciter: aut de rebus in se consideratis

in quantum sunt partes mundi secundum se et absolute, et sic veritas complexa nec falsitas non sunt in rebus; aut in quantum apprehenduntur ab intellectu et sunt sub consideratione ejus, et veritas earum simplices intelliguntur actu sic sunt subiectum veritatis remotum solum, non tamen in quantum res, set in quantum intellecte, et sic per accidens sunt subjectum veritatis complexe et mediate. Ad objectum respondeo, verum incomplexum dupliciter; aut absolute secundum quod est veritas et quiditas rei scibilis et ordinabilis ad animam, et sic non fit veritas complexa ab ea, aut in quantum actu est veritas rei intellecta ad anima et apprehensa; sic fit verum complexum ex eo vero, scilicet ex incomplexo, quia veritas complexa se habet actualiter ad illa simplicia sicut forma domus ad lapides et ligna, quia illa non inrant essentiam forme; similiter res simplices non inrant essentiam veritatis complexe. Ad aliud respondeo, quod exigitur in ratione cause materialis; set de re dupliciter; aut absolute sumpta secundum se, et sic non est subjectum; aut de re in quantum est actu intellecta, et sic est subjectum. Aliter, sicut exponit Aristoteles ibi: ‘ex eo quod res est vel non est dicitur, etc.’ id est, res dicti que est res propositionis, quia istius ‘Sor sedet’ dictum est sedere, quod est res istius propositionis, unde res ibi sumitur pro re dicti, scilicet pro dicto quod est res in quo consistit tota veritas orationis. Ad aliud, sensus est, veritas causatur ex adaequatione istorum, scilicet rerum et intellectuum; unde licet adaequatio sit in rebus adaequatis, non tamen veritas est in adaequatione, vel causatur ab adaequatione” (Baconus, *Quaestiones*, 188–190).

34. See Aristotle: “Est autem oratio omnis quidem significativa non sicut instrumentum, sed (quemadmodum dictum est) secundum placitum. Enunciativa vero non omnis, sed illa in qua verum vel falsum est, non autem in omnibus inest, ut deprecativa, oratio quidem est, sed neque vera neque falsa” (Aristoteles, *De interpretatione*, c. 4, 17a 1–5, in Boethius, *In librum Aristotelis de interpretatione Commentaria Majora*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. Jacques Paul Migne, vol. 64, col. 441).
35. “Queritur utrum verum complexum et falsum sunt in oratione sicut in subjecto suo, ex quo non in rebus. Et videtur quod non: oratio est signum veritatis; set signum est aliud a signato, ergo oratio non dicitur vera. [...]. Item: in diffinitione ponitur quod est essenziale diffinito; set in diffinitione veritatis ponitur intellectus et res, et non oratio; quare oratio non erit subjectum veritatis. Contra: verum et falsum sunt in divisione contradictoriarum, ut dicit in litera, et affirmatione et nega-

tionem; set affirmatio et negatio sunt in oratione, quare oratio erit subiectum. Quod concedo quod oratio est subiectum veri per se, unde veritas et falsitas est quedam quae est passio enuntiationis, et hec denominat propositionem, et hec derelinquitur ex adaequatione rerum et orationum, et hec debet diffiniri per rem et orationem solum. Nec est passio orationis, set est apud compositionem intellectus, et istius est oratio significativa, et hec non denominat orationem, et sic non dicitur oratio vera. Ad aliud, dicendum quod in diffinitione veritatis, secundum quod est passio orationis, debet cadere omnino sic, ‘veritas est adaequatio rerum, sermonum et intellectuum’, secundum autem quod est apud intellectum signata per orationem solum sicut signum, non est de essentia signati, sic nec oratio est de essentia veritatis” (Baconus, *Quaestiones*, 190–191).

36. Regarding the date of composition: Amos Bertolacci, “Avicenna’s and Averroes’s Interpretations and Their Influence in Albertus Magnus,” in *A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, eds Amerini, and Galluzzo, 95.
37. “Non tantum recipiunt nomen entis, quae sic secundum primos intellectus rerum, sed etiam quae respiciunt ens secundum intellectus secundos logicos. Unde horum quae dicta sunt, non solum affirmationes, sed etiam negationes horum aut etiam negationes substantiae dicimus esse et non-esse significare, licet huiusmodi intentionum dispositio non sit nisi in anima; propter quod etiam dicimus non-ens esse non-ens.” (Albertus Magnus, *Metaphysica, libros quinque priores*, ed. Bernhard Geyer (Opera omnia, XVI/1) (Münster: Aschendorff 1960), 164).
38. “Dividamus igitur ipsum dicentes, quod ens sicut et unum dicitur aut secundum accidens aut secundum se. Secundum autem accidens dupliciter vel forte melius tripliciter [...]. Epilogando igitur dicimus, quod secundum accidens dicta sic dicuntur, aut eo quod eidem enti ambo accidunt aut quia enti per se accidens accidit aut quia illud cui inest accidens, est idem illi subiecto de quo praedicatur accidens, sicut secunda substantia idem subiectum est primae substantiae, cui proprie inest accidens praedicatum de ipsa.” (Albertus, *Metaphysica*, 233–234).
39. “Secundum se autem esse sive ens dicuntur, quaecumque praedicantur secundum coordinationem figurae praedicamentorum, ita quod alterum de altero praedicatur essentialiter ut de subiecto” (Albertus, *Metaphysica*, 234). See my comment on the phrase “praedicetur essen-

- tialiter” in the next section on Aquinas. Although the term “essentialiter” comes from Averroes’s *Long Commentary*, Albert might refer here to the predication “simpliciter”, as opposed to the predication “secundum accidens”, of which he could read in Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*.
40. “Amplius autem esse et ens significat ipsam rei veritatem, et hoc dupliciter: uno quidem modo in ipsa re extra animam et extra sermonem accepta, et sic veritas rei est ipsa entitas, quam habet ex sui perfectione. Sicut dicimus verum aurum, quod perfectionem auri attingit, et verum hominem et verum tempus et veram materiam et huiusmodi. Et huic vero opponitur permixtum sive apparens et non-existens, quod vulgariter falsum vocatur. Et hoc verum cum quolibet ente convertitur nec est separabile ab ipso sicut nec unum.” (Albertus, *Metaphysica*, 234).
41. “*Alio modo significat esse veritatem compositionis in complexione sermonis, quia ‘in eo quod res est vel non est, oratio vera vel falsa esse dicitur’*. Et hoc proprie est esse quoddam, quia compositio dicit esse potius quam ens simplex, quia cum dicimus aliquid esse, monstramus ipsa dictione ipsum esse verum, et quando dicimus aliquid non esse, ipsa dictione monstramus, quia non est verum, sed falsum. Hoc autem secundum similitudinem unam est in affirmatione et negatione. *Ut quando dicimus, quia Socrates est musicus, significamus hoc esse verum, et quando dicimus, quia Socrates est non albus, significamus, quia non est verum ipsum esse album*. Dicimus autem non esse diametrum commensurabilem, significantes hoc esse falsum. In omnibus enim talibus esse et non-esse secundum se sunt causa veritatis et falsitatis, quamvis forte attributio extremorum ad invicem sit accidentalis” (Albertus, *Metaphysica*, 234).
42. “Igitur cum quaeruntur entis genera et partes, *praetermittendum est accidens* per accidens, sicut supra diximus, quod non est in aliquo genere entis. *Et etiam praetermittendum est verum*, quod est sicut *ens*, quia, sicut iam ostendimus, illud etiam non est in aliquo genere entis, et accidentis quidem *causa est indefinita* et incerta, sicut ostendimus superius, *huius* autem, veri videlicet, causa est *mentis aliqua passio*. *Et utraque* istarum causarum est *circa genus entis*, quod *reliquum* est et extraneum ab eo quod vere est ens, in aliquo genere entis determinatum existens. *Et* ideo neutrum istorum entium *ostendit* aliquid determinatum, *extra* in rebus ratam entitatem habentibus; neutrum enim horum *aliquam* veram entis habet naturam. *Praetermittantur* igitur ista entia. *Perscrutanda* enim sunt *principia et causae* illius entis quod vere est ens,

inquantum est ens; hoc enim est in genere aliquo entis. Palam autem est ex his quae determinata sunt in v libro, ubi distinximus, quot modis unumquodque dicitur, quod ens ipsum quod vere est, multipliciter dicitur" (Albertus, *Metaphysica*, 315).

43. "Ut quando dicimus, quia Socrates est musicus, significamus hoc esse verum, et quando dicimus, quia Socrates est non albus, significamus, quia non est verum ipsum esse album" (Albertus, *Metaphysica*, 234).
44. "Solutio: Dicendum, quod, sicut dicit Philosophus in v Metaphysicae, ens dupliciter dicitur; dicitur enim ens compositionis, quod significat veritatem propositionis, dicitur etiam ens, quod significat quiditatem rerum, quod dividitur in decem genera. Secundum igitur primum modum malum est in existentibus, ita quod li 'est' copulet inter 'malum' et li 'in existentibus'; nihil enim prohibet malum esse malum et esse in subiecto, ut privatio in subiecto est, et sic intelliguntur inductae rationes. Secundo autem modo malum in existentibus non est; esset enim sensus, quod malum, quod est in existentibus, 'esset', idest haberet quiditatem aliquam in subiecto sicut aliae formae accidentales. Et hoc ipse intendit remove, et sic complebitur sua perscrutatio de malo, quod non sit. Supra enim ostendit, quod non est existens per se sicut substantia, et nunc intendit ostendere, quod non est existens in aliis ut accidens ponens aliquid in subiecto" (Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysii De divinis nominibus*, c. 4, in Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*. Editio Digitalis • t. XXXVII/1, <https://www.albertus-magnus-online.de/>).
45. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 539. Italics mine: "Item negationes eorum quae ad substantiam habitudinem habent, vel etiam ipsius substantiae esse dicuntur. Unde dicimus quod non ens est non ens. Quod non diceretur nisi negationi aliquo modo esse competeret (Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 1).
46. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 885. I changed the mistaken translation "essential" being and "accidental" being" or predicated "essentially" and "accidentally" leaving the phrase in Latin. "Sciendum tamen est quod illa divisio entis non est eadem cum illa divisione qua dividitur ens in substantiam et accidens. Quod ex hoc patet, quia ipse postmodum, ens secundum se dividit in decem praedicamenta, quorum novem sunt de genere accidentis. Ens igitur dividitur in substantiam et accidens, secundum absolutam entis considerationem, sicut ipsa albedo in se considerata dicitur accidens, et homo substantia. Sed ens secundum accidens prout hic sumitur, oportet accipi

per comparationem accidentis ad substantiam. Quae quidem comparatio significatur hoc verbo, est, cum dicitur, homo est albus. Unde hoc totum, homo est albus, est ens per accidens. Unde patet quod divisio entis secundum se et secundum accidens, attenditur secundum quod aliquid praedicatur de aliquo per se vel per accidens. Divisio vero entis in substantiam et accidens attenditur secundum hoc quod aliquid in natura sua est vel substantia vel accidens” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9).

47. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 889, and 890. “Dicit ergo primo, quod illa dicuntur esse secundum se, quaecumque significant figuras praedicationis [...]. Unde oportet, quod ens contrahatur ad diversa genera secundum diversum modum praedicandi, qui consequitur diversum modum essendi; quia quoties ens dicitur, idest quot modis aliquid praedicatur, toties esse significatur, idest tot modis significatur aliquid esse. Et propter hoc ea in quae dividitur ens primo, dicuntur esse praedicamenta, quia distinguuntur secundum diversum modum praedicandi. Quia igitur eorum quae praedicantur, quaedam significant quid, idest substantiam, quaedam quale, quaedam quantum, et sic de aliis; oportet quod unicuique modo praedicandi, esse significet idem; ut cum dicitur homo est animal, esse significat substantiam. Cum autem dicitur, homo est albus, significat qualitatem, et sic de aliis” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9).
48. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 887. “Et est quasi similis ratio praedicandi, cum subiectum praedicatur de accidente, et accidens de accidente. Sicut enim subiectum praedicatur de accidente ea ratione, quia praedicatur subiectum de eo, cui accidit accidens in subiecto positum; ita accidens praedicatur de accidente, quia praedicatur de subiecto accidentis. Et propter hoc, sicut dicitur musicum est homo, similiter dicitur musicum esse album, quia scilicet illud cui accidit esse musicum, scilicet subiectum, est album” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9).
49. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*, transl. Fabian R. Larcher (Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, 1970), c. 22. “Sed cum dico, lignum est album, praedicando accidens de subiecto, non significo sicut in praedicto modo praedicationis, quod alterum aliquid sit substantialiter album, cui accidit esse lignum” (Thomas de Aquino, *In Post. Anal.*, I 33).
50. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*, c. 22. “Deinde cum dicit: ut de homine est album etc., manifestat praemissam differentiam

per exempla: et dicit quod cum dicimus, homo est albus, praedicatum illud est accidentale, quia homo non est quod vere album est, idest esse album non est essentia hominis; neque quod vere album aliquid, ut supra expositum est. Sed cum dicitur, homo est animal, forsan homo est quod vere est animal: animal enim significat essentiam hominis, quia illud ipsum quod est homo, est essentialiter animal. Et quamvis illa, quae non significant substantiam, sint accidentia, non tamen per accidens praedicantur. Praedicantur enim de quodam subiecto non propter aliquod aliud subiectum: puta cum dico, homo est albus, praedicatur album de homine, non ea ratione, quod aliquod aliud subiectum sit album, ratione cuius homo dicatur albus; sicut supra dictum est in his, quae praedicantur per accidens” (Thomas de Aquino, *In Post. Anal.*, I 33).

51. Stephen Menn, “Andronicus and Boethius: Reflexions on Michel Griffin’s *Aristotle’s Categories in the Early Roman Empire*,” *Documenti e Studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 29 (2018): 21–22, footnote 13.
52. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 890. “Unde oportet, quod ens contrahatur ad diversa genera secundum diversum modum praedicandi, qui consequitur diversum modum essendi; quia quoties ens dicitur, idest quot modis aliquid praedicatur, toties esse significatur, idest tot modis significatur aliquid esse. Et propter hoc ea in quae dividitur ens primo, dicuntur esse praedicamenta, quia distinguuntur secundum diversum modum praedicandi. Quia igitur eorum quae praedicantur, quaedam significant quid, idest substantiam, quaedam quale, quaedam quantum, et sic de aliis; oportet quod unicuique modo praedicandi, esse significet idem; *Ut cum dicitur homo est animal, esse significat substantiam. Cum autem dicitur, homo est albus, significat qualitatem*, et sic de aliis” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Italics mine).
53. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 894. “Nec est verum quod Avicenna dicit, quod praedicata, quae sunt in generibus accidentis, principaliter significant substantiam, et per posterius accidens, sicut hoc quod dico album et musicum. Nam album ut in praedicamentis dicitur, solam qualitatem significat. Hoc autem nomen album significat subiectum ex consequenti, in quantum significat albedinem per modum accidentis. Unde oportet, quod ex consequenti includat in sui ratione subiectum. Nam accidentis esse est inesse. Albedo enim etsi significet accidens, non tamen per modum accidentis, sed per modum substantiae. Unde nullo modo consignificat subiectum. *Si enim principaliter*

significaret subiectum, tunc praedicata accidentalia non ponerentur a philosopho sub ente secundum se, sed sub ente secundum accidens. Nam hoc totum, quod est homo albus, est ens secundum accidens, ut dictum est” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Italics mine).

54. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. VIII, 41. “Formae autem et accidentia, et alia huiusmodi, non dicuntur entia quasi ipsa sint, sed quia eis aliquid est; ut albedo ea ratione dicitur ens, quia ea subiectum est album. Unde, secundum philosophum, *accidens magis proprie dicitur entis quam ens*. Sicut igitur accidentia et formae, et huiusmodi, quae non subsistunt, *magis sunt coexistentia quam entia; ita magis debent dici concreata quam creata*. Proprie vero creata sunt subsistentia” (Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 45, a. 4. Italics mine).
55. Aquinas, “On Being and Essence”, 46: “Qualiter enim sit in omnibus substantiis, dictum est. Et quia, ut dictum est, essentia est id quod per diffinitionem significatur, oportet ut eo modo habeant essentiam quo habent diffinitionem. *Diffinitionem autem habent incompletam, quia non possunt diffiniri, nisi ponatur subiectum in eorum diffinitione. Et hoc ideo est, quia non habent per se esse, absolutum a subiecto*, sed sicut ex forma et materia relinquitur esse substantiale, quando componuntur, ita ex accidente et subiecto relinquitur esse accidentale, quando accidens subiecto advenit. Et ideo etiam nec forma substantialis completam essentiam habet nec materia, quia etiam in diffinitione formae substantialis oportet quod ponatur illud, cuius est forma; et ita diffinitio eius est per additionem alicuius, quod est extra genus eius, sicut et diffinitio formae accidentalis” (Thomas de Aquino, *De ente*, cap. VI. Italics mine).
56. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 889 (translation slightly modified by me). “Primo distinguit ens, quod est extra animam, per decem praedicamenta, quod est ens perfectum. Secundo ponit alium modum entis, secundum quod est tantum in mente, ibi, amplius autem et esse significat” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9).
57. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 1242. “Illius vero, scilicet entis veri, causa est aliqua passio mentis, idest operatio intellectus componentis et dividens” (Thomas de Aquino, *In VI Met.*, l. 4).
58. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 895: “Deinde cum dicit amplius autem ponit alium modum entis, secundum quod esse et est, significant compositionem propositionis, quam facit intellectus componens et dividens. Unde dicit, quod esse significat veritatem rei. Vel sicut alia translatio melius habet *quod esse significat* quia aliquod dictum est verum” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Italics mine).

59. In this case, the English translation would not make sense, because it is a question of following the source exactly, as it appeared to Thomas. I thank Marta Borgo for the useful information she provided on this point.
60. “Unde veritas propositionis potest dici veritas rei per causam. Nam ex eo quod res est vel non est, oratio vera vel falsa est. Cum enim dicimus aliquid esse, significamus propositionem esse veram. Et cum dicimus non esse, significamus non esse veram” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9).
61. Cesalli, “States of Affaires”, 426–427. See also Gyula Klima, “The Changing Role of Entia Rationis in Mediaeval Semantics and Ontology,” *Synthese* 96, no. 1 (1993), 1: 25–59.
62. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 1223. “Dicit ergo *quod ens quoddam dicitur quasi verum*, idest quod nihil aliud significat nisi veritatem. Cum enim interrogamus si homo est animal, respondetur quod est; per quod significatur, propositionem praemissam esse veram” (Thomas de Aquino, *In VI Met.*, l. 4. Italics mine).
63. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 2, co.
64. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 1242–1243 (translation slightly modified by me). “Et ideo utrumque est praetermittendum; scilicet et ens per accidens, et ens quod significat verum; quia huius, scilicet entis per accidens, causa est indeterminata, et ideo non cadit sub arte, ut ostensum est. Illius vero, scilicet entis veri, causa est aliqua *passio mentis*, idest operatio intellectus componentis et dividensis. Et ideo pertinet ad scientiam de intellectu. Et alia ratio est, quia utrumque, scilicet ens verum et ens per accidens, sunt circa aliquod genus entis, non circa ens simpliciter per se quod *est in rebus*; et non ostendunt aliquam aliam naturam entis existentem extra per se entia. Patet enim quod ens per accidens est ex concursu accidentaliter entium extra animam, quorum unumquodque est per se. Sicut grammaticum musicum licet sit per accidens, tamen et grammaticum et musicum est per se ens, quia utrumque per se acceptum, habet causam determinatam. Et similiter intellectus compositionem et divisionem facit circa res, quae sub praedicamentis continentur”. (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9. Italics mine).
65. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 896. Italics mine. “Sciendum est autem quod iste secundus modus comparatur ad primum, sicut effectus ad causam. Ex hoc enim quod aliquid in rerum natura est, sequitur veritas et falsitas in propositione, quam intellectus significat per hoc verbum est prout est verbalis copula. Sed, quia aliquid, quod est in

se non ens, intellectus considerat ut quoddam ens, sicut negationem et huiusmodi, ideo quandoque dicitur esse de aliquo hoc secundo modo, et non primo. Dicitur enim, quod caecitas est secundo modo, ex eo quod vera est propositio, qua dicitur aliquid esse caecum; non tamen dicitur quod sit primo modo vera. Nam caecitas non habet aliquod esse in rebus, sed magis est privatio alicuius esse. Accidit autem unicuique rei quod aliquid de ipsa vere affirmetur intellectu vel voce. Nam res non refertur ad scientiam, sed e converso. Esse vero quod in sui natura unaquaque res habet, est substantiale. Et ideo, cum dicitur, Socrates est, si ille est primo modo accipiatur, est de praedicato substantiali. Nam ens est superius ad unumquodque entium, sicut animal ad hominem. Si autem accipiatur secundo modo, est de praedicato accidentali” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9).

66. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 1982. “Similiter etiam deceptus est ex aequivocatione entis. Nam ens quod significat compositionem propositionis est praedicatum accidentale, quia compositio fit per intellectum secundum determinatum tempus. Esse autem in hoc tempore vel in illo, est accidentale praedicatum. Sed ens quod dividitur per decem praedicamenta, significat ipsas naturas decem generum secundum quod sunt actu vel potentia” (Thomas de Aquino, *In X Met.*, l. 3).
67. Aquinas, “De veritate”, 177. “Veritas autem quae dicitur de rebus in comparatione ad intellectum humanum, est rebus quodammodo accidentalis, quia posito quod intellectus humanus non esset nec esse posset, adhuc res in sua essentia permaneret” (Thomas de Aquino, *De ver.*, q. 1, a. 4).
68. “Si autem consideretur veritas rei in ordine ad intellectum humanum, vel e converso, tunc quandoque fit mutatio de veritate in falsitatem, quandoque autem de una veritate in aliam. Cum enim veritas sit adequatio rei et intellectus, ab aequalibus autem si aequalia tollantur, adhuc aequalia remanent quamvis non eadem aequalitate, oportet quod quando similiter mutatur intellectus et res, remaneat quidem veritas, sed alia; sicut si Socrate sedente intelligatur Socrates sedere, et postmodum non sedente intelligatur non sedere. Sed quia ab uno aequalium si aliquid tollatur, et nihil a reliquo, vel si ab utroque inaequalia tollantur, necesse est inaequalitatem provenire, quae se habet ad falsitatem sicut aequalitas ad veritatem; inde est quod si intellectu vero existente mutetur res non mutato intellectu, vel e converso, aut

utrumque mutetur, sed non similiter, proveniet falsitas; et sic erit mutatio de veritate in falsitatem, sicut si Socrate existente albo, intelligatur esse albus, verus est intellectus; si autem postea intelligat eum esse nigrum, Socrate albo remanente, vel e converso Socrate mutato in nigredinem, adhuc albus intelligatur; vel eo mutato in pallorem, intelligatur esse rubeus, falsitas erit in intellectu. Et sic patet qualiter veritas mutetur, et qualiter veritas non mutatur” (Thomas de Aquino, *De ver.*, q. 1, a. 6).

69. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 896. “Esse vero quod in sui natura unaquaeque res habet, est substantiale. Et ideo, cum dicitur, Socrates est, si ille est primo modo accipiatur, est de praedicato substantiali. Nam ens est superius ad unumquodque entium, sicut animal ad hominem. Si autem accipiatur secundo modo, est de praedicato accidentaliter” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9).
70. The *de re - de dicto* distinction will be used by Henry of Ghent to clarify just this point: “Secundum Philosophum V Metaph. in modis entis, ens prima divisione dividitur in ens per se, et ens per accidens. Esse autem in ente per accidens significat de duobus hoc accidere huic. Quod contingit dupliciter scilicet secundum accidens absolute, et accidentaliter per accidens [...]. Et quia in Deo nullum cadit accidens, ut infra patebit, ideo tale esse in Deo non cadit, sed solum ens et esse per se, quod habet duos modos: ut distinguit Philosophus V Metaph. Est enim ens per se duplex: et illud quod significat essentiam rei, et illud quod significat veritatem rei. Et dicitur hic veritas, non que (quia) idem est quod rei per se entitas in natura et essentia eius qua habet esse in se: sed diminuta rei entitas qua habet esse apud animam apprehendentem eam, ut dicit VI Metaph. Tale enim ens est ens verum et pertinet ad predicamentum accidentis, non accidentis ipsi rei in se, sed prout ab intelligente concipitur et ideo est *accidens* non in intellectu, sed *in intelligente*. Ens autem quod significat essentiam rei, magis pertinet ad praedicamentum generis, ut dicit Commentator super V Metaph. Et (ut dicit ibidem) Aristoteles intendebat distinguere inter hoc nomen ens quod significat complexionem in intellectu, et quod significat essentiam quod est extra intellectum. Unde cum dicit Sortes (Socrates) est, hoc quod est est, uno modo significat rem existere in actu et praedicat esse rei in seipsa. Alio modo significat compositionem esse cum homine esse veram et praedicat esse rei in animam. Quibus modis procedi illa communis distinctio propositionum quod (?) propositio aut est de re aut

de dicto. Est enim de re propositio ista, Sortes (Socrates) est, quando hoc verbum est copulat circa subiectum existentiam eius absolute sub hoc sensu, Sortes (Socrates) est, id est *esse convenit Sorti* (Socrati). Est autem de dicto, quando compositionem esse cum subiecto indicat esse veram sub hoc sensu, Sortes (Socrates) est, id est *Sortem (Socratem) esse est verum*. De isto modo esse per se, scilicet diminuto, verum est quod semper est aliquid praeter essentiam rei cuius est, quia est aliquid non in ipsa re, sed in cognoscente et apprehendente ipsam. Et esse Dei modo isto, scilicet esse quod est verum existentes de Deo apud intellectum creatum cognoscente et apprehendente Deum, est aliquid praeter essentiam Dei, non in ipso Deo, neque aliquid in eius essentia existentes, sed in creato intellectu apprehendente ipsum. Nec de tali esse Dei intelligenda est proposita quaestio, sed de esse eius primo modo quod convenit ei in natura et essentia sua, quae est extra intellectum” (Henricus a Gandavo, *Summa quaestionum ordinariarum*, ed. L. Badius (Paris 1520, repr. St. Bonaventure N.Y. 1953), art. 21, q. 3, fo. 125 v, 125 r. Italics mine)

71. Aquinas, “De veritate”, 177. “Est ergo veritas in intellectu divi-
dem primo et proprie; in intellectu vero humano proprie quidem sed
secundario; in rebus autem improprie et secundario, quia non nisi per
respectum ad alteram duarum veritatum [...]. Veritas autem quae dicitur
de rebus in comparatione ad intellectum humanum, est rebus quo-
dammodo accidentalis, quia posito quod intellectus humanus non esset
nec esse posset, adhuc res in sua essentia permaneret [...]. Sic ergo res
aliqua principalius dicitur vera in ordine ad veritatem intellectus divini
quam in ordine ad veritatem intellectus humani” (Thomas de Aquino,
De ver., q. 1, a. 4).
72. Aquinas, “De veritate”, 171: “Et ideo, cum verum dicatur per prius et
posterius de pluribus, oportet quod de illo per prius dicatur in quo
primo invenitur completa ratio veritatis [...]. Et quia bonum, sicut
dictum est, dicit ordinem entis ad appetitum, verum autem dicit ordi-
nem ad intellectum; inde est quod philosophus dicit in VI Metaphys.,
quod bonum et malum sunt in rebus, verum autem et falsum sunt in
mente. Res autem non dicitur vera nisi secundum quod est intellectui
adaequata; unde per posterius invenitur verum in rebus, per prius
autem in intellectu”. (Thomas de Aquino, *De ver.*, q. 1, a. 2). McNerny
translates “verum” and “ens ut verum” as “the true” and “being as the
true”, whereas I prefer and have used in this book the expression “truth”
and “being as truth”.

73. Aquinas, “De veritate,” 173: “Dicendum, quod sicut verum per prius invenitur in intellectu quam in rebus, ita etiam per prius invenitur in actu intellectus componentis et dividensis quam in actu intellectus quiditatem rerum formantis. Veri enim ratio consistit in adaequatione rei et intellectus; idem autem non adaequatur sibi ipsi, sed aequalitas diversorum est; unde ibi primo invenitur ratio veritatis in intellectu ubi primo intellectus incipit aliquid proprium habere quod res extra animam non habet, sed aliquid ei correspondens, inter quae adaequatio attendi potest. Intellectus autem formans quiditatem rerum, non habet nisi similitudinem rei existentis extra animam, sicut et sensus in quantum accipit speciem sensibilis; sed quando incipit iudicare de re apprehensa, tunc ipsum iudicium intellectus est quoddam proprium ei, quod non invenitur extra in re. Sed quando adaequatur ei quod est extra in re, dicitur iudicium verum; tunc autem iudicat intellectus de re apprehensa quando dicit aliquid esse vel non esse, quod est intellectus componentis et dividensis; unde dicit etiam philosophus in VI Metaph., quod compositio et divisio est in intellectu, et non in rebus. Et inde est quod veritas per prius invenitur in compositione et divisione intellectus” (Thomas de Aquino, *De ver.*, q. 1, a. 3).
74. Wolfgang Künne, *Conceptions of Truth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 102–112.
75. “Deinde cum dicit amplius esse ponit distinctionem entis per actum et potentiam; dicens, quod ens et esse significant aliquid dicibile vel effabile in potentia, vel dicibile in actu. In omnibus enim praedictis terminis, quae significant decem praedicamenta, aliquid dicitur in actu, et aliquid in potentia. Et ex hoc accidit, quod unumquodque praedicamentum per actum et potentiam dividitur. Et sicut in rebus, quae extra animam sunt, dicitur aliquid in actu et aliquid in potentia, ita in actibus animae et privationibus, quae sunt res rationis tantum.” (Thomas de Aquino, *In V Met.*, l. 9).
76. Aquinas, “On the Power of God,” 206: “Ens et esse dicitur *dupliciter*, ut patet V Metaph. Quandoque enim significat essentiam rei, sive actum essendi; quandoque vero significat veritatem propositionis, etiam in his quae esse non habent: sicut dicimus quod caecitas est, quia verum est hominem esse caecum” Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 1. *Italics mine*).
77. Gianfranco Fioravanti, “Introduction,” in *Anonymi Boethio Daco usi Quaestiones Metaphysicae*, ed. Gianfranco Fioravanti (Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi XIV) (Kopenhagen 2009), 154, 176–177.

78. “Quaeritur utrum dicendo: non ens est non ens, utrum non enti attribuitur esse. Et videtur quod non. 1. Dicit Boethius super secundum Perihermeneias: hoc verbum ‘est’ quando praedicatur secundo adiacens, praedicat illud quod est in se, id est esse in actu, sed quando praedicatur tertio adiacens, praedicat illud quod sibi attribuitur; <sed sibi attribuitur> non ens; ergo illud praedicat; ergo etc. Contrarium dicit Philosophus in littera. Dicit enim quod ens et privationes sunt entia; quodcumque ergo ens praedicatur de ente, id est denominative, est quod enti denotatur esse inesse; ergo dicendo: non ens est non ens, non enti attribuitur esse. Dicendum secundum Commentatorem quod esse dicitur dupliciter: primo modo de esse vero quod est extra ipsam animam; alio modo de esse dicendo quod esse est in anima. Uterius distinguit de esse in anima, quod dicitur dupliciter: uno modo quod est post esse rei extra, ita quod illud esse in anima sumitur ab esse rei extra; alio modo esse in anima est quod non fit post esse rei extra, quod dicitur esse diminutum, ut figmentum, et tale esse habet negatio, scilicet esse intellectum, et aliquo modo significatur post intellectum, quia omne illud de quo enuntiamus aliquid, cum esse enuntiationis sit esse intellectum, et ideo necesse est quod illud habeat aliquod esse; ergo cum hoc facimus de negatione, ergo habebit aliquod esse. Omnis enim enuntiatio alicuius de aliquo praesupponit intellectum eius de quo est enuntiatio, ut dicit Commentator. I. Ad argumentum patet solutio, Maior enim concedatur, quod esse praedicat esse actuale, id est suum significatum, non tamen esse actualitate, et quando praedicatur tertio adiacens praedicat esse enuntiationis, non tamen esse simpliciter.” (Anonymus Lipsiensis, *Quaestiones Metaphysicae*, q. VI, 6, in *Anonymi Boethio Daco usi Quaestiones Metaphysicae*, ed. Gianfranco Fioravanti), 281–282). (Trans. Richard Davies and myself).
79. It is interesting to note that, among the authoritative statements (*auctoritates*) of Aristotle taken from Book V, the following two propositions are cited: “(130) Ens est duplex, scilicet per se et per accidens”; (131) Ens per se est quod significat decem praedicamenta uno modo. Alio modo significat veritatem uniuscujusque”. The distinction referred to in 131 is similar to but not identical to that in Anonymus Lipsiensis. We note that we have already seen both these claims: the former in the commentaries of Rufus, Roger, Albert and Thomas; the latter at least in Albert and Thomas. *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis. Un florilège médiéval. Étude historique et édition critique*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse (Louvain-

- Paris: Publications universitaires—Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1974), 125. As for the date of compilation: Jacqueline Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis. Un florilège médiéval. Étude historique et édition critique*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse, 38.
80. Fioravanti, “Introduction”, 164–166.
 81. Gianfranco Fioravanti, “Footnotes”, in *Anonymi Boethio Daco usi Quaestiones Metaphysicae*, ed. Gianfranco Fioravanti, 282.
 82. William Dunphy, “Avant-propos,” in Sigerus de Brabantia, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, éd. revue de la reportation de Munich, texte inédit de la reportation de Vienne, ed. William Dunphy (Louvain-La-Neuve: Éditions de l’Institut Supérieur de Philosophie 1981), 22.
 83. “*Amplius esse*. Consequenter ponit secundam divisionem vel secundum modum entis per se, dicens quod ens et esse significant ens secundum animam, quod non haberet esse si anima non esset; et non ens similiter: sicut est ens quod est verum, quod consistit in compositione vel divisione sicut est “hominem esse animal” esse quod est verum, et “hominem esse asinum” esse quod est falsum; et dicitur similiter non vel “hominem non esse animal”, non esse quod est falsum, et “hominem non esse asinum”, non esse quod est verum. Et advertendum quod ad istum modum entis reducuntur entia de quibus fecit Aristoteles mentionem in principio IV huius, secundum quod negationes et privationes dicuntur entia; immo et non ens sic est aliquo modo ens, scilicet secundum animam: non enim sunt entia extra animam, sed eorum opposita; unde, si non esset ratio considerans ista, ipsa non essent aliquo modo entia. Et iterum considerandum est quod dicit Averroes hic, quod unicuique rei accidit quod sit verus intellectus de ea et verae enuntiationes, et ideo ei accidit esse quod habet per intellectum; tamen ei non accidit esse quod est ex natura sua propria, sed inest ei substantialiter. Et ideo sic dicendo “homo est” potest esse problema de accidente, uno modo accipiendo Iy esse secundum quod dicit esse quod habet secundum animam, quod non est esse verum; si autem dicat esse quod habet ex propria sua natura, tunc est praedicatum substantiale, et est problema de genere” (Sigerus de Brabantia, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, ed. William Dunphy, here: Reportation de Munich, 301). (Trans. Richard Davies and myself).
 84. See: Matteo di Giovanni, “The Commentator: Averroes’s Reading of the *Metaphysics*, in *A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, eds Amerini, and Galluzzo, 59–94.

85. “Commentum 13: Quia ens dicitur de illo de quo dicitur unum, et unum dicitur de illo quod est unum per se et unum per accidens, ita etiam fuit dispositio entis. Et ideo incepit primo notificare modos entis, quae sunt entia per accidens. Et dixit: *Ens dicitur*, etc., idest: sicut dicimus quod illud quo est iustum est musicum, scilicet idem. Ista enim identitas est per accidens quia accidit unum alteri et ambo uni subiecto, quod defert musicam et iustitiam. Haec igitur est intentio uniusmodi. Et suum exemplum est dicere: omnis musicus est iustus. Secundus autem modus est sicut dicimus quod homo est musicus aut quod musicus est homo; et iste modus dicitur per accidens aut quia musicum accidit homini, qui est tamquam genus, aut quia musica et humanitas accidunt sibi ad invicem unum alteri, quia sunt in uno subiecto, scilicet in homine in quo existit musica, sicut dicimus quod omnis musicus est homo. Sed unum istorum inest per accidens subiecto in quo conveniunt, et aliud essentialiter, e contra dispositioni in primo modo, scilicet in quo dicimus quod musicus est albus. Hoc igitur quod dixit: *ista enim dicuntur modo accidentali*, etc., est exemplum ad dicendum quod musicus est albus, non ad dicendum quod homo est musicus. Deinde congregavit ambas intentiones, et dixit: *Entia igitur quae dicuntur modo accidentali*, etc., idest: et intendit per illa quae ambo sunt unius entis, sicut albus et musicus, quae sunt unius rei cui accidit ut sit albus et musicus. Deinde dicit: *Aut quia sunt*, idest: sicut dicimus quod musicus est homo: illud enim in quo existit musica accidentaliter, scilicet homo, idem est cum homine universaliter. Et similiter est cum dicimus quod homo est musicus: intentio enim illius hominis est homo cui accidit quod esset musicus. Et determinandum est in eis quae dicuntur idem essentialiter hoc quod sunt duo essentialiter uno modo et duo essentialiter alio modo. Sicut dicimus: omnis homo est animal; homo enim essentialiter differt ab animali uno modo et sunt idem essentialiter alio modo”. (Averroes, *Commentum in Metaphysicam V*, in *Averrois in Librum V Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Commentarius*, ed. Ruggero Ponzalli (Bern: Francke, 1971), 126–128).
86. “Commentum 14: Cum declaravit modos entis quod est secundum accidens, incepit declarare secundum quot modos dicitur ens essentialiter. Et dixit: *Et dicuntur entia* etc., id est: et intendit per figuras genera praedicamentorum, scilicet dictiones significantes genera praedicamentorum. Deinde dicit: *Sunt enim secundum numerum* etc., idest: dicitur enim ens secundum numerum secundum quem dicuntur praedica-

menta. Deinde dicit: *Quaedam igitur*, etc., idest: et hoc nomen ens dicitur de omnibus de quibus dicuntur praedicamenta, quia quod significat hoc nomen ens idem videtur cum eo quod significant dictiones praedicamentorum. Deinde enumeravit praedicamenta, et dixit: *Quaedam igitur significant quid*, etc. Et tacuit praedicamentum situs et habitus propter abbreviationem sermonis aut quia latent. Deinde dicit: *Et significatio uniuscuiusque istorum*, etc., idest: et significatio uniuscuiusque nominum novem accidentium cum sua significatione super illud accidens est significatio super unum praedicamentum, scilicet praedicamentum substantiae. Non enim est differentia inter dicere in praedicamento qualitatis quod homo est sanus et quod homo est in sanitate. Et intendebat per hoc notificare quod nomen denominativum non significat in propositione cuius subiectum est substantia et cuius praedicatum est denominativum. V.g. Socrates est albus significat substantiam et accidens aut substantiam in qua fit accidens. Sicut aestimavit Avicenna, qui, cum vidit quod haec dictio “albus” significat aliquid in quo est albedo, dixit quod primo significat subiectum et secundo accidens. Sed est e converso: scilicet primo significat accidens et secundo subiectum. Accidens enim innatum est existere in subiecto. Et si esset sicut dicit, scilicet quod “albus” primo significat corpus, tunc idem esset dicere “Socrates est albus” quod dicere “Socrates est corpus album” et idem esset dicere “corpus album” et “corpus album” et sic in infinitum, quoniam cum dixerimus hoc vocabulum “album” collocabitur in eo corpus” (Averroes, *Commentum*, 130–131).

87. Stephen Menn kindly wrote to me, pointing out that in the Arabic text occurs the phrase “what signifies true” rather than “what sounds true” (*illud quod sonat verum*). This makes perfect sense, yet in both the editions of the Latin translation, including in the editio critica by Ponzalli, occurs “sonat” and there is no variant quoted in the apparatus of Ponzalli’s edition which contains “significat” instead of “sonat”.
88. “Et cum dixit quod hoc nomen ens dicitur de decem praedicamentis, dixit: Et etiam ens significat essentiam, etc., idest: et hoc nomen ens etiam significat illud quod significat dicere aliquid esse verum. Cum enim dicimus aliquid esse, demonstramus ipsum esse verum; et quando dicimus aliquid non esse, demonstramus ipsum non esse, scilicet ipsum esse falsum. Deinde dicit: *Et similiter in affirmativa et negativa*, etc., et intendit per ens hic illud quod sonat verum aut simpliciter aut compositae, scilicet in quaesito singulari et composito. In propositione autem

- composita, sicut dicimus: “Socrates est musicus” aut “Socrates non est musicus”; in quaestione autem simplici, sicut dicimus “utrum Socrates sit” aut “non sit”. Et universaliter hoc nomen ens hic non significat nisi verum” (Averroes, *Commentum*, 131–132). (Trans. Richard Davies and myself).
89. “Sed debes scire quod universaliter hoc nomen ens, quod significat essentiam rei, est aliud ab ente quod significat verum. Et ideo expositores diversantur in quaestio simplici, scilicet dicere “utrum aliquid sit” est in secundo Thopicorum: utrum collocetur in quaestionibus accidentis aut generis. Qui enim intellexit de ente illud quod commune est decem praedicamentis, dixit quod collocatur in quaestionibus generis; et qui intellexit de ente illud quod intelligitur de vero, dixit quod collocatur in quaestionibus accidentis” (Averroes, *Commentum*, 132). (Trans. Richard Davies and myself).
90. “Et intendebat distinguere inter hoc nomen ens quod significat copulationem in intellectu et quod significat essentiam quae est extra intellectum” (Averroes, *Commentum*, 133). (Trans. Richard Davies and myself).
91. Aquinas, “On the Power of God,” 206. “*Quandoque enim significat essentiam rei, sive actum essendi; quandoque vero significat veritatem propositionis*”. (Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 1. Italics mine).
92. Averroes, *Commentum in Metaphysicam X*, in *Averrois in X (I) Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Commentarius*, ed. Fernando (Salvatore) Ruggiero (Fribourg: Université de Fribourg, 1961), 26. Also in this case the English translation would not make sense, because it is a question of following the source exactly, as it appeared to Thomas.
93. Averroes, *In libros Metaphysicorum*, X (Venetiis apud Iunctas, 1562, VIII), f. 257 F-G.
94. Averroes, *Averroes’ Tahafut Al-Tahafut (the Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, trans. Simon van den Bergh (Cambridge: EJW Gibb Memorial Trust 1954, reprinted 1987), 179. Italics mine. “Pluralitas vero quinta est numeratio quiditatis et esse, est quoniam esse in rei veritate in entibus est quod intellectuale, et est esse rem extra animam, sicut est in alia, et id, quod illud significat, est synonymum veri et est id, quod significatur per copulam categoricam in propositionibus categoricis. *Nam dictio est, dicitur dupliciter. Primo id, quod significatur per verum*, ut cum dicimus si res est, aut non est, aut si hoc erit hoc, aut non erit hoc. *Secundo id, quod ponitur de entibus tamquam genus, ut divisio entis ad decem praedi-*

camenta, et ad substantiam, et accidens, et, cum intellegitur de ente id, quod intelligitur de vero tunc non erit extra animam pluralitas, tunc vero intelligitur de eo id, quod intelligitur de substantia: et tunc nomen substantiae de necessario in esse, et alio secundum prius et posterius, ut nomen calidi, quod dicitur de igne, et rebus calidis, haec autem est opinio Philosophi” (Averroes, *Destructio destructionum philosophiae Algazelis*, Disp. V. (Venetiis apud Iuntas, 1550, IX), ff. 34–35. Italics mine).

95. Averroes, *On Aristotle’s “Metaphysics”. An Annotated Translation of the So-Called “Epitome”*, ed. Rüdiger Arnzen (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2010) 27–28. Italics mine. “*Ens dicitur multis modis. Uno modo de quolibet decem praedicamentorum: et est de nominibus, quae dicuntur secundum ordinem et proportionem, non quae dicuntur per meram aequivocationem, neque univocationem. Secundo dicitur de vero, quod scilicet ita se habet in intellectu, quemadmodum extra intellectum; ut si diceremus si natura est, et si vacuum non est. Dicitur et de quiditate cuiuslibet rei habentis quiditatem, et essentiam extra animam, sive apprehendatur [...] essentia, sive non. In decem autem praedicamentis aggregantur haec secundum quod dicitur de eis nomen entis his duobus modis. Uno scilicet modo inquantum habent esse extra animam. Secundo, inquantum significant quiditates illarum essentiarum. Et ideo nomen entis revertitur ad haec duo tantum, scilicet ad verum, et ad id quod est extra intellectum*” (Averroes, *Epitome in librum Metaphisicae Aristotelis*, Tract. I, (Venetiis apud Iuntas, 1562, VIII), ff. 357 I-K. Italics mine).
96. Stephen Menn, “Al-Fārābī’s *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* and His Analysis of the Senses of Being”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 18 (2008), 1: 59–97. Stephen Menn, “Fārābī in the Reception of Avicenna’s Metaphysics: Averroes against Avicenna on Being and Unity,” in *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna’s Metaphysics*, eds Hasse, and Bertolacci, 51–96.
97. Madeleine Fletcher, “Almohadism: An Islamic Context for the Work of Saint Thomas Aquinas”, in *Los almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, vol. II, eds Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro, and Luis Molina (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Invesrigaciones Cientificas, 2005), 1163–1226, here 1202. André Berthier, “Un Maître orientaliste du XIII^e siècle: Raymond Martin O.P”, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 6 (1936): 291.

98. Fletcher, "Almohadism," 1197, footnote 75.
99. Berthier, "Un Maître orientaliste du XIII^e siècle," 268.
100. Berthier, "Un Maître orientaliste du XIII^e siècle," 300–301. Laureano Robles has proved that the *Pugio Fidei* contains also excerpts from Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*: Laureano Robles, *Tomas de Aquino* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1992), 121–139. Furthermore Ann Giletti has more recently pointed out that the *Pugio Fidei* contains also excerpts from Aquinas's *De veritate* as well as a passage from the commentary on *De anima* by Albert the Great, a passage from Albert's *Summa theologiae* and passages containing philosophical arguments from the *Sentences commentary* by Peter of Tarentaise: Ann Giletti, "Early Witness: Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great and Peter of Tarentaise in Ramon Marti's *Pugio fidei* (c. 1278)," in *Ramon Marti's Pugio Fidei. Studies and Texts*, eds Görgé K. Hasselhoff, and Alexander Fidora (Santa Coloma de Queralt: Obrador Edèndum, 2017), 121–156.
101. Berthier, "Un Maître orientaliste du XIII^e siècle," 272–273.
102. Apart from Madeleine Fletcher (Fletcher, "Almohadism") and Miguel Asín Palacios (Miguel Asín Palacios, "El Averroismo teológico de Sto. Tomas de Aquino," in *Homenaje a D. Francisco Codera en su jubilación del profesorado*, ed. Eduardo Saavedra (Zaragoza: Escar, 1904), 271–331), there is general agreement nowadays that Raymond copied from the *Summa contra Gentiles*: see the scholars quoted by Ann Giletti (Giletti, "Early Witness," 129, footnote 24).
103. Berthier for example, doesn't mention such a Neapolitan stay (Berthier, "Un Maître orientaliste du XIII^e siècle," 268).
104. Fletcher, "Almohadism", 1207.
105. In a review of Anthony Kenny's *Aquinas on Being* Stephen Menn complains of the lack in that text of "source references to Muslim philosophers": "it is disturbing that this is still acceptable in Thomas scholarship, and many detailed difficulties, as well as the overall picture of how Thomas's senses of being are related, might have been cleared up by first-hand acquaintance with Avicenna and Averroes". (Stephen Menn, "Book Review on *Aquinas on Being*", *Philosophical Review*, 115 (2006), no. 3: 391–395). We hope with this chapter to have filled some of the lacunae Menn complains of.



6

Conclusions

In this work, I have tried to re-read Thomas through the lenses of Frege. My purpose was not to show that Thomas was highly Fregean without knowing it. Nor was it to show how little Fregean he was, as some authors today wish to believe in their excessive criticism of what is called “analytic Thomism”.¹ The purpose was rather simply to understand Thomas better. As I have shown in the first chapter, the comprehension of a text from the past takes place through the lenses of philosophical intuitions more or less contemporaneous with the interpreter.

For years, existentialism furnished most Thomists of the twentieth century with their spectacles. This is often still true today, though many Thomists don't realize they're wearing “Heidegger” brand designer glasses. If anything, they think they're wearing “Gilsonian” glasses, of the *Being and Some Philosophers* line, though few people know his products are actually assembled by the Heidegger Company, using neo-Platonic materials, as demonstrated in the first chapter.

In this book I have shown that Fregean glasses, designed in the UK by Peter Geach and Anthony Kenny, are better than those produced years ago in France (by Gilson) or indeed in Germany (by Heidegger). Here I have simply developed that design, produced the Geach & Kenny glasses

and tested their effectiveness on a large scale directly on the texts of Thomas.

This is why I have preferred to quote the texts of Thomas directly and extensively rather than to appeal to the *communis opinio* of the Thomists, which often replaced Thomas for the glasses through which he is being looked at. For, it was often in this book a matter of challenging that *communis opinio*, wearing new glasses and rediscovering Thomas himself.²

Such is the case on the topic of the senses of being, of which we have treated in the second chapter, in the fourth chapter and in the fifth chapter.

The existentialist *communis opinio* promoted the discovery and exploitation of texts of Thomas about the act of being (*actus essendi*), forgotten by Thomists for centuries. Some suggestions of Frege, emphasized by Peter Geach, have allowed us to discover and exploit often the very same texts, but now in their full amplitude.

For the act of being was only one of the two fundamental senses of being of which Thomas spoke in various texts. It is incredible to discover how existential Thomism simply cut out just the parts of those texts that spoke of the second sense of being, that of being as truth. What Frege has done is to allow us to read these texts in their entirety, without excisions. The matter is all the more important when we think that being as truth is crucial for Thomas for the understanding not only of the very notion of act of being but also, as we saw in the second chapter, the being of the divine relations, the being of God, the being of evil, the being of the human nature of Christ. We hope, then, to have shown how the topic of the senses of being must no longer be omitted from the syllabus of students of Thomas concerned with his metaphysics (and of his ethics too, if we consider also the topic of the being of evil).

In the fifth chapter, we discovered, then, how the topic of the senses of being was not at all marginal in the thirteenth century, but on the contrary attracted the attention of most contemporary authors of Thomas. All were in fact busy at the time in interpreting Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book V, where the Philosopher had first dealt with this important topic.

In short, we have seen that with Frege's glasses, we understand better not only Aquinas's ontology but also that of authors such as Richard

Rufus of Cornwall, Roger Bacon, Albert the Great, the so-called Anonymus Lipsiensis, Henry of Ghent and Siger of Brabant, not to mention Averroes.

Naturally, when we see more clearly, we see also imperfections. If we focus on a text, it is not surprising if stains and defects that were formerly invisible come to light.

Such is the case with the very topic of the senses of being in Thomas Aquinas. Each of the two fundamental senses of being is divided in turn into two sub-senses, and in each case the relation between the two sub-senses is problematic.

Let us take the sense of being as act of being and its two sub-senses: being as act of being *simpliciter dictum* (e.g. “Socrates est”) and being-something (e.g. “Socrates is a man” or “Socrates is wise”). Sometimes it seems as if being as the act of being *simpliciter dictum* is independent from being as being-something, elsewhere it seems as if the two senses must stand or fall together. The independence of the act of being from being-something is very satisfactory for Thomists of an existentialist persuasion, while the interdependence of the two satisfies better Thomists of an Aristotelian persuasion. Which of the two are right? In the first chapter we showed that Thomas’s first task was to rediscover Aristotle in a philosophical and theological context that was impregnated with neo-Platonism. If that is so, then perhaps we should return to giving greater credit to the Aristotelian Thomas, because it is probably just there that his fundamental option is concealed.

Let us next consider the two sub-senses of being as truth: the being that answers the question *an sit* or *anitas*—expressed in English by “there is”—and “veridical” being—expressed by the formula: “it *is* true that p” or “it *is* so [or: the case] that p”. Thomas is not clear on the topic. Sometimes, following Averroes, Thomas maintains that being as truth corresponds only to *anitas*—there is something that is blind—elsewhere he maintains, probably following Aristotle, that it corresponds only to veridical being—it *is* true that non-being is non-being—and finally in some places we are told that being as truth correspond to both: “it *is* true that there is something that is blind”.

Likewise, the relation between the two sub-senses is not clear. As we have seen in the fourth chapter, we can infer from the texts of Thomas

sometimes that being as truth implies being as *anitas*, and sometimes does not: “blindness exists” means “something is blind” and this in its turn implies “it *is* true that there is something that is blind”, whereas “negation exists” means “it *is* true that non-being is non-being” and this does not imply any being even in the sense of “there is”. However, Thomas himself seems to use indifferently the two different sub-senses of being as truth and he offers no explicit account of their relationship.

There are also problems about the relationship between the two fundamental senses of being, that is to say between being as act of being and being as truth. Sometimes Thomas maintains that being as act is the cause and foundation of being as truth so that it seems that the primacy belongs to the act of being. Sometimes, however, and often in the very same texts, he himself says that being as truth in its sub-sense of veridical being has a more universal applicability than being as act of being, and hence it seems that the primacy should belong to the veridical being. The tension between these two primacies is for the most part unresolved in Thomas’s work, so that his position is a sort of pluripotent stem cell: it can be developed, and in fact has been developed, in different directions, particularly in that of the primacy of the veridical being by Suarez.

I am indeed convinced that historico-philosophical developments after Thomas concerning the object of metaphysics as ontology, or the passage from “ontology” to “tinology”, were a natural consequence of the attempt to resolve those unresolved tensions.³

As some very interesting studies from the last few years have documented, the “tinology”, literally the “science” (*logos*) of something (*tin*os), in other words the science that considers “thing” a notion more comprehensive and more “transcendental” than that of “being” (and hence called “supertranscendental”), encountered a remarkable welcome in the history of philosophy after Thomas Aquinas. This was first offered by Duns Scotus, in the Quodlibetical question III, where he identified the significance of “thing” in opposition to the concept of “nothing”, and included within “things” both those of reason and those that “can have or have entity” (Johannes Duns Scotus, *Quodlibet III*). But a similar welcome was given by Lorenzo Valla, Francisco Suarez, and the whole of seventeenth century scholasticism. As the studies of Doyle have shown, there is a current of thought that goes to the concept of “object in general” in Kant

and ends with Meinong's theory of objects, namely the conception of a general catalogue of all that is that includes not only material objects existing in nature but also fictitious, possible, and impossible objects, indeed whatever is an object of thought.⁴

In other words, driven by its essential drive towards universality and transcendentalism, metaphysics drops the primacy of the act of being and becomes open to whatever can be the content of a true proposition or to whatever can simply be thought. This ultimate sense is more universal than the earlier one. This is just what Suarez and modern scholasticism had tried to do.

Apart from the topic of the senses of being, we have discussed in this book also essence and the transcendentals, as would be the case in a scholastically oriented manual of ontology even at the present time. Here too some intuitions of Frege are very useful to help us rediscover some forgotten texts of Thomas.

Frege's distinction between concept and object allowed us to re-evaluate Thomas's criticism of Plato's theory of subsistent ideas, which he in his turn took from Aristotle. Just as for Frege an object cannot at the same time be a concept, so for Thomas a substance cannot be a subsistent universal. The reason is simple: it is impossible that something that is by its nature individual, and so singular and unique, should be common to many as universal forms are: "it is impossible to think", Thomas wrote, "that there could be many of this individual".

One interesting consequence, often overlooked by Thomists, is that in this life "God" can only be understood by humans as a form predicated of an individual. For it is impossible for humans to comprehend his individual act of being, and so the word "God" does not indicate his proper name, as is the case with "Peter exists". It indicates rather a form, or a concept-word in Frege's language, which is predicated of some *x*. "God exists", therefore, for Thomas means just "There is an *x* such that *x* is god."

We need, however, to emphasize that God is the creative cause of all that exists. In that sense, therefore, he cannot be other than "common". From this point of view, the system of Plato offered a perfect solution: the formal cause is in fact the common cause of all of which it is predicated. But just this was the heart of the problem: God cannot be predicated of his effects or we risk falling into pantheism. For this reason, in one of his

last works, namely the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Thomas, following Aristotle, suggests that we consider God as efficient rather than formal cause. This cause too is a cause of all that exists and comes into being, but it has the advantage that it is not predicated of all its effects.

In the case of the doctrine of essence, too, we have discovered a number of tensions and changes of mind in Thomas's texts. The clearest is the conception of God as subsistent goodness, unity, and being. He states explicitly that the Platonic system of separate ideas is not valid for material beings, but it is "absolutely true" and "consonant with the Christian faith" in the case of God. God can even be defined as "*forma separata*", "*ipsum esse separatum*", "*ipsum esse abstractum*". What should we make of this explicit Platonism of Thomas, at least with regard to things in heaven? I think I have given some clues that suggest Thomas adopted a fundamentally Aristotelian option on this topic too. For example, in the Commentary on the *Liber de causis* he has an explicit criticism of the Platonic theory of the differentiation of forms on the basis of their recipients. This criticism was considered characteristic of his position by his contemporaries at a time when the doctrine of God as subsistent goodness, unity, and being was held by many contemporary theologians. But there is no doubt that Thomas's changes of mind remain obvious.

Frege's notion of concept as function has been shown to be useful to help us in understanding in Thomas's teaching about form. Just as for Frege a concept is always an unsaturated function, so in Thomas a form, whether substantial or accidental, is always "of": "of a being" rather than "a being", co-existent rather than existent. In Thomas's Latin, no less than in Frege's German, the genitive is the case characteristic of a form. Without the subject whose form it is, it is incomplete on its own. In other words, wisdom, for instance, is always "wisdom of..." and is complete only when saturated, as in the case of "wisdom of Socrates", which in its turn is so united to the being of Socrates that it can be expressed also by the proposition "Socrates exists wisely".

Once again, we ask what we are to make of the doctrine of God as subsistent goodness, unity, and especially being? Does it not seem that this famous doctrine squarely contradicts the theory of forms as "of being" rather than "being"? Here too we have shown that some very important Aristotelian notions, taken over by Thomas, are capable of

resolving the tensions found in Thomas's texts. The Aristotelian notion of being as *energeia*, often translated into Latin as "second act" throws a new light on the notion of being as act of being and of God as subsistent act of being. Second act, clearly identified by Thomas with the act of being, and in particular with God's act of being, indicates the active use of specific capacities, in other words it indicates "activities" and sums up in a single word the characteristic activities of God, that is to say of thinking, willing, and loving, which are the activities of a thinking and willing individual. Precisely because God is being in the sense of second act he is individual being, not a subsistent form incapable of exercising the activities of a personal being. This is a doctrine characteristic of Thomas, in which the Aristotelian notion of being as *energeia* plays a crucial role. This allows us to resolve the tension between the neo-Platonic God that is nothing other than being (*esse tantum*) and the Christian God that is a personal being. It is a doctrine silently overlooked by Thomists.

Finally, we considered Thomas's idea of the transcendentals. Here the Fregean notions that were useful were those concerning assertion and negation. For Thomas a transcendental is something that is universally predicable of everything. Being as act of being is not predicable of everything, since it cannot be predicated of negations and privations. These, however, have a place in the universal catalogue of what there is, because non-being *is* non-being, as Thomas observes, commenting on Aristotle. It is implicit but obvious that in this case the only sense of being that is applicable is veridical being (and the same conclusion is explicit in the so-called Anonymus Lipsiensis and in Siger of Brabant, as we saw in the fifth chapter). From the totality of Thomas's thought about this kind of being it turns out that it can be understood only in this sense: "it *is* true that or it *is* so [or: the case] that (non-being is non-being)".

The veridical being expressed by "it *is* true that p" is the answer to a sentence-question: "yes, it is", where the "it" refers to the whole proposition. In other words, while the question about a categorical aspect—for instance, "what is a human being?"—is a word-question, a question about a transcendental aspect is a sentence-question, for instance, "Is Socrates still alive?" or "is non-being non-being?". An affirmative answer to these questions refers to transcendental being or veridical being. We are here very close to what Frege meant to express by the assertion sign.

This interpretation is extended and confirmed if we consider another transcendental, that Thomas expresses under the pseudonym of “aliquid”, that is “*aliud*” or “*diversum*”. This is one of the transcendentals most characteristic and most original of Thomas, as we have amply shown. It corresponds to *divisio*, which is the basis of the transcendental multiplicity, itself characteristic of Thomas’s thought. *Divisio* in its turn is connected with the syncategorema “non” and with negation. As we saw in the second section of the fourth chapter, negation is a *divisio*, because according to Thomas in the judgement the predicate is divided from the subject: “Socrates is not white.” We have seen that this internal negation can be rewritten as an external one according to Thomas. So, “Socrates is not white” can be written as “it *is* not that (Socrates is white)” or “it *is* not true that (Socrates is white)”. Hence, the transcendental *aliud* or *diversum*, and the corresponding *divisio*, involves the assertion of a negation and so it is related to the logical operator of negation.

Thus, we see that affirmation and negation, or, in syncategorematic terms “est” and “non” underpin at least two of the transcendentals, *ens* and *aliud*. Though all this was probably not clear to Thomas, his thought is more easily intelligible with the aid of Frege’s teaching about assertion and negation. Similarly, as we have seen above, the sense of being as *animitas*, a notion that Thomas took from Averroes, is more readily intelligible with the aid of the notion of the existential quantifier.

All in all, considering Thomas’s ontology after this study, one might find it confusing that he used the same word “est” to perform such different functions as those of a first level predicate (e.g. Socrates est/is), the copula (e.g. Socrates is wise), the quantifier (e.g. there is God) and the assertion sign (it *is* so [or: the case] that or it *is* true that p). But at the same time one might see the same situation the other way around: even though there was in Thomas’s time the same word “est”, still he was able to grasp different functions, which later would have been expressed by different words and logical symbols. In any case my job so far has been that of bringing out such different meanings and functions implied in that same “est”.

Naturally, and fortunately, several lines of research remain open, from the viewpoint of both the history of medieval philosophy and theoretical philosophy.

Here I will mention only some of them: were there other historical paths, apart from those analysed in the fifth chapter, from Al-Farabi and Averroes's theory of the two senses of being to Aquinas's theory? Were there some relations between transcendentals and syncategoremata (which in their turn were the ancestors of the logical constants) in the thirteenth century? How shall we interpret the other transcendentals? For instance, is "good" (*bonum*) to be interpreted in terms of "it is good that p"? And even more urgent: is Thomas's ontology capable of giving an ontological account of propositional truths? Is the notion of state of affairs, for example, to be found in Thomas as it seems to be in other medieval authors⁵?

I expect there will be some pleasant surprises in answering these questions. So, the research does not end here.

In the meantime, I will be content if I have succeeded in awakening the desire to read old texts in a new way, rather than to seek confirmation of long-standing and worn-out opinions. Although the old traditions are reassuring, research would not exist without the desire and courage to look for something new.

Notes

1. Knasas, "Haldane's Analytic Thomism and Aquinas's Actus Essendi". Kerr, "Thomist Esse and Analytical Philosophy". Gyula Klima's position seems to me more balanced. See Gyula Klima, "Geach's Three Most Inspiring Errors Concerning Medieval Logic", *Philosophical Investigations*, 38, 1–2 (2015): 34–51; Gyula Klima, "Aquinas' Reception in Contemporary Metaphysics", in *Oxford Handbook of the Reception of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).
2. We have also often quoted texts by Frege himself even though they are well known among analytic scholars, imagining that a reader mastering Thomas's philosophy is often not very acquainted with that of Frege.
3. Rolf Schönberger, *Die Transformation des klassischen Seinsverständnisses. Studien zur Vorgeschichte des neuzeitlichen Seinsbegriffs im Mittelalter* (Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 1986). Ludger Honnefelder, *Scientia transcendens. Die formale Bestimmung der Seiendheit und Realität in der Metaphysik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit (Duns Scotus – Suarez – Wolff–*

- Kant – Peirce*) (Hamburg: Meiner, 1990). Jean-François Courtine, *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990); Jean-François Courtine “Res,” in *Historische Wörterbuch der Philosophie, Forschungsprojekt der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur*, Band VIII, eds Joachim Ritter, and Karl Gründer (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 1992), 892–901. Piero Di Vona, *I concetti trascendenti in Sebastian Izquierdo e nella Scolastica del Seicento* (Napoli: Loffredo, 1994); Piero di Vona, *L'ontologia dimenticata. Dall'ontologia spagnola alla Critica della ragion pura* (Napoli: La Città del Sole, 2008). De Libera, *La querelle des universaux de Platon à la fin du Moyen Âge*. Alain De Libera, “Subsistance et existence: Porphyre et Meinong”, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 2 (1997): 167–192. Olivier Boulnois, *Être et représentation. Une généalogie de la métaphysique moderne à l'époque de Duns Scot* (Paris: Vrin, 1999). Giovanni Ventimiglia, “Res”, in *Enciclopedia filosofica (nuova edizione)*, vol. X, eds Virgilio Melchiorre et al. (Milano: Bompiani, 2007), 9648. Giovanni Ventimiglia, “Trascendentali,” in *Enciclopedia filosofica (nuova edizione)*, vol. XII, eds Virgilio Melchiorre et al., 11751–11752. Marco Lamanna, “Ontology between Godenius and Suárez”, in *Suárez's Metaphysics in its historical and systematic Context*, edited by Lukáš Novák (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 2014), 135–151. Marco Lamanna, “Zwischen Real- und Supertranszendentalwissenschaft. Metaphysikunterricht und “Geburt” der Ontologie in St. Gallen im Zeitalter der Reformation”, *Wolfenbütteler Renaissance-Mitteilungen 2* (2018) (forthcoming).
4. John P. Doyle, “Extrinsic Cognoscibility: a Seventeenth Century supertranscendental notion”, *Modern Schoolman*, 68 (1990): 57–80; John P. Doyle, “Another God, Chimerae, Goat-Stags, and Man-Lions: a Seventeenth Century debate about impossible objects”, *Review of Metaphysics*, 48 (1995): 771–808; John P. Doyle, “Between Transcendental and Transcendental: the missing link?”, *Review of Metaphysics*, 50 (1997): 783–815; John P. Doyle, “Supertranscendental nothing: a philosophical Finisterre”, *Medioevo*, 24 (1998): 1–30; John P. Doyle, “Supertranscendental Being: On the verge of modern philosophy”, in *Meeting of the minds. The relation between medieval and classical modern European philosophy*, ed. Stephen Brown (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 297–315; John P. Doyle, “The borders of knowability: thoughts from or occasioned by Seventeenth-century Jesuits”, in *Die Logik des Transzendentalen. Festschrift für Jan A. Aertsen zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Martin Pickavé (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2003), 643–658.
 5. I do not entirely agree with Habbel's interpretation: Habbel, *Die Sachverhalts-Problematik in der Phänomenologie und bei Thomas von Aquin*.

Appendix: Sense/Reference (Frege), Ratio/res (Aquinas)

In his commentary on the *Sentences* Thomas Aquinas, when discussing the divine attributes (such as wisdom and goodness), says that the understanding of everything discussed in the first book,¹ that is to say practically the whole treatise on God, depends on understanding that the attributes of God are identical “re” but different “ratione”.

Thomas hastens to explain immediately in the same passage that a difference *ratione* is not created by the reasoning subject, but belongs to a property of the thing itself, and that the divine attributes are all identical *re* in God.²

This passage, then, gives us two important pieces of information: (1) the formula “idem re, differunt ratione” is a fundamental pillar of Thomas’s entire theology, (2) the difference *ratione* between the divine attributes is not a subjective difference but an objective one.

If we consider the work of Thomas as a whole we discover immediately that the formula is also fundamental to his ontology, in particular the treatise on the transcendentals, and to his epistemology, in particular the theory of judgement.

For the relation between the transcendental properties of being is also considered as an identity *re* and a difference *ratione* between the terms that denote them. Similarly, the relation between subject and predicate in

a judgement is regarded as an identity *re* and a difference *ratione*. This is therefore a central formula of Aquinas's philosophical construction.

How should this formula be translated? The first part of the expression—*idem re*—is not particularly difficult. In English it is customarily translated as “are really the same”, “is really the same thing as”, “are identical in reality”, “are the same numerically”.

It is much more difficult, however, to translate the second part of the expression: *differunt ratione*. English translations render it thus: “differ in idea”, “differ in thought”, “have different meanings”, “differ conceptually”.³

At least some of these translations give rise to problems if we judge them by what Thomas wrote on the topic. If, as we have read, the difference *ratione* “is not created by the reasoning subject but belongs to a property of the thing itself” then at least the translations “differ in idea” or “differ in thought” do not seem adequate, because “idea”, “thought” have a subjective connotation, especially in modern philosophy, which in the middle ages and in Thomas *ratio* did not have. As we shall see, the *ratio* often has to do with the essence and the definition of a thing, and consequently with an objective feature. Hence these translations are for the most part misleading. A principal task of this appendix is to find new linguistic solutions that are more adequate for the translation of the most problematic part of the formula, that is, *differunt ratione*. In this case too Frege will be of help.

Frege

The distinction between sense and reference was a concern of Frege's right from the *Concept Script*. As is well known, it is a topic on which Frege's thought explicitly evolved. In the *Concept Script* he maintained what follows:

Equality of content differs from conditionality and negation by relating to names, not to contents. Elsewhere, signs are mere proxies for their content, and thus any phrase they occur in just expresses a relation between their various contents; but names at once appear *in propria persona* so soon as

they are joined together by the symbol for equality of content; for this signifies the circumstance of two names' having the same content.⁴

Equality, therefore, concerns not the contents but the names. However, Frege himself hastens to explain:

At first sight this makes it appear as though it were here a matter of something pertaining only to expression, not to thought.⁵

To show this he uses an example taken from geometry. At the end he observes:

It is clear from this that different names for the same content are not always just a trivial matter of formulation ("*bloss eine gleichgultige Formsache*"); if they go along with different ways of determining the content, they are relevant to the essential nature of the case. In these circumstances the judgement as to equality of content is, in Kant's sense, synthetic.⁶

This last passage is illuminating. Frege is here talking about a case where the existence of two different names for the same content is caused by "a trivial matter of formulation" ("*bloss eine gleichgultige Formsache*"). In such a case, in fact, the judgement of equality would be of the kind that Kant would call not synthetic a priori, but analytic a priori. He observes that different names of this kind are not what he has in mind in relation to the equality that he is discussing, because in the case that interests him the different names are said to be identical for a reason that does not concern only the expression, but "the essential nature of the case".

If I had to find an example of different names judged identical because of "a trivial matter of formulation" I would offer a pair of synonymous nouns. If I said, for example, that a garment is a clothing I would judge the equivalence of the two different nouns by reference to the linguistic expressions themselves, and therefore on the basis of a difference between the nouns caused by a "trivial matter of formulation". In this case the judgement of identity would be clearly a Kantian analytic a priori, a *nugatio* in Latin, that is to say an obvious and "useless repetition of the same thing", or as one would say today a "truism".

The thoughts presented here are confirmed, or rather developed, following the analysis in *On Sense and Reference* in which, as is well known, Frege extends and in part corrects his account in order to make it more rigorous.

First of all, he begins by explaining more clearly the principal reason for the thesis that he had maintained in *Concept Script*, that is to say the reason why an equivalence between two names cannot concern a relationship between objects.

$a = a$ and $a = b$ are obviously statements of differing cognitive value; $a = a$ holds a priori and, according to Kant, is to be labelled analytic, while statements of the form $a = b$ often contain very valuable extensions of our knowledge and cannot always be established a priori.⁷

Kenny comments that “the morning star = the morning star” is a statement very different in cognitive value from “the morning star = the evening star”. The former is analytically true, while the second records an astronomical discovery.⁸

Frege goes on:

Now if we were to regard equality as a relation between that which the names ‘a’ and ‘b’ designate, it would seem that $a = b$ could not differ from $a = a$ (i.e. provided $a = b$ is true). A relation would thereby be expressed of a thing to itself, and indeed one in which each thing stands to itself but to no other thing. What is intended to be said by $a = b$ seems to be that the signs or names ‘a’ and ‘b’ designate the same thing, so that those signs themselves would be under discussion; a relation between them would be asserted.⁹

If an equivalence between two different names concerned a relationship between objects there would be no difference between $a=a$ and $a=b$. The *pars destruens* of the statement in the *Concept Script* is thus proved.

Now Frege inquires whether from all this one can deduce, as he maintained in the *Concept Script*, at the level of *pars construens*, that a judgement of equivalence concerns “names” or “signs”, asserting an equivalence between them and not between the objects they denote.

At this point Frege rejects that hypothesis, or rather, in my opinion, makes it more precise and rigorous. For, it is true that the equivalence concerns the signs and not the objects (expressing an identity of content), but it does not concern the signs as formally and lexically diverse in themselves, but in so far as they exhibit a difference in the manner of expressing the same content, that is to say—and here is the fundamental novelty in Frege's discussion—a difference of "sense".

If the equivalence concerned the signs *qua* signs, then, once again, we would end up by a different route in a situation very like the earlier one, because the cognitive value of the proposition $a=b$ would be the same as that of the proposition $a=a$. In Frege's own words:

If the sign 'a' is distinguished from the sign 'b' only as object (here, "by means of its shape"), not as sign (i.e. not by the manner in which it designates something), the cognitive value of $a = a$ becomes essentially equal to that of $a = b$, provided $a = b$ is true.¹⁰

Kenny remarks that in that case the statement of identity "would not express any knowledge about the extra-linguistic world. 'The evening star = the morning star' would record a lexical fact rather than an astronomical fact."¹¹

At this point, having ruled out that the equivalence of two names concerns a relationship between objects, and having ruled out that it concerns a relationship between signs as signs, we are ready for Frege's solution: it concerns the relationship between two different senses (expressed by different signs):

A statement of identity can be informative only if the difference between the signs corresponds to a difference in the mode of presentation of what is designated.¹²

In other words: in so far as the two different signs *express different senses of the same denoted object*.

The example that Frege suggests to explain his thesis is clearer than the one he had suggested in the *Concept Script*: the point of intersection of the first and second median line of a triangle is the same as the point of

intersection of the second and third median line. If we name “r”, “s”, and “t” respectively the first, the second, and the third median line, we can say that the “point of intersection of r and s” is identical with the “point of intersection of s and t”.

In this case we have the same “meaning”, coinciding with the object denoted, but two different senses, that is to say two different ways of indicating the same object, which nonetheless express something about the object itself.

In our example, accordingly, the reference of the expressions ‘the point of intersection of a and b’ and ‘the point of intersection of b and c’ would be the same, but not their senses. The reference of ‘evening star’ would be the same as that of ‘morning star,’ but not the sense.¹³

Frege hastens, a few lines later, to explain, as he had already done in the *Concept Script*, that the difference in sense between the signs that makes a statement of identity informative is not something subjective, like an idea:

The reference and sense of a sign are to be distinguished from the associated idea [...]. This constitutes an essential distinction between the idea and the sign’s sense, which may be the common property of many and therefore is not a part of a mode of the individual mind [...].

The reference of a proper name is the object itself which we designate by its means; the idea, which we have in that case, is wholly subjective; in between lies the sense, which is indeed no longer subjective like the idea, but is yet not the object itself.¹⁴

Frege does not say much about the ontological status of the sense of a sign. He says only that “it may be the common property of many”. Perhaps one could nowadays think of something that has to do with social objects, linked in their turn to properties or aspects “relevant to the essential nature of the case”.

It is also interesting, with regard also to what will be said later, to remember what Frege says about the verbs connected with meaning and sense:

to make short and exact expressions possible, let the following phraseology be established: A proper name (word, sign, sign combination, expression) *expresses* its sense, stands for or *designates* its reference. By means of a sign we *express* its *sense* and *designate* its *reference*.¹⁵

We have now, it seems to me, reached a point where we can construct a typology of differences between signs, starting from what Frege says about equivalence.

First of all, there are names and signs that differ because of a difference between objects signified. Clearly Frege is not concerned with these because they do not fall within the scope of different signs occurring in a judgement of equivalence. Of the three elements identified above we have in this case: different names, different objects signified or designated, different senses.

At the opposite extreme that are names or expressions different “*be means of their shape*” Here we have simply synonymous expressions, such as “clothing” and “garment”. These different names can indeed be judged identical, but in this case the equivalence expresses only a lexical fact and is not at all informative; it is simply a matter of the linguistic fact of the equivalence and interchangeability of two signs that differ only through “a trivial matter of formulation”. In this case we have: different names, identical signification, identical sense.

Lastly, there are different names or expressions that *signify* the same object *expressing different senses*. These are the informative judgements of identity, which Kant would have called synthetic a priori, which are identified and analysed by Frege in *On Sense and Reference*. In this case we have: different names, identical signification, different senses.

It is important to emphasize here that the sense of a sign is something quite distinct from an idea. The latter is “a part of a mode of the individual mind”, while a sense is not.

Aquinas

In order better to understand what Thomas means by a difference “*rati-one*” between names that denote the same reality, it is best first of all to understand what it is not.

First of all it is obviously not a difference between terms that refer to different “res”.

In the case of the difference *ratione* between the divine names Thomas never fails to insist that “to the different *rationes* of the divine attributes there corresponds something in the divine reality, that is to say a single and identical reality”.¹⁶ As we read earlier, the divine attributes are “altogether a single thing in God”. If that were not so, it would hazard the divine simplicity which rules out any real composition.

Further, in the case of transcendental names Thomas frequently emphasizes that they signify the same thing. In the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, for example, Thomas uses the following argument in connection with the transcendentals *unum* and *ens*:

Now the terms *one* and *being* signify *one nature according to different concepts* (*unum autem et ens significant unam naturam secundum diversas rationes*) and therefore they are *like the terms principle and cause, and not like the terms tunic and garment, which are wholly synonymous*. [...]. He proves that they are *the same numerically* (*idem re*) by using two arguments. He gives the first where he says, “For one man,” and it runs as follows. Any two things which when added to some third thing cause no difference are wholly the same. But when one and being are added to man or to anything at all, they cause no difference. Therefore, they are wholly the same. The truth of the minor premise is evident; for it is the same thing to say “man” and “one man.” And similarly it is the same thing to say “human being” and “the thing that is man;” and nothing different is expressed when in speaking we repeat the terms, saying, “This is a human being, a man, and one man.”¹⁷

In other words, since the expressions “human being”, “a man”, and “one man” signify the same thing, it follows that “one” and “being” signify the same thing.

However, even if the different terms we are discussing signify, for the reasons set out, the same things, however they do not signify it in the same way as synonymous terms.

This is an important point for the whole issue. And the matter will be clearer when we have spent some time on Frege.

For both “clothing” and “garment”, to use Aristotle’s example taken up by Thomas, signify the same thing, but the judgement that expresses their identity—“A clothing is a garment”—is a “nugatio” or a “useless repetition of the same thing”. It adds nothing to our knowledge of the world, but is simply a lexical statement, that tells us that two terms that differ “by reason of their shape” signify the same thing and are interchangeable:

The adding of synonym to synonym is frivolous, as if one were to say clothing and garment. Therefore, if these names were synonyms, it would be frivolous to say that God is good, God is wise—and that is false [...]. It should be said that all who understand are agreed that these names are not synonyms.¹⁸

The same thing can be said of transcendental names: though they refer to the same subject, they are not synonymous:

The useless repetition of the same thing is frivolous; accordingly, if the true were the same as being, it would be frivolous to speak of true being, and it isn’t.¹⁹

What, then, for Thomas is the third way, that is, the alternative to the two opposed cases we have mentioned? It consists, similarly to what we have seen in Frege, in introducing a third level between the name and the *res*, that is to say the level of the *ratio*. This allows us to identify a third type of difference between names, not the same as the difference derived from a difference of the *res* signified, and not the same as the difference deriving from a simple difference of linguistic form, as in the case of synonymous names. What establishes the existence of this third type of different terms is the fact that though they signify the same thing they do not produce a *nugatio* or truism, if they are placed side by side and judged identical with each other.

It will suffice to read Thomas’s replies to the objections about synonymous terms quoted above:

Although these names *signify* one thing, they do so via many ‘notions’, as has been argued, and because of these they are not synonyms.²⁰

About the transcendentals:

It is not frivolous to say ‘true being’, because something is *expressed* by the term ‘true’ that is not *expressed* by the term being, but not because they really differ.²¹

We read, for example, about *bonum* and *ens*:

Although being good is the really the same thing as existing, one cannot use the words ‘good’ and ‘existent’ interchangeably without qualification, due to a difference in meaning.²²

I would like to draw the reader’s attention once again to the surprising similarity with what we have read in Frege, which goes as far as the use of verbs: it is said in fact that the terms in question “signify” the same thing, “expressing” different *rationes*.

The similarity with Frege is even more obvious if we consider the example used by Thomas in cases of this kind which is taken, as in Frege, from geometry (and in the case of Thomas, from Aristotle too):

In God there is no being save that of the essence, even as there is no (act of) understanding but the intellect—and therefore as in God there is but one act of understanding, so is there but one being. Wherefore it can nowise be granted that in God the being of the relations is distinct from the being of the essence. Now the definition of a thing does not signify its being but its being this or that, namely what that thing is. Wherefore two definitions of one thing do not prove that it has a twofold being, but that it can be said in two ways of that thing that it is: thus *we may say of a point what it is as a beginning, and what it is as an end*, on account of the different definitions of beginning and end (*sicut de puncto potest dici quid est sicut principium et ut finis, propter diversam rationem principii et finis*).²³

As the word “beginning” and “end” can denote the same thing, while expressing different *rationes*, so the terms “relation” and “essence” said of God denote the same divine reality while expressing different *rationes*.

I believe that at this point we have sufficient evidence to show the similarity between the framework for the types of difference between terms provided by Frege and the framework provided by Thomas.²⁴

There are names that differ on the basis of the difference between the *res* signified—Frege’s *reference*—and those that differ qua signs “by means

of their shape” as Frege would have said. Lastly there are names that while signifying the same thing differ in respect of the *ratio*—in Frege’s terminology the “sense”—they intend to express.

We are now therefore ready to suggest a solution for the translation of the typically Thomistic expression “*idem re differunt ratione*” and so to propose the following translation: “they are identical as to the reference (signified) and differ as to the sense (expressed)”.

The commonly used English translations—and also the German, French, Italian, and Spanish—are mostly erroneous because they translate “ratio” as “idea” or “thought”, giving the mistaken impression that there are only *two* levels—the objective one of reality, and the subjective one of the reasoning subject—and because they represent a difference *ratione* as something mental. If that were so, it would not be possible to explain the difference between synonymous and non-synonymous terms that designate the same thing—a difference which is very clear in Thomas. As we saw, in Thomas as in Frege there are in fact *three* levels: *nomen, ratio, res*. *Ratio* does not belong on the side of the subject, but in the middle, and is surely connected with the essence of things, just as in Frege.²⁵

So, Frege shows himself useful even for the translation of Thomas.

The Distinction Between Essence and Being

The distinction *re/ratione*, corresponding to the distinction sense/reference is useful also to define precisely an important aspect of the *vexata quaestio* whether the distinction between being and essence is real or of reason. That is a question which for centuries has played a lively role in the history of Thomism.²⁶

If essence and being were really distinct for Thomas, then the corresponding terms “essence” and “being” would have to designate realities that were distinct *re*. However, the texts of Thomas on the topic, quoted by all the Thomists who do not share the belief that the distinction is real, are quite clear.²⁷ The terms denote the same reality but express different senses.

But in regard to the first point he does not seem to be right; for even though a thing's existence is other than its essence, it should not be understood to be something added to its essence after the manner of an accident, but something established, as it were, by the principles of the essence. Hence the term 'being', which is applied to a thing by reason of its very existence, designates the same thing as the term which is applied to it by reason of its essence (*hoc nomen ens quod imponitur ab ipso esse, significat idem cum nomine quod imponitur ab ipsa essentia*).²⁸

It is, further, well known that the transcendental "res" is derived from the quiddity or essence while the term "ens" is derived from the act of being. Thomas lays down clearly that the terms "ens" and "res" signify the same reality while expressing different *rationes* or senses:

It is also evident from the foregoing argument that unity and being are the same numerically but differ *ratione*; for if this were not the case they would be wholly synonymous, and then it would be nonsense to say, "a human being," and "one man." For it must be borne in mind that the term *man* is derived from the quiddity or the nature of man, and the term *thing* from the quiddity only (*hoc nomen res imponitur a quidditate tantum*); but the term *being* is derived from the act of being (*hoc nomen ens, imponitur ab actu essendi*), and the term *one* from order or lack of division; for what is one is an undivided being. Now what has an essence, and a quiddity by reason of that essence, and what is undivided in itself, are the same. Hence these three—thing, being, and one—signify absolutely the same thing but according to different *rationes* (*Unde ista tria, res, ens, unum, significant omnino idem, sed secundum diversas rationes*).²⁹

Does that mean that the distinction between essence and being is only a distinction "of reason"? Not at all. That would be the case if there were only two levels in Thomas, an objective one of reality and a subjective one of mental ideas. But we have seen that that is just not how things are.

Notes

1. “Respondeo dicendum, quod, sicut supra dictum est, art. praeced., in corp., sapientia et bonitas et omnia hujusmodi sunt omnino unum re in Deo, sed differunt ratione: et haec ratio non est tantum ex parte ipsius ratiocinantis, sed ex proprietate ipsius rei. Ad cuius rei evidentiam, ut diligenter explicetur, quia ex hoc pendet totus intellectus eorum quae in 1 libro dicuntur, quatuor oportet videre” (Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 2, q. 1, a.3, co).
2. Thomas de Aquino, *In I Sent.*, d. 2, q. 1, a.3, co.
3. “Respondeo dicendum quod bonum et ens sunt idem secundum rem, sed differunt secundum rationem tantum [...]. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, licet bonum et ens sint idem secundum rem, quia tamen differunt secundum rationem non eodem modo dicitur aliquid ens simpliciter, et bonum simpliciter” (Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.* I, q. 5, a. 1).

Translations into English: “Goodness and being are really the same, and *differ only in idea* (sed differunt secundum rationem tantum) [...]. Ad 1: Although goodness and being are the same really, nevertheless, since they *differ in thought* (differunt secundum rationem), they are not predicated of a thing absolutely in the same way” (Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologiae”, trans. Anthon C. Pegis, in *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anthon C. Pegis (Indianapolis-Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 42–43). “To be good is really the same thing as to exist, but the words have *different meanings* (sed differunt secundum rationem tantum) [...]. Ad 1: Although being good is really the same thing as existing, one cannot use the words ‘good’ and ‘existent’ interchangeably without qualification, due to *a difference in meaning* (differunt secundum rationem)” (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. II, 63. Italics mine.).

“Good and being are identical in reality; they differ only *conceptually* (sed differunt secundum rationem tantum) [...]. Ad 1: Although good and being are identical in reality, nevertheless, since they differ *conceptually* (differunt secundum rationem), something is not said to be unqualified a being and unqualified good in the same way.” (Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologiae,” trans. Brian Shanley, in *Thomas Aquinas: Basic Works*, ed. Jeffrey Hause, and Robert Pasnau (Indianapolis-Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2014), 72. Italics mine).

4. Frege, "Begriffsschrift," 10.
5. Frege, "Begriffsschrift," 11.
6. Frege, "Begriffsschrift," 12.
7. Frege, "On Sense and Reference," 56.
8. Kenny, *Frege*, 126.
9. Frege, "On Sense and Reference," 56.
10. Frege, "On Sense and Reference," 57. Italics mine.
11. Kenny, *Frege*, 127.
12. Kenny, *Frege*, 127.
13. Frege, "On Sense and Reference," 57. Italics mine.
14. Frege, "On Sense and Reference," 59. Italics mine.
15. Frege, "On Sense and Reference," 61. Italics mine.
16. Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 12.
17. Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Met.*, l. 2. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 549–550. Italics mine. A colleague of mine noticed that the translation needs correction. In English all tunics are garments, but not all garments are tunics.
18. Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 6., sed contra 1. "De potentia", trans. McInerny, in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, ed. McInerny, 318.
19. Thomas de Aquino, *De ver.*, q. 1, a. 1., arg. 1. Aquinas, "De veritate," 165.
20. Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 7, a. 6., ad 1. Aquinas, "De potentia" 320. Italics mine.
21. Thomas de Aquino, *De ver.*, q. 1, a. 1., ad. 1. Aquinas "De veritate," 169. Italics mine.
22. Thomas de Aquino, *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 5, a. 1. ad 1. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Vol II, 63.
23. Thomas de Aquino, *De pot.*, q. 8, a. 2, ad 11. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, trans. English Dominican Fathers (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, reprint of 1932), 1952. Italics mine.
24. As far as I know the first person to suggest matching Frege's "sense and reference" with Thomas's formula "idem re, different ratione" was Peter Geach in Geach, "Form and Existence", 269. Subsequently the idea was developed more fully by Anthony Kenny in Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 36; 195–197.
25. Scholars have discovered that Thomas changed his mind regarding this question. An anonymous author criticized a position of Peter of Tarentasie, who had been a pupil of Thomas's, and his criticisms were

passed on to Thomas. The latter then felt he should partially rectify his own position since someone thought it endangered divine simplicity. However, even in this later, softer position of Thomas's, in which he emphasized that the difference *ratione* between the divine attributes was to be found in the human intellect as its subject, he did not cease to maintain that this difference had nonetheless "the foundation and cause of its truth" *ex parte rei*, in God himself. See Ventimiglia, *Differenza e Contraddizione*, 308–342, where all Thomas's texts and the studies of Dondaine are mentioned.

26. See Imbach, "Averroistische Stellungnahmen zur Diskussion über das Verhältnis von esse und essentia"; Anthony Kenny, "Form, Existence and Essence in Aquinas," in *Peter Geach: Philosophical Encounters*, ed. Harry A. Lewis (Dordrecht-Boston-London: Kluwer, 1991), 65–76; Peter T. Geach, "Reply to Kenny," in *Peter Geach: Philosophical Encounters*, ed. Lewis, 254–258; John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 132–176; Pasquale Porro, "Qualche riferimento storiografico sulla distinzione di essere ed essenza", in *Tommaso d'Aquino: L'ente e l'essenza*, ed. Pasquale Porro (Milano: Bompiani, 2002), 183–215; Catherine König-Pralong, *Avènement de l'aristotélisme en terre chrétienne*; Giovanni Ventimiglia, *Distinctio realis. Ontologie aristotelico-tomistiche nella prima metà del Novecento* (Lugano: Eupress-FTL, 2012).
27. See Giovanni Ventimiglia, *Distinctio realis*.
28. *In IV Met.*, l. 2. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 558.
29. *In IV Met.*, l. 2. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, nr. 553. Italics mine.

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