PONTIFICAL REGINA APOSTOLORUM COLLEGE
School of Philosophy

Esse as *Virtus Essendi*: the Dynamic "Expansion" of *Actus Essendi*, Measured by Essence, as the Ontological Foundation of the Good, according to Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Professor: Alain Contat

Student: Louis Melahn, LC

Student ID: 3327

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1. INTRODUCTION

David Hume provokingly observes in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, at the end of his argument against deriving moral distinctions from reason,

> In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, […] when of a sudden I am surprized to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. […] For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, it is necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.[1]

In other words, Hume argues that from the mere *fact* of existence, it does not seem possible to deduce any sort of moral obligation. This study is not primarily an investigation in ethics, but rather in metaphysics; nevertheless, Hume's remark provides a thought-provoking starting point. It is an incontrovertible fact that men experience moral obligation.[2] More broadly, man experiences reality not only as being (*ens*) but also as desirable (*bonum*). Some of these *bona* are only relative, making him more perfect with respect to some concrete aspect (for example, food, which nourishes the body), and others are "absolute," making him more perfect inasmuch as he is a man (for example, giving alms to the poor, in the right measure). This fact reveals something more profound: that man naturally and spontaneously seeks his

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[1] D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by E.C. Mossner, Penguin, Harmondsworth (England) 1984, Bk. III, sec. i, 521.

[2] Consistently with his empiricism, Hume practically reduces the apprehension of moral obligation to sentiment; however not even Hume denies the *fact* of obligation. See, for example, *ibid.*, Bk. III, sec. i, 520: "Take any action allowed to be vicious: Wilful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call *vice*. In which-ever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but it is the object of feeling, not of reason."

own perfection, and that in fact, it is impossible for him not to do so. Man cannot desire his own misery directly. At most, he can desire something that *appears* to be good for him, but which in reality brings about his misery. However, his basic tendency to perfection remains unaltered even in these cases; it is the means that are ill chosen.

I choose man as the example because it is the one best known to us, but in fact this principle applies analogically to all *entia*. Angels seek angelic perfection; man seeks perfection as man; animals and plants seek to reach adulthood and reproduce their species; even stones in their own way seek their own perfection, as when they are placed precariously on a height and "seek" a stable place below by falling. It is this mysterious drive to self-fulfillment, present in all *entia*, that is the topic of this investigation. Why, when it is raised up, "must" the stone fall? Why, when it is placed in the sun, "must" the plant grow toward it? Why, when food is placed before it, "must" the animal eat? Why, when man sees his neighbor in need, does he experience, as an obligation, that he "must" come to his neighbor's aid?

Generalizing even more, we can say that *ens* does not simply "be;" it also acts. When a man stubs his toe on a rock, he experiences pain; the stone—seemingly the most static of creatures—*acts* on him. No *ens*, therefore, is ever encountered that does not produce *operari*. Indeed, if there were a completely static *ens*, we would be unable to know it, because our intellect depends on the *operari* of *ens* to put it into act. The fact of *operari* and in particular of the tendency for things to their own fulfillment is incontrovertible. This paper, however, is less interested in the *fact itself* as in its metaphysical *foundation*. Our focus will be on the intrinsic causes of *bonum* (not without some mention of extrinsic causes), which we will reduce, by a *resolutio secundum rationem*, to the *actus essendi*, measured by an *essentia* that is understood as *potentia essendi*. In this investigation, we will make use principally of the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas regarding the intrinsic principles of *ens*, aided by the preliminary work done by Aristotle. We will also make use of the inter-

pretation made by C. Fabro, who (along with others, most notably E. Gilson)[3] shows that Thomas conceives the *actus essendi* as a rich and fecund act, a *virtus essendi* that is the source of all the actuality in *ens*, not merely a static "fact" of being, or *existentia*.

We will see in our investigation that reducing *actus essendi* from *virtus essendi* to *existentia* produces a simultaneous reduction of *ens* to *essentia* or *ens possibile* and a radical separation between *esse* (*actus primus*) and *agere* (*actus secundus*). It is not difficult to see why: if *esse* is not an act, but just a "fact," it seems that the only consistent part of *ens* is its essence; whether it exists or not seems unimportant. In this way, metaphysics, which ought to be the science of being, is paradoxically transformed into the science that *abstracts* from being, concentrating on what is possible. We will see that this tendency has been the dominant one in Western philosophy: Thomas Aquinas, who masterfully stitched Aristotle's science of *ens qua ens* together with Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's notion of perfection as intensive act, was practically unique in proposing *esse* as the single original act (what we will call *esse ut actus*) that communicates itself and flows forth to all the actuality (what we will call *esse in actu*) found in a substance. Unless there is this flow, it is difficult to understand the relationship between *esse* and *agere*: *ens* appears to be static, and *agere* appears as completely *sui generis*. Such a separation, aside from being philosophically unsatisfying (requiring, as it does, a *reductio ad duo*), is also dangerous: if *agere* (which includes *operari*, the domain of human acts) is completely independent of the domains of *esse* and *essentia*, then the natural law,[4] if the philosophy in question admits of one, must be imposed extrinsically on rational beings. In this way, ethics can degenerate into a set of rules or norms to follow, and

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[3] Other contributers to this interpretation, cited in this work, include J. de Finance, F. O'Rourke, and W.N. Clarke.

[4] In this paper, the term *natural law*, in accord with its common usage in English, will always refer to the natural *moral* law proper to rational creatures. To refer to the analogous but deterministic reality in non-rational creatures, the term term *physical law* is ordinarily employed.

it is difficult to see their intrinsic goodness. In reality, however, it seems to me that we can demonstrate a profound analogy and homogeneity between *esse* and *agere*. *Agere sequitur esse*, not only by an analogy of proportionality, but more importantly by an analogy of reference, because *esse ut actus* is the source of all actuality.

The problem that this paper will discuss, therefore, can be summed up as follows: why does *ens* always seek its own perfection? Why does *omne agens* always *agit propter finem*? Is there an answer to this problem on the *intrinsic* level, or must we make recourse to the extrinsic causes? Our investigation into the answer will be divided into three main parts: a *resolutio secundum rationem* of *bonum* to its underlying reality, *esse* (chapter 2); a detailed study of the intrinsic constitution of *ens*, including a *resolutio secundum rationem* of *ens* to its original act, *actus essendi*, and (working in reverse) a *compositio* of *ens* to see how it proceeds from its ultimate causes to the various layers of actuality that it possesses, ending with a section justifying our characterization of *actus essendi* as *virtus essendi* (chapter 3); and finally, an investigation, based on what we have learned about *bonum* and *actus essendi*, into the intrinsic dynamism of *ens* (chapter 4). Chapter 2 and chapter 3 both begin with a succinct history of each chapter's topic of discussion (*bonum* as a transcendental "property" of *ens* and *esse* as its original act). The authors are chosen to so as to show the ones that most heavily influenced Thomas Aquinas regarding our problem (especially Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite), as well as those that can be seen as models for how to interpret *actus essendi*: the metaphysics of essence; what I call the "metaphysics of dual act," which includes classical or Neo-Scholastic Thomism; and what I will call the "metaphysics of action," represented by M. Blondel and transcendental Thomism. We will discover the answer to our problem in the intrinsic dynamism of *ens*: the very structure of a *suppositum*—an original *actus essendi*, measured by an *essentia ut potentia essendi*, that flows forth into three levels of *esse in actu*—necessarily entails also an intrinsic *ordo ad finem*.

In short, a *suppositum* is obliged, by metaphysical necessity, to seek the actuation of the "potential" (*virtus*) that is present in its *actus essendi*.

2. *RESOLUTIO* OF *BONUM* TO *ESSE*

In order to begin our inquiry, we will examine in detail what is meant by "good" (*bonum*) and how it is founded. After a brief historical overview of the notion of *bonum* (especially as a "transcendental"), we will resolve the good into its intrinsic causes. The *resolutio* in this chapter will enable us to make a "noetical" foundation, in which we will discover what we can learn about *bonum* based on its very notion. In order to do this, we will proceed first *in via inventionis*, beginning with the fundamental and most well known notion of *bonum*, which is desirability or "appetibility," and finishing with *esse* as the underlying principle. Eventually, we will resolve *esse* itself into its radical principle, *esse ut actus* as measured by essence, but that analysis will need to wait until we have discussed the intrinsic composition of *ens* in greater detail (chapter 3). Then, *in via iudicii*, we will perform a *compositio* so as to draw a sketch of how *esse* founds *bonum*, leaving the definitive "ontological" foundation for chapter 4.[5]

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[5] *Resolutio* and *compositio* refer to methods proper to metaphysics. The former, which roughly means "analysis," signifies investigation into the causes of the object of metaphysics (*ens*), starting with the "data;" that is, the incontrovertible "givens" that are accessible to everyone. In its etymological sense, *resolutio* means the "decomposition" of a whole into its parts, although, borrowing from the Greek root from which it comes (ἀναλύω), it can also mean more generally a rising up (ἀνά) to the ultimate causes, whether they are intrinsic or extrinsic. *Compositio* indicates the opposite process, the joining together of parts into a whole, or going from the causes to their effects.

For an overview of *resolutio* as understood by Thomas Aquinas and interpreted by C. Fabro, see J. Villagrasa, "La resolutio come metodo della metafisica secondo Cornelio Fabro", in *Alpha Omega* 4 (2001), 35–66, especially 57–62; also, J. Mitchell, "The Method of Resolutio and the Structure of the Five Ways", in *Alpha Omega* 15 (2012), 339–359. Aquinas himself describes *resolutio* and *compositio* in Thomas Aquinas, *Super Boetium De Trinitate*, vol. 50, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Commissio Leonina, Rome 1992, 1–230 (henceforth cited as *In Boeth. De Trin.*), q. 6, a. 1, especially in the *responsum* to the third question: "Ratio enim, ut prius dictum est, procedit quandoque de uno in aliud secundum rem, ut quando est demonstratio per causas vel effectus extrinsecos: componendo quidem, cum proceditur a causis ad effectus; quasi resolvendo, cum proceditur ab effectibus ad causas, eo quod causae sunt effectibus simpliciores et magis immobiliter et uniformiter permanentes. Ultimus ergo terminus resolutionis in hac via est, cum pervenitur ad causas supremas maxime simplices, quae sunt substantiae separatae. Quandoque vero

2.1 Historical Background of *Bonum*

2.1.1 Plato, Plotinus, and Aristotle

The attempt to discover characteristics common to all reality without exception—what Saint Thomas Aquinas calls the *transcendentia* and later Scholastics the *transcendentalia* or *passiones entis*—dates at least as far back as Plato, who held that reality consists, not so much in the sensible world, but in the separated ideas (τὰ εἴδη) in which sensible things participate.[6] In the *Sophist*, he posits not only ideas that unify sensible things, but also what could be termed "meta-ideas," which unify the ideas themselves: movement, rest, being (τὸ ὄν), "same," and "different." These, in turn, are said to participate in the Idea of the Good and—supposing that Plato had "esoteric" teachings that are not directly referred to in his dialogues—ultimately the Principles of the One and the Dyad.[7] Although it is debatable whether or not Plato

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procedit de uno in aliud secundum rationem, ut quando est processus secundum causas intrinsecas: componendo quidem, quando a formis maxime universalibus in magis particulata proceditur; resolvendo autem quando e converso, eo quod universalius est simplicius."

[6] Probably the best exposition of his theory is to be found in the *Phaedo*. See especially Plato, *Phédon*, ed. and trans. by P. Vicaire, vol. 4/1, Oeuvres complètes, Belles Lettres, Paris 1983 (henceforth cited as *Phaedo*), 78c–79a, and 100b–101d. The principal ideas contributed by Plato, Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius regarding *bonum* are well documented in J. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1996, 290-298.

Regarding the term *participation*: participation entails an active element (whatever has the perfection *proprie et per se*) and a passive one (whatever receives the perfection from the former). Latin and Romance languages can render both aspects using the terms *participo* and *participatio*; however, in English usage, the verb *to particpate* is strictly intransitive. Therefore, to designate active participation, I will use *to communicate*, and for passive participation, *to participate in* or *to take part in*. Regarding participation, see also C. Fabro, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation", in *The Review of Metaphysics* 27 (1974), 453–456.

[7] We will discuss the doctrine and development of the meta-ideas below, in section 3.1.1. The Idea of the Good is developed above all in Plato, *La République*, ed. and trans. by É. Chambry, vol. 6–7, Oeuvres complètes, Belles Lettres, Paris 1932–1931–1934 (henceforth cited as *Republic*), VI, 508c–509a.

It is a matter of debate whether or not Plato had unwritten doctrines, in particular ones that resolve all of the ideas to "principles" that transcend the world of ideas. Aristotle reports that Plato reduced all of the ideas (hence all of reality) to the One and the Dyad. (See Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, ed. by W. Jaeger, Oxford University, 1957 [henceforth cited as *Metaphysics*], A, 6, 987b19-988a7.) In general the school of Tübingen (represented by G. Reale and H.J. Krämer) has held that Plato did have esoteric doctrines. For an exposition of

intended to identify the One and the Good, many of his followers did so, notably Plotinus and other Neoplatonists, who explicitly posited the Good or One as the supreme transcendent cause of all reality.[8] Since, according to Plotinus, all things participate in their supreme principle, it follows that they are all in some measure good.[9] For Plato and his followers, however, properties such as goodness are generally considered extrinsic to the things that possess them—that is, the "goodness" as such is to be found principally in the Principle, not so much in the entity that participates in it—and for this reason, the notion of goodness (and of any other "transcendental") is necessarily univocal. In other words, even though it is evident that different things have different degrees of participated goodness, in reality the only thing that can really be said to be truly "good" is the Good itself. The Good as such, therefore, remains the same, even though the "amount" goodness found in, or communicated to, each concrete reality is different. Hence, goodness is differentiated extrinsically, not intrinsically. Nevertheless, for Plato, the Good is not simply a "property" of things, but rather is "generous," "fecund" and "expansive," an idea taken up by the Neoplatonists and through them by Thomas Aquinas.[10]

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this position, see H.J. KRÄMER, *Platone e i fondamenti della metafisica: Saggio sulla teoria dei principi e sulle dottrine non scritte di Platone*, trans. by G. REALE, Vita e Pensiero, Milan 2001[6], and G. REALE, *Per una nuova interpretazione di Platone*, Vita e Pensiero, Bompiani 2010.

On the other hand, F. Copleston, for example, sustains that the One should not be distinguished from the Idea of the Good. See F. COPLESTON, *History of Philosophy: Greece and Rome*, vol. 1, Newman, Westminster (Maryland) 1946, 177 "Hence it would seem only reasonable to conclude that the One, the Good and the essential Beauty are the same for Plato, and that the intelligible world of Forms owes its being in some way to the One."

[8] Plotinus specifies that the principle of the Intellect (Νοῦς) is the Good (τὸ ἀγαθόν or simply τἀγαθόν), for example, in PLOTINUS, *Enneadi (testo greco a fronte)*, ed. by G. FAGGIN and R. RADICE, Bompiani, Milan 2000 (henceforth cited as *Enneads*), V, 1, 8. This same principle, however, is clearly identified as the One (τὸ ἕν) in *ibid.*, V, 1, 1. See also *ibid.*, VI, 7–9.

[9] How *entia* participate in the Good is discussed in *ibid.*, I, 7.

[10] See J. DE FINANCE, *Être et agir dans la philosophie de Saint Thomas*, Presses de l'Université Grégorienne, 1965, 62: "Et, pour Platon, le Bien, s'il dit proportion et mesure, dit aussi expansion généreuse. Le démiurge du Timée a organisé le monde parce qu'« il était bon, et de ce qui est bon, nulle envie ne naît jamais à nul sujet. Exempt d'envie, il a voulu que toutes choses naquissent, le plus possible, semblables à lui ». The author is quoting from *Timaeus*, 29e: "ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος· τούτου δ᾽ ἐκτὸς ὢν πάντα ὅτι μάλιστα ἐβουλήθη γενέσθαι παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ" (PLATO,

Aristotle, although a disciple of Plato, rejected his teacher's theory of separated ideas, giving his primary emphasis to concrete realities, including sensible ones; that is, the First Science for him was the science of *ens qua ens* (τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὄν). For Aristotle, τὸ ὄν refers primarily to substance (οὐσία), and secondarily to the ὄντα that inhere in substance (what we would call accidents).[11] Nevertheless, Aristotle affirms that τὸ ὄν has certain coextensive properties. He is most clear regarding oneness (τὸ ἕν): in *Metaphysics*, Γ, 2, for example he says,

> εἰ δὴ τὸ ὂν καὶ τὸ ἕν ταὐτὸν καὶ μία φύσις […] καὶ οὐδὲν ἕτερον τὸ ἕν παρὰ τὸ ὄν, ἔτι δ' ἡ ἑκάστου οὐσία ἕν ἐστιν οὐ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ὅπερ ὄν τι· ὥσθ' ὅσα περ τοῦ ἑνὸς εἴδη, τοσαῦτα καὶ τοῦ ὄντος.[12]

In other words, "one" can be predicated of all of the meanings of τὸ ὄν mentioned in Γ, 2, and above all of οὐσία itself; nevertheless, in reality, τὸ ἕν is not distinct from τὸ ὄν. Moreover, Aristotle, in contrast to Plato, clearly considers the First Philosophy to be primarily the study of *ens qua ens*, not of the One.[13] This passage, therefore, shows, at least implicitly, that τὸ ἕν has all of the characteristics of the *transcendentia*; namely, *additio*, *conversio*, and *processio*: τὸ ἕν renders a characteristic of τὸ ὄν explicit without being really distinct, it has the same logical "extension" as τὸ ὄν, and it "proceeds" from τὸ ὄν as one of its "properties."

In Book A of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle makes a similar analysis with a property of *ens* that is closer to the subject matter of this paper: τὸ ἀγαθόν. He

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Timée, ed. and trans. by A. Rɪᴠᴀᴜᴅ, vol. 10, Oeuvres complètes, Belles Lettres, Paris 1925 [henceforth cited as *Timaeus*]).

[11] The passage from *Metaphysics*, Γ, 2, in which he reduces the manifold meanings of τὸ ὄν to οὐσία, is well known, as is his refutation of the Platonic "universal" (καθόλου), or idea, in Z, 13. See *Metaphysics*, Γ, 2, 1003a33-1003b4, and Z, 13, 1038b35-1039a3.

[12] *Ibid.*, 1003b23, 33-34: "Now if Being and Unity are the same, i.e. a single nature, […] and Unity is nothing distinct from Being; and further if the substance of each thing is one in no accidental sense, and similarly is of its very nature something which is—then there are just as many species of Being as of Unity" (translation from Aʀɪsᴛᴏᴛʟᴇ, *Metaphysics*, trans. by H. Tʀᴇᴅᴇɴɴɪᴄᴋ, vol. 17–18, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1933 [henceforth cited as *Metaphysics,* tr. H. Tʀᴇᴅᴇɴɴɪᴄᴋ]).

[13] It is sufficient to see the opening sentence of *Metaphysics*, Γ: "ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη τις ᾗ θεωρεῖ τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὂν καὶ τὰ τούτῳ ὑπάρχοντα καθ' αὑτό" ("There is a certain science that studies *ens qua ens*, and the properties in it *per se*" [my translation]), *Metaphysics*, Γ, 1, 1003a21.

states, τὸ δ᾽ ἀγαθὸν λέγεται καὶ ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι καὶ ἐν τῷ ποιῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πρός τι.[14]

The good, therefore, can to be found in precisely those categories—substance, quality, and relation—that are common to all substances, including separated substances (such as human souls—inasmuch as they are subjects of purely spiritual accidents—and angels, to use Christian parlance). Aristotle goes further, stating,

> ἔτι δ᾽ ἐπεὶ τἀγαθὸν ἰσαχῶς λέγεται τῷ ὄντι (καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ τί λέγεται, οἷον ὁ θεὸς καὶ ὁ νοῦς, καὶ ἐν τῷ ποιῷ αἱ ἀρεταί, καὶ ἐν τῷ ποσῷ τὸ μέτριον, καὶ ἐν τῷ πρός τι τὸ χρήσιμον, καὶ ἐν χρόνῳ καιρός, καὶ ἐν τόπῳ δίαιτα καὶ ἕτερα τοιαῦτα).[15]

Aristotle specifically rejects Plato's "univocal" notion of the good (which, as we saw, arises because the ideas—even the meta-ideas and Principles—are extrinsic to the realities that participate in them), saying quite quite explicitly that τὸ ἀγαθόν can be predicated of all the categories: "δῆλον ὡς οὐκ ἂν [τἀγαθὸν] εἴη κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν: οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐλέγετ᾽ ἐν πάσαις ταῖς κατηγορίαις, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν μιᾷ μόνῃ."[16] In Aristotle, therefore, the "properties" of τὸ ὄν can be said "in many ways," just like τὸ ὄν itself: they are intrinsically (not extrinsically) differentiated and therefore "analogical."[17] It is also Aristotle who first frames the notion of the

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[14] "The good, however, is said in the 'what is it' [i.e., essence or substance] and in the 'which' [quality] and in the 'towards what' [relation]" (my translation), ARISTOTLE, *Ethica Nicomachea*, ed. by I. BYWATER, Oxford University, 1894 (henceforth cited as *Ethics*), A, 1, 1096a19-23.

[15] "Again 'good' means the same as '*ens*' for with respect to the 'what' [substance] it means, for example, God and the intellect; and with respect to the 'which' [quality], virtue; and with respect to the 'how much' [quantity], the just measure; and with respect to the 'toward which' [relation], usefulness; and with respect to time, occasion [or 'acceptable time']; and with respect to place, dwelling; and other similar things" (my translation), *ibid.*, A, 1, 1096a24-26.

[16] *Ibid.*, A, 1, 1096a28-30: "It clearly follows that [the good] cannot be a common and unique 'universal,' for [if it were] it could not be said of all the categories, but only of one" (my translation).

[17] In other words, from each category follows a different type of goodness, which, however, is recognizably "goodness" in every case. Aristotle clearly makes what the Scholastics would call an analogy of proportionality between τὸ ὄν and its properties (τὸ ἕν and τὸ ἀγαθόν). It is less clear from these passages whether he intends to make an analogy of reference or "attribution" to the *priceps analogatum*, as he does for τὸ ὄν. It should also be noted that Aristotle is clearly rejecting a number of key Platonic notions: the priority of the One and the Good over *ens*, the univocity and extrinsicness of the Principles and meta-ideas, and their subsistence as "universals."

good in terms of desire or appetite: in this same passage of the *Ethics*, he describes τὸ ἀγαθόν as οὗ παντ᾽ ἐφίεται,[18] which is the notion that St. Thomas accepts.[19]

2.1.2 Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite

It is the merit of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite to adapt the Neoplatonic reflection on *bonum* to Christian revelation.[20] He could not accept the theory proposed by Plotinus and his followers that the One or Good causes its effects necessarily and that each sphere or level is caused by the mediation of the sphere immediately above it, but instead affirms that God freely and directly creates all of reality outside of himself.[21] Following other Neoplatonists, Dionysius adheres to the priority of the Good over Being: in his treatise *On the Divine Names*, the first attribute of God he discuss is Goodness, followed by Being.[22] To justify this priority, Dionysius argues

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For an overview of how Aristotle discusses the τὸ ἕν and τὸ ἀγαθόν, see M. Loux, "Aristotle on the Transcendentals", in *Phronesis* 18 (1973), 225–239. I cannot, however, be in agreement with the author in denying, in his words, "the claim that such notions [as Being, One, and Good] are not univocally predicable of all things" (225). The author seems to be making an alternative between univocal predication and what he calls "ambiguity" (which seems to be equivalent to equivocity in Scholastic terminology). The simple solution to this dilemma, it seems to me, is to realize that there is a *tertium quid*; namely, analogy. In any case it seems contrary to fact to argue that an accident "is," or else is "good" or "one," in exactly the same way (*univoce*) as a substance. The problem disappears entirely once we realize (as we will see below) that things "are," and are "good" and "one," to the degree that they receive *esse* by participation from the radical *actus essendi*.

[18] "That which all things desire," *Ethics*, I, 1, 1094a3.

[19] He translates the phrase as "quod omnia appetunt;" see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 4–12, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Typographia Polyglotta, Rome 1888–1889–1891–1892–1895–1897–1899–1903–1906 (henceforth cited as *S.Th.*), I, q. 5, a. 1, co.

[20] It is thought that Pseudo-Dionysius wrote his works in the late fifth or early sixth century, since his works bear a resemblance to and seem to depend on Proclus, who died in 485. See K. Corrigan and L.M. Harrington, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall, 2011), ed. by E.N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/pseudo-dionysius-areopagite/ [28-4-2014], § 1.

[21] Plotinus seems to suggest that the overflow (τὸ προϊέναι) from the One is necessary, not free. He compares it to a "circumradiation" (περίλαμψις) or eternal irradiation (ἐπιλάμπειν ἀεὶ); hence the One seems no more free to produce the Νοῦς than the sun or fire to produce light and heat. See *Enneads*, V, 1, 6, and V, 3, 12. Regarding Pseudo-Dionysius himself, see Corrigan and Harrington, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite", § 4.1.

[22] See F. O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, Brill, Leiden 1992, 65–66. The first three chapters of *De divinis nominibus* regard the One and Good, whereas only the fourth chapter deals with Being.

that, although the good extends to all things, even things that are (in Thomistic parlance) *in potentia*, being extends only to things *in actu*. Hence, for Dionysius, only the name of "Good" can express God's nature:

> Καὶ γὰρ ἡ τἀγαθοῦ θεωνυμία τὰς ὅλας τοῦ πάντων αἰτίου προόδους ἐκφαίνουσα καὶ εἰς τὰ ὄντα καὶ εἰς τὰ οὐκ ὄντα ἐκτείνεται καὶ ὑπὲρ τὰ ὄντα καὶ ὑπὲρ τὰ οὐκ ὄντα ἔστιν. Ἡ δὲ τοῦ ὄντος εἰς πάντα τὰ ὄντα ἐκτείνεται καὶ ὑπὲρ τὰ ὄντα ἔστιν.[23]

This conclusion may result from the tendency of Platonists to describe goodness as "generosity," rather than "appetibility;" that is, as referring more to efficient than to final cause. Hence hence for Dionysius the Good formally signifies overflowing (τὸ προϊέναι) into the things that participate in it.[24]

Dionysius differs from earlier Neoplatonists in fully identifying God with his attributes—especially Goodness and Being (more precisely τὸ ὑπεράγαθον and τὸ ὑπερεῖναι)[25] —whereas Plotinus and his followers maintain that the Good (or One) is a separate hypostasis from those that participate in it: the Intellect (Νοῦς) and

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[23] "For the Divine Name of the Good, as making known whole progressions of the Cause of all, is extended, both to things being, and things not being, and is above things being, and things not being. But the Name of Being is extended to all things being, and is above things being," Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by B. Cordier, vol. 3, 1857, V, 1; translation from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *On Divine Names*, in *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, trans. by J.H. Parker, Parker, London 1897, 73.

[24] See C. Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica di Partecipazione Secondo San Tommaso d'Aquino*, Editrice del Verbo Incarnato, Segni 2005³, 89, and J. de Finance, *Connaissance de l'être*, Desclée, Paris 1966, 160. Thomas Aquinas, preferring Aristotle's notion of τὸ ἀγαθόν, considers that the Good, properly speaking, is associated with perfection and act—and hence is based on and presupposes *esse*—as we will see in greater detail below. The two conceptions are not completely incompatible: for example, Aquinas accepts the Dionysian maxim, *Bonum est diffusivum sui esse*; significantly, however, he interprets it in terms of *final*, not *efficient*, causality. As the development below will show, associating efficient causality properly with *esse* and final causality with *bonum* seems to be more congruous. Regarding this point, see Aquinas' objection and answer in *S.Th.* I, q. 5, a. 4, arg. 2 and ad 2; as well as O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius …*, 86–87, and de Finance, *Être et agir …*, 68.

[25] For Dionysius, strictly speaking, being (τὸ εἶναι) applies only to creatures: it is the first and greatest gift of the Creator to his creation. God, strictly speaking, is the "Super-good" and the "Super-being"—that is, beyond both creaturely goodness and creaturely being. Other terms related to "super-being" include τὸ ὑπερούσιον and ἡ ὑπερούσιος οὐσία. See Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divin. nom.* II, 3; V, 1; and V, 5, and O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius …*, 69.

the Soul (Ψυχή).[26] Although Dionysius does not directly address the problem of the intrinsic constitution of *ens*—his works dealing with the Good and Being study the attributes of God—it is largely from the Areopagite that Thomas Aquinas obtains his notion of participation, as well as his "intensive" conception of being, both of which are central to the problem of the intrinsic foundation of *bonum*.[27]

It seems likely, then, that Dionysius provided Aquinas with the necessary groundwork for his doctrine regarding *actus essendi*, albeit with a few modifications. Dionysius correctly saw that God's *esse* (or "*super-esse*") is infinitely superior to that of his creatures (so much so that he goes so far as to say that God is above all *esse* and even could even be characterized as *non-esse*).[28] Aquinas corrects Dionysius' excessive apophatism, reminiscent of Plato's dialectic, and—following Aristotle— gives both logical and ontological priority to *esse*, rather than *bonum*.[29] Therefore, Aquinas argues, *Esse* is the proper name for God, and the proper effect of God in his creatures is precisely their *esse* or *actus essendi*.[30]

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[26] F. Pascual, "La concezione metafisica di Plotino", in *Alpha Omega* 9 (2006), 136–137.

[27] See Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica …*, 90-98, for a discussion of how much Aquinas assimilates from Dionysius. Fabro notes that a superficial reading of Dionysius could easily construe his doctrine as being excessively close to pagan Neoplatonistm: for example, Dionysius says in *De divin. nom.* V, 4, Ἀλλ᾽ αὐτός ἐστι τὸ εἶναι τοῖς οὖσι καὶ οὐ τὰ ὄντα μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι τῶν ὄντων, ἐκ τοῦ προαιωνίως ὄντος, ("But he [God] is the *esse* in *entia*, and not only *entia*, but also the very *esse* of the *entia* [is] eternally from him" [my translation]), which could be interpreted as pantheism. Aquinas, however, makes many efforts to defend and correct him. This example, for instance, can easily be understood in an orthodox way using the notion of participation.

[28] Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divin. nom.* V, 4: Ὁ ὢν ὅλου τοῦ εἶναι κατὰ δύναμιν ὑπερ- ούσιός ἐστιν. […] μᾶλλον δὲ οὔτε ἐστίν, "The One Who Is [i.e., God] is super-substantially above all *esse* according to power. […] Rather, he [God] is not" (my translation). Note the similarity to Plato's dialectic method: the One Who Is, in reality is not.

[29] For a full discussion regarding the primacy of *esse* in Aquinas, see O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius …*, 109–113.

[30] Aquinas finds a confirmation of his doctrine in the Divine Name given in Exodus 3:14, "I Am Who Am." See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, ed. by C. Pera, P. Marc, and P. Caramello, vol. 2–3, Marietti, Turin 1961 (henceforth cited as *Contra Gent.*), I, cap. 22, n. 10 (Marietti n. 211): "Hanc autem sublimem veritatem Moyses a domino est edoc- tus, qui cum quaereret a domino, Exod. 3 dicens: *si dixerint ad me filii Israel, quod nomen eius? Quid dicam eis?* Dominus respondit: *ego sum qui sum. Sic dices filiis Israel: qui est misit me ad vos*, ostendens suum proprium nomen esse qui est. Quodlibet autem nomen est institutum ad significandum naturam seu essentiam alicuius rei. Unde relinquitur quod ip-

2.2 *Resolutio Secundum Rationem* of the Good

Having seen a brief historical overview of *bonum*, especially in view of the pro-found influence that Pseudo-Dionysius had on Saint Thomas, we are in a position to begin the *resolutio*. In doing so, we will be guided by Thomas Aquinas' masterful treatise on *bonum* in the *Summa theologia*, I, q. 5, a. 1, and his *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, espeically *quaestio* 21.[31]

2.2.1 Derivation *in Via Inventionis*

The first step of our "inventive" phase regards whether *bonum* can in fact be considered a *transcendens* (as the philosophical tradition has clearly maintained, at least until the modern era). This assertion must be demonstrated, because it is evident that there are certain realities that *cannot* be considered good, at least not without qualification; for example, natural disasters, wars, sinful actions, and fallen angels.[32] Hence, it is necessary to begin with the most easily understood notion of *bonum*—the *ratio boni*—and examine how it applies analogically to *entia*.

It is an evident fact that certain *entia* are the object of man's desire and that others are not: in this sense, *bonum* is one of the first notions that is known immediately by the intellect with the help of the *intellectus agens*: what first falls into the intellect is *ens*, but some *entia* fall into the intellect as *attractive*, others as *repulsive*, and

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sum divinum esse est sua essentia vel natura." Regarding this topic, see Gilson's discussion in chapter 3 of *Le Thomisme*: É. Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, Vrin, Paris 1986[6], 99-112.

[31] See *S.Th.* I, q. 5, a. 1, and Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, vol. 22, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Sancta Sabina, Rome 1970 (henceforth cited as *De verit.*), q. 21. See also J. Aertsen, "Good as Transcendental and the Transcendence of the Good", in *Being and Goodness: The Concept of the Good in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology*, ed. by S. MacDonald, Cornell University, Ithaca (New York) 1990, 63-69, for an excellent summary of Saint Thomas' reasoning. I have taken the idea of founding the good noetically, ontologically, and theologically from J. Mitchell, "Aquinas on the Ontological and Theological Foundation of theTranscendentals", in *Alpha Omega* 16 (2013), 39–78.

[32] Thomas raises this very objection in his *De veritate*. See *De verit.* q. 21, a. 5, arg. 3. "de quocumque praedicatur aliquid essentialiter, oppositum eius de eo praedicari non potest. Sed oppositum boni praedicatur de aliqua creatura, scilicet malum. Ergo creatura non est bona per essentiam."

for some the attractive or repulsive force is so small as to render them practically neutral.[33] Since *bonum* is a primitive notion, it is sufficient to recognize that its *ratio* is that of desirability or appetibility: no demonstration is possible.[34] When we investigate the matter further—argues Aquinas—we discover that when something attracts us, it invariably has some quality or other property capable of perfecting us: what is good is desirable precisely because it is *perfective*:

> Alio modo ens est perfectivum alterius non solum secundum rationem speciei, sed etiam secundum esse quod habet in rerum natura. Et per hunc modum est perfectivum bonum.[35]

It is, of course, perfective to different degrees, depending on the ontological degree of the perfection desired: Ice cream is desirable—and in that sense "good"—because it provides satisfaction to the nutritive appetites; studies are good because they perfect the intellect; friendship is good because it fulfills man's natural need for companionship and also because he cannot truly be fulfilled, paradoxically, without making a gift of himself to others; morally good acts are good because they provide man with virtues that enable him to reach his final end. The "desirability" and "perfectiveness" of the good is analogical, just like *ens*.

If, however, the *bonum* desired is perfective, it must have an inherent perfection that makes it so: potency cannot be reduced to act except by an agent that is in act.[36] In this case the potential principle is the individual that desires, the act to be

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[33] As we saw above, Thomas defines the *ratio boni* as follows: "Ratio enim boni in hoc consistit, quod aliquid sit appetibile, unde philosophus, in I *Ethic.*, dicit quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt" (*S.Th.* I, q. 5, a. 1, co.). Since *omnia appetunt* the good, Thomas evidently regards *bonum* as a notion that everyone grasps *in actu exercito*.

[34] Against the opinion of the Platonist tradition—that the *ratio boni* is "generosity"—we may simply state that "generosity" is not an immediately grasped notion. It is something that must be discovered first by *resolutio*. We could say—following a good insight by M. Heidegger—that we spontaneously grasp the thing desired (as "ready-to-hand" or *zuhanden*) and only afterward reflect on its capacity to perfect (which would be a kind of "presence-at-hand" or *Vorhandenheit*). See M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Neomarius Verlag, Tübingen 1953⁷, 42 and 69 (English translation in M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1962, 67 and 98).

[35] *De verit.* q. 21, a. 1, co.

[36] This is the principle of causality as described in the *prima via*. See *S.Th.* I, q. 2, a. 3, co.

obtained is the perfection that the individual desires for itself, and the agent is what-ever produces that perfection.[37] "Perfection," as can be seen, is really just another term for "act," especially "ultimate" or "second" act.[38] Hence, although desirability was our port of entry to *bonum*, we see that it leads us to a more profound reality: that of intrinsic perfection, which Aquinas calls the *natura boni*.[39] Clearly, not ev-ery perfection in a thing produces a corresponding desire in every subject, but by analogy we can call anything "good" to the degree that it has obtained the perfection expected of it.[40] In this sense, Aquinas says, "unumquodque in tantum bonum sit in quantum est perfectum."[41] Moreover—as will be seen in greater detail in the next chapter—all proper act in a substance can be characterized as one of various kinds of *esse in actu* (of substance, accident, and *operari*) and is ultimately derived from and "virtually" contained in that substance's *actus essendi* (or *esse ut actus*). For

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[37] For example, if I am cold and desire warmth, I am warm only *in potentia*. In order to obtain the warmth, I must approach the fire, which is warm *in actu*. The fire is "good" and hence desirable because it has an inherent perfection (warmth). Therefore, the individual, or *suppositum*, is related to the agent with the desired perfection as *participans* to *partici-patum*. We will see this type of participation many times further on in our investigation; it is a key notion for resolving our problem.

[38] In its proper sense, "perfection" means "completeness;" it is the end result of a devel-opment, or passage from potency to act. More broadly, it can refer to any *actus secundus* added to a substance, even if it is not the result of a process; or more broadly still to any act. The term can even be applied to God, with the caution that God has no potency and suffers no movement whatsoever. See DE FINANCE, *Être et agir …*, 193: "La perfection—la structure même du mot l'indique—s'entend comme un achèvement, une fin. Et si épuré qu'on le suppose, ce concept garde toujours de son origine une référence à un progrès; il représente le terme d'un accroissement idéal de valeur. La perfection divine elle-même est pour nous le point à l'infini vers lequel monte la courbe de nos ascensions dialectiques."

[39] Aquinas makes this useful distinction in the *Summa contra gentiles*: "Communicatio esse et bonitatis ex bonitate procedit. Quod quidem patet et ex ipsa natura boni, et ex eius ratione. Naturaliter enim bonum uniuscuiusque est actus et perfectio eius. […] Ratio vero boni est ex hoc quod est appetibile. Quod est finis." See *Contra Gent.* I, cap. 37, n. 5 (Ma-rietti n. 307). See also AERTSEN, "Good as Transcendental …", 65; and DE FINANCE, *Être et agir …*, 190.

[40] Since desire requires two "poles"—the subject that desires and the object that satisfies the desire—the degree to which the latter produces a desire in the former depends on the intrinsic makeup of the former, which in turn depends on the thing's essence. A non-rational animal is incapable of desiring intellectual knowledge, for example, but that does not take away the intrinsic "goodness" (perfection) of, say, learning Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

[41] *Contra Gent.* III, cap. 24, n. 6 (Marietti n. 2051); the same language is found in *ibid.*, III, cap. 20, n. 2 (Marietti n. 2010).

this reason, Aquinas can state "esse enim est actualitas omnis rei," [42] *Bonum*, therefore, is founded on *esse*, and a thing's goodness is in proportion to the "quantity" of *esse* that it possesses. Therefore, *ens*—that is, *id quod habet esse*—can be said to be coextensive with *bonum*.[43]

In fact, it is the very *esse* that makes a thing good:

> Ipsum igitur esse habet rationem boni. Unde sicut impossibile est quod sit aliquid ens quod non habeat esse, ita necesse est ut omne ens sit bonum ex hoc ipso quod esse habet; quamvis etiam et in quibusdam entibus multae aliae rationes bonitatis superaddantur supra suum esse quo subsistunt.[44]

Since *ens* is *id quod habet esse* and *esse* is what makes a thing good, it follows that in reality, there is no difference between *ens* and *bonum*: the distinction is strictly conceptual (*rationis tantum*). *Bonum* adds the notion of "desirability" or "perfection" to the notion of *ens*, but in so doing it merely renders explicit something that is already present in *ens*.[45] From this reflection, it is clear that *bonum* fulfills the three characteristics of a *transcendens*: *additio*, because it renders explicit a property of *ens*; *conversio*, because it is coextensive with *ens*, and *processio*, because it is posterior logically (it is known after *ens*) and ontologically (a thing is good *because* it is *ens*).

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[42] *S.Th.* I, q. 5, a. 1, co.

[43] The term "quantity" here is, of course, taken in an analogical sense. We will see that we can, in a way, speak of both an "extensive" quantity of *esse* and an "intensive" quantity, which correspond to the "predicamental" and "transcendental" participations of *esse*.

[44] *De verit.* q. 21, a. 2.

[45] Aquinas mentions three ways that a notion can be "added" to another: the *additio* can be *realis*, in which case the two terms in question are really distinct from another; or else *rationis*, in which case the two terms are distinct only conceptually. The latter, in turn, can be *cum contractione*—as when one narrows a genus to a smaller genus or to a species—or *sine contractione*—when the terms are perfectly coextensive. All of the *transcendentia* are "additive" in the third sense only. See *ibid.*, q. 21, a. 1, co., and q. 1, a. 1, co. as well as See also J.F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, Catholic University of America, Washington 2000, 192.

2.2.2 *Bonum Simpliciter* and *Secundum Quid*

At this point, we are in a position to make a definitive answer to the objection that we identify certain things as "evils"—either because they are repulsive or because they are evidently lacking in inherent perfection—and hence that *bonum* cannot be coextensive with *ens*. Aquinas finds the solution in the different ways that *ens* and *bonum* are predicated.[46] *Ens*, argues Aquinas, is understood as in proportion to act, as we saw above, and so it applies most properly where there is the most radical reduction of potency to act. Two such reductions are readily knowable: that of substrate to accident, and that of matter to form.[47] The latter is far more radical, and so it is the *esse in actu* (the *esse* pertaining to the form, or what Thomas calls *esse substantiale*) of the substance that makes a thing *ens simpliciter*.[48] Any posterior *esse in actu*—the *actus superadditi*, those acts proper to the accidents and operation— are only *ens* in qualified sense ("secundum quid"). This distinction in predication is born out in practice: when we say, "Fifi (the cat) is," without qualification, we mean simply that it exists.[49] On the other hand, when we say, "Fifi is white," we refer to a certain aspect or manner (*modus*) of its being.[50]

Bonum, however, works in precisely the opposite way. A thing is desirable because it possesses a perfection, and (in creatures) a perfection, properly speaking, is an *actus superadditus*.[51] Whether we are referring the good as desirability or as in-

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[46] In this discussion we will follow Thomas Aquinas' reasoning as found in *S.Th.* I, q. 5, a. 1, co.

[47] The composition of *actus essendi* with *essentia* can only be known by a rigorous and scientific *resolutio*.

[48] In the following chapter, we will see that every *ens* is founded on a radical ontological "ἐνέργεια" called *actus essendi* or *esse ut actus*. This ἐνέργεια in turn communicates itself to three levels of act called *esse in actu*.

[49] Here, I use the verb "to exist" in its non-technical sense. We will see that *esse* cannot be reduced to mere *existentia*, or "placement" outside a thing's causes.

[50] For another discussion of the distinction between *esse simpliciter* and *esse secundum quid* along the same lines, see *S.Th.* I, q. 76, a. 4, co.

[51] See Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus*, vol. 50, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Commissio Leonina, Rome 1992, 231–297 (henceforth cited as *Super De hebd.*), lc. 4: "Alia vero bonitas consideratur in eis absolute, prout scilicet unumquodque dicitur bonum, inquantum est perfectum in esse et in operari. Et haec quidem perfectio non competit creatis bonis secundum ipsum esse essentiae eorum, sed secundum aliquid super-

trinsic perfection, therefore, a thing is called good without qualification (*simpliciter*) only when it possesses an *actus superadditus*, its *ultimate* perfection. On the other hand, the goodness that something possesses simply by being only permits it to be characterized as good in a qualified sense (*secundum quid*).[52] This analysis, therefore, provides the answer: all *entia* are good to the degree that they possess *esse substantiale*—even things that we characterize as evil. However, since things are *primarily* or *simply* called good because they are desirable or perfect—both of which entail "ultimate" or "second" act (*actus superadditus*)—and not simply because they are substances.

2.2.3 Derivation *in Via Iudicii*

The result of our inventive process is that *bonum*, known first through its desirability and then upon reflection by its intrinsic perfection, is founded on an ontological source of act—an ἐνέργεια—that Saint Thomas calls *esse*.[53] Having done a demonstration of this foundation, we are now in a position to examine briefly *in via iudicii* how it is that *esse* founds *bonum* noetically. As we said above, the most fundamental and self-evident notion is *ens*—the *ratio entis*—and it is the first to fall into the intellect;[54] the rest of the *transcendentia*—including *bonum*, as we saw— are logically posterior. It is difficult to describe the precise sequence in which the

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additum, quod dicitur virtus eorum, ut supra dictum est;" also Thomas Aquinas, *In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*, ed. by C. Pera, P. Caramello, and C. Mazzantini, Marietti, Turin 1950 (henceforth cited as *In De div. nom.*), IV, lc. 1, n. 269: "res aliae, etsi inquantum sunt, bonae sint, tamen perfectam bonitatem consequuntur per aliquod superadditum supra eorum esse."

[52] For example, a pizza is good and desirable to the degree that it is tasty and crispy; only this type of pizza is good "*simpliciter*," but tastiness and crispiness are dispositions of the pizza—not the pizza itself—and hence *actus superadditi*. A mediocre pizza, or even a bad pizza, might be good in some respect ("*secundum quid*"), but it cannot be called good without qualification, simply because it exists.

[53] A more detailed *resolutio* of *esse* will be done in the next chapter.

[54] Among many examples, see "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod id quod primo cadit in intellectu, est ens, unde unicuique apprehenso a nobis attribuimus quod sit ens; et per consequens quod sit unum et bonum, quae convertuntur cum ente," (*S.Th.* I-II, q. 55, a. 4, ad 1); and "primo sint intelligenda ens et non ens" (*In Boeth. De Trin.* pars 2, q. 4, a. 1, co. 2).

intellect derives these notions, but we can say the following: from *ens* is immediately derived the opposite notion, *non-ens*, which permits the first speculative *divisio* (the foundation for the principle of non-contradiction). The rest follow from other *divisiones* and *compositiones*: the next *transcendens* to be derived would be *unum*, which entails a denial of division; from *unum* is derived *multum*, which implies *aliquid*, indicating the "separation" or "division" that one *ens* has with respect to another;[55] and finally the *transcendentia* that have to do with the *convenientia* of an *ens* with a subject: *bonum* and *verum*.[56] The last two, Aquinas argues, both have to do with the capacity of the *ens* to perfect the subject. *Verum*, however, only does so *secundum rationem speciei tantum*—which is another way of saying that the intellect (or sensibility) of the subject receives the form of *ens* only *intentionally*.[57] *Bonum*, on the other hand, perfects a subject *secundum esse quod habet in rerum natura*; that is, it actually produces or changes an accidental form in the subject, as fire makes the subject warm.[58] In this way, we are able to reverse our *resolutio* of *bonum*: at the

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[55] In Aquinas' works, *aliquid*, when considered as a *transcendens*, does not take on the classical Latin meaning "something," but is closer in meaning to *aliud* ("something else").

[56] This reflection is guided by *De verit.* q. 21, a. 1, co.: "Id autem quod est rationis tantum, non potest esse nisi duplex, scilicet negatio et aliqua relatio. [...] Illa autem relatio, secundum philosophum in V *Metaph.*, invenitur esse rationis tantum, secundum quam dicitur referri id quod non dependet ad id ad quod refertur, sed e converso, cum ipsa relatio quaedam dependentia sit, sicut patet in scientia et scibili, sensu et sensibili." Where does *res* fit in? It is somewhat difficult to say, because on the one hand Aquinas says that it results from an affirmation (*De veritate*, q. 1, a 1., co.), but this passage from *quaestio* 21 asserts that of affirmations, only a relation can be *rationis tantum*. Since *res* signifies the essence, and at this stage the intellect is only grasping these notions *in actu exercito*, one presumes that *res* is derived close to the beginning, as soon as the intellect does its first abstraction. Whether *res* is a relation, however, is more problematic. One possibility is that *res* signifies the relation of "measurement" or "delimitation" that the essence has with the *actus essendi*.

[57] The *species* is the "image"—sensible or intelligible—produced in the knower by the thing known. Regarding the *species*, see DE FINANCE, *Être et agir …*, 277–279; also the chapter IV of R. LUCAS LUCAS, *El hombre espíritu encarnado: Compendio de filosofía del hombre*, Atenas, Madrid 2007, 73–142, especially 114–115 and 133–138.

[58] One consequence of this distinction is that the subject of *bonum* could, analogically speaking, be any substance, because it simply permits the subject to reach its end, however banal that end might be. *Verum*, on the other hand, can only be experienced by a subject able to receive a *species*, hence capable at least of sensible knowledge.

Looking at *verum* and *bonum* in this way helps to understand why Saint Thomas—following Aristotle—considers the intellect to be a more noble faculty than the will: *verum* is accessible only to those creatures that are sufficiently noble to receive it. See *Contra Gent.*

root is *esse* (in its various forms, all rooted in the *actus essendi*), which founds an *ens*'s intrinsic perfection (*natura boni*); this perfection makes the *ens* perfective to subjects capable of receiving the perfection; and it is this perfectiveness that makes *entia* objects of desire.

2.3 Conclusions Regarding *Bonum*

From the reflections made above, we can draw conclusions to prepare for the more profound *resolutio* of the principles of *ens* that will take place in the next chapter. First of all, the distinction made by Saint Thomas between *ratio boni* and *natura boni*—between *bonum ut appetibile* and *bonum ut perfectum*—helps us to see more clearly that *entia* desire *bonum* because they also desire their *own* perfection. There is an intrinsic drive or impulse in all *entia* reach the fulfillment that is proper to them: to reach the maximum "quantity" of *esse in actu* possible, a state that could be used as a provisional definition of "happiness" or εὐδαιμονία,[59] which Aristotle would

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III, cap. 26, n. 8 (Marietti n. 2078): "Cum enim beatitudo sit proprium bonum intellectualis naturae, oportet quod secundum id intellectuali naturae conveniat quod est sibi proprium. Appetitus autem non est proprium intellectualis naturae, sed omnibus rebus inest: licet sit diversimode in diversis." Regarding the relationship between intellect and will in general, see *S.Th.* I, q. 82, a. 3. For Thomas, beatitude consists in an exercise of the most noble faculty. See J.A. Izquierdo, "La vita che si apre all'agire: Il potenziale operativo dell'uomo", in *Alpha Omega* 8 (2005), 378–381.

[59] See, for example, *Ethics*, A, 7: τέλειον δή τι φαίνεται καὶ αὔταρκες ἡ εὐδαιμονία, τῶν πρακτῶν οὖσα τέλος, "Happiness, therefore, appears as something fulfilled and as self-sufficient, being the end of actions." Aristotle maintains that this fulfillment is obtained by accomplishing the "work" (ἔργον) proper to each thing, which depends on its ontological level (whether it merely "lives," or else also has sentient life, or else is also rational). He says in further on in 1098a7 and 1098a16–17, εἰ δ' ἐστὶν ἔργον ἀνθρώπου ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου, […] τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθὸν ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια γίνεται κατ' ἀρετήν, εἰ δὲ πλείους αἱ ἀρεταί, κατὰ τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ τελειοτάτην, "If, however, the work of man is the act of the soul that corresponds to reason, or [at least is] not without reason, […] then the good of man is the act of the soul that arises according to virtue (κατ' ἀρετήν). If, however, there are more virtues, then according to the best and most fulfilled [among them]" (my translation in both cases).

Regarding happiness in Aristotle, see also Izquierdo, "La vita che si apre all'agire", 203–204; for a survey of how it is treated in various philosophies, see A. Millán-Puelles, *La libre afirmación de nuestro ser: Una fundamentación de la ética realista*, Rialp, Madrid 1994, 254–275.

say is attained when a thing has attained its proper *virtus*.[60] The remaining task of this investigation, therefore, is to determine exactly what this "expansion" of *esse in actu* consists in, and how, ontologically speaking, it can be founded on the very structure of *ens*. In order to do this, we will need to discover the constitution of *ens* and resolve its ultimate intrinsic principles; we will see that the desire for fulfillment or happiness (for apt subjects) is founded on the *actus essendi*, which can be characterized as a *virtus*, an inexorable power to "expand," as determined and measured by the essence co-created with it.

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[60] See ARISTOTLE, *Physica*, ed. by W.D. Ross, Oxford University, 1956² (henceforth cited as *Physics*), H, 2, 264a13-15: ἡ μὲν ἀρετὴ τελείωσίς τις—ὅταν γὰρ λάβῃ τὴν αὑτοῦ ἀρετήν, τότε λέγεται τέλειον ἕκαστον, "Virtue (ἀρετή) is a certain fulfillment—whenever each one attains its own virtue (ἀρετή), then it is said to be perfect" (my translation); also F. O'ROURKE, "Virtus Essendi: Intensive Being in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas", in *Dionysius* 15 (1991), 34.

3. *ESSE UT ACTUS* AS *VIRTUS ESSENDI*

In the previous chapter, we were able to show from the notion of *bonum* that its foundation is *esse*. We have, however, already observed that this *esse* comes in various types, which explain how *ens* can be said *simpliciter* or *secundum quid*: namely, there is the *esse* proper to substance, that proper to the accidents (especially those that are relatively stable, such as the *propria*), and finally *operari*. There is evidently an analogy of proportionality among the three levels, and it is also clear—taking our cue from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Γ, 2—that these levels can all be reduced in some way to the *esse* proper to substance (*esse substantiale*). In this chapter, we will show that this reduction in fact arises from an intrinsic *participation* of *esse*, and that the three levels of *esse*—which can be termed *esse in actu* or *esse* on the "predicamental" level—can ultimately be reduced to a radical principle of actuality that contains them "virtually": the *actus essendi* or *esse ut actus*, which for this reason can also be termed *virtus essendi*.

3.1 Historical Background of *Esse*

3.1.1 From the Presocratics to Aristotle

The first known investigator into the ultimate intrinsic principle of reality is Parmenides, who asserts that the world can be reduced to a unique, immovable principle called τὸ εἶναι—or more exactly τὸ ἐστίν, for he felt that the conjugated verb *to be*, without a subject, best characterized this underlying principle:

> Εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἐρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας,
> αἵπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι·
> ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,
> Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος (Ἀληθείῃ γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ)
> ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι,

τὴν δή τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν·
οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐὸν (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν)
οὔτε φράσαις.[61]

All reality "is," he argues, and it cannot "become" from something outside of being—because there is nothing outside of being—and nothing can come to be from non-being. It follows that the reality behind is simply τὸ ἐστίν; changes and multiplicity are mere appearance. Such an extreme monism is evidently difficult to maintain,[62] and so it is easy to see why Sophists such as Gorgias, in critiquing Parmenides, fell into relativism: if being, knowledge, and discourse imply an absurd unity and immobility of reality, then they must be rejected.[63] It was Plato who, in the face of such unsatisfactory claims, first attempted to reconcile Parmenides' search for a stable and immutable principle with the evident changeability and multiplicity of the sensible world, and in so doing refute the Sophists' relativism. As we saw above, he thought that only separate, unchangeable, intelligible realities— τὰ εἴδη—could account for stable and universal knowledge.[64] In fact, every valid predication, he would argue, entails a participation in an idea: "Fifi is a cat" means that Fifi participates in the idea of "cat." Plato sees, with Parmenides, that τὸ ὄν can be predicated of all things—sensible as well as intelligible—and hence all of these must participate in a unique "meta-idea" called τὸ ὄν. Participation, however, is not complete identity (τὸ ταὐτὸν): it necessarily means a merely *partial* iden-

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[61] H. Diels and W. Kranz, eds., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Weidmann, Berlin 1974[6], DK28b2: "For come, I say, do (you) take care, and listen to my word. There are only [two] ways of inquiry to be thought: the first, namely, that 'is,' and that it is impossible for anything not to be, is the path of persuasion (for it accompanies truth); the other, namely, that 'is not' and that there must be something that is not, this, I make clear to you, that it is a completely unknowable path. For you can never know what is not (for it cannot be done), nor can you say it" (my translation).

[62] For example, one might ask, even if multiplicity and change are "appearances," how can "appearance" be really distinct from "reality"?

[63] Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, 93–94.

[64] It is interesting to see that Plato has a marked similarity with Hume and Kant on one point of doctrine: all of them profoundly distrust sensible knowledge. The difference between Plato and the Empiricists, of course, is that Plato believes that through ἀνάμνησις and dialectic one can reach the intelligible realities; Hume and Kant, naturally, consider it impossible.

tification of the *participans* with the *particpatum*. Plato famously concluded that, for this reason, all *entia* must also participate in the "different" (τὸ ἕτερον), a type of non-being.[65] This conclusion constitutes the famous "parricide of Parmenides": asserting that being (τὸ ὄν) and non-being (of which τὸ ἕτερον is a type) are present in *every* reality.[66] Since τὸ ὄν is a form or idea (a "meta-idea," certainly, but ontologically similar to the lower ideas), and ideas are necessarily "separate," we can say that in order to avoid monism, Plato reduced Parmenides' τὸ εἶναι to an extrinsic and formal participation in τὸ ὄν, that takes place in a sort of dialectic solidarity with non-being.[67]

Aristotle, as it were, restored to τὸ εἶναι its intrinsic place in τὸ ὄν. Whereas Plato, it could be said, would have considered the First Science to be dialectic, the study of the relations among the ideas, Aristotle considered it to be the study of *ens qua ens* (τοῦ ὄντος ᾗ ὄν), which—as he argues in the famous passage from *Metaphysics*, Γ, 2, cited above—reduces to οὐσία. He recognized that τὸ ὄν is differentiated into various degrees, both on the "horizontal" level (accidents with respect to the substance in which they are inherent) and on the "vertical" level (the various types of substances: sublunar, superlunar, and ultimately the First Mover).[68] Most significantly, he recognized that τὸ ὄν could be reduced to two intrinsic principles: οὐσία and ἐνέργεια, and that οὐσία could be characterized as τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι.[69] It follows that τὸ εἶναι is in a way at the root of the actuality of all οὐσία. Aristotle did

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[65] The exact word used by Plato in the dialogue is the related τὸ θάτερον, which is essentially a synonym.

[66] For Plato's derivation of the meta-ideas, see PLATO, *Le Sophiste*, ed. and trans. by A. Diès, vol. 8/3, Oeuvres complètes, Belles Lettres, Paris 1925, 251b–259a, especially 254b–257a.

[67] In other words, being and non-being are contradictory concepts when taken without qualification. Plato, lacking analogy and a doctrine of composition, resorts to dialectic in order to explain how they can coexist in the same reality: while affirming that something *is*, we affirm at the same time that it *is not*.

[68] Regarding the different levels of movement (and the corresponding substances) in Aristotle, see J. MITCHELL, "From Aristotle's Four Causes to Aquinas' Ultimate Causes of Being: Modern Interpretations", in *Alpha Omega* 16 (2013), 401–402.

[69] We will make a more detailed examination of how Aristotle reduces the object of the First Science to its intrinsic principles.

not, however, explore this route explicitly any further; it was for the Neoplatonists, especially Pseudo-Dionysius, to discover the virtuality and "fecundity," of τὸ εἶναι.

3.1.2 The Unlimitedness of τὸ εἶναι

In his hymn in praise of τὸ ἐστίν, after attributing to it a number of attributes that would apply very well to God, Parmenides gives the following description, which may seem surprising: κρατερὴ γὰρ Ἀνάγκη / πείρατος ἐν δεσμοῖσιν ἔχει, τό μιν ἀμφὶς ἐέργει;[70] in other words, among the attributes of τὸ ἐστίν is its *limitedness*. What Parmenides seemingly is trying to say is that τὸ ἐστίν is well *defined*; he is denying that it is ἄπειρον, which could mean either "limitless" or "indefinite," but he does not distinguish. Melissus of Samo, his disciple, seems to have been the first to make the distinction, calling the totality of reality ἄπειρον.[71] The Neoplatonists, however, were the first ones to understand fully that the infinity (τὸ ἄπειρον) of the Principle entails the fullness of "power" (δύναμις or *virtus*).[72] For example, Plotinus says of the One, "[τὸ ἕν] Ληπτέον δὲ καὶ ἄπειρον αὐτὸν οὐ τῷ ἀδιεξιτήτῳ ἢ τοῦ μεγέθους ἢ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀπεριλήπτῳ τῆς δυνάμεως."[73] The choice of

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[70] "A strong force keeps it in the chains of *limit*, which shuts it in on both sides" (my translation; emphasis added), Diels and Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, DK28b8, l. 30. Regarding the ἄπειρον in Greek philosophy, see de Finance, *Être et agir …*, 42–49.

[71] "Melissus [dicit] hoc quod esset infinitum et inmutabile et fuisse semper et fore;" "Διογένης καὶ Μέλισσος [λέγουσιν] τὸ μὲν πᾶν ἄπειρον, τὸν δὲ κόσμον πεπεράνθαι" (Diels and Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, DK30a8). These are not original fragments, but witnesses found in Cicero's *Lucullus* and from Theodoret of Cyrus' *Graecarum affectionum curatio*.

[72] It should be said that Aristotle may have laid the basis for this understanding. He called the First Mover "Pure Act" and νόησις νοήσεως, which for Aristotle is the exercise of the most perfect act by the supreme being. While the notion of "fullness" is not explicit, it is implied by the very notion of act—a conclusion that the Neoplatonists came to see more clearly. See *Metaphysics*, Λ, 7, 1072a24–25: ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ κινούμενον καὶ κινοῦν καὶ μέσον, τοίνυν ἔστι τι ὃ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, ἀΐδιον καὶ οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργεια οὖσα, "For since what is moved and moving is an intermediate, therefore there is something that is not moved by which it moves, being eternal substance and act." See also *ibid.*, Λ, 9, 1074b34: αὑτὸν [τὸ νοῦς] ἄρα νοεῖ, εἴπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κράτιστον, καὶ ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις, "Therefore it [the divine intellect] thinks itself, since it is the mightiest, and the thinking [of this intellect] is a thinking of thinking" (my translation in both cases).

[73] *Enneads*, VI, 9, 6: "[The One] is to be taken also as infinite, not in measurelessness of magnitude or number, but in unboundedness of power" (my translation). Plotinus frames

the term δύναμις is significant, because the it means that the Supreme Principle—which for Plotinus is "beyond" being, as we saw—is not simply infinite in "size," but infinite in *power*.

Dionysius took up this idea, connecting it to τὸ εἶναι:[74] although for Dionysius τὸ ἀγαθόν is the most proper name for God, nevertheless τὸ εἶναι or, more correctly, τὸ ὑπερεῖναι, is attributable to God because τὸ εἶναι is God's primary gift or effect;[75] moreover, he possesses τὸ εἶναι before all things and in a preeminent way: "Καὶ γὰρ τὸ προεῖναι καὶ ὑπερεῖναι προέχων καὶ ὑπερέχων τὸ εἶναι πᾶν, αὐτό φημι καθ᾽ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι, προϋπεστήσατο καὶ τῷ εἶναι αὐτῷ πᾶν τὸ ὁπωσοῦν ὂν ὑπεστήσατο."[76] God communicates τὸ εἶναι first, and the other gifts—intelligence and life, for example—must flow from the first; otherwise it is impossible to understand how those creatures who possess only God's greatest gift (τὸ εἶναι) are inferior to those who also possess life and intelligence: these perfections are communicated by God and entail an increasing participation in God and closeness to him.[77] In fact, not only is τὸ εἶναι prior to the other perfections, it contains them *virtually*: "μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ αὐτὰ καθ᾽ αὐτὰ πάντα, ὧν τὰ ὄντα μετέχει, τοῦ αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὐτὸ εἶναι μετέχει, καὶ οὐδέν ἐστιν ὄν, οὗ μὴ ἔστιν οὐσία καὶ αἰὼν τὸ αὐτὸ εἶναι"[78] What is most significant for our topic of discussion is that for Dionysius, "*per-se* being itself" (αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὐτὸ εἶναι) does not mean God (Saint Thomas'

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the distinction in a way that is similar to a distinction we will make in section 3.4 between intensive and extensive quantity.

[74] For an excellent discussion of Pseudo-Dionysius' intensive conception of being, see O'ROURKE, *Pseudo-Dionysius …*, 50–56.

[75] See PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divin. nom.* V, 5: Πάντων οὖν εἰκότως τῶν ἄλλων ἀρχηγικώτερον ὡς ὢν ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῆς πρεσβυτέρας τῶν ἄλλων αὐτοῦ δωρεῶν ὑμνεῖται, "Among all other things, therefore, God is suitably and more originally named as 'he who is,' from the 'elder' [or first] among his gifts" (my translation).

[76] *Ibid.*: "Also, therefore, possessing pre-being before all, and preeminently having super-being, he pre-caused all being (I mean being itself [αὐτό καθ᾽ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι]) and caused everything in every way whatever in its very being" (my translation).

[77] See *ibid.*, V, 2.

[78] *Ibid.*, V, 5: "Moreover, all of the *per-se* realities, in which all *entia* participate, participate in *per-se* being itself, and there is no *ens* whose substance and eternity is not being itself" (my translation).

Ipsum Esse), but the gift of being given by God to his creatures.[79] Hence Dionysius was the first to conceive of τὸ εἶναι as an intensive perfection that entails a greater or lesser participation in the Principle that possesses it *per se*. Moreover, for him τὸ εἶναι, far from denoting the mere "fact" of existence, is the supreme perfection that is the source of all the others.

3.1.3 The Intrinsic Principles of *Ens*

Also central to our problem is the relationship between the intrinsic principles discovered by Aristotle: οὐσία and ἐνέργεια. It is difficult to find in the *Metaphysics* a clear hierarchy between the two. In Θ, 6, he equates actuality with existence (τὸ ὑπάρχειν): "ἔστι δὴ ἐνέργεια τὸ ὑπάρχειν τὸ πρᾶγμα μὴ οὕτως ὥσπερ λέγομεν δυνάμει."[80] The term τὸ ὑπάρχειν means the "fact of existence," and hence does not necessarily entail all the richness of τὸ εἶναι, but this description of ἐνέργεια does suggest that τὸ εἶναι is at the root of all act. Hence, although Aristotle insists that the object of the First Science is unique, he never resolves the problem of how to overcome the *reductio ad duo* he has accomplished. Subsequent commentators attempted various solutions, which could be grouped into four general types: those who affirm what we will call the metaphysics of essence, or "essentialism," who tend to "fuse" οὐσία and ἐνέργεια; those who espouse what we could call the metaphysics of dual act, which seeks to separate the two principles radically, treating them almost as two *res*; those who hold what we could call the metaphysics of action, which places the emphasis on *operari*, as with Blondel's *l'Action* and "transcendental" Thomism; and finally those who place the emphasis on *esse*, as in the "intensive" school represented by Étienne Gilson and Cornelio Fabro.[81]

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[79] O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius …*, 54.

[80] *Metaphysics*, Θ, 6, 1048a31-32: "Act is precisely that the thing exists, but not as when we say 'in potency' " (my translation). He goes on to give several examples of act-and-potency pairs so as to make an analogy of proportionality, but without giving a definition. See section 3.2.2.2 and table 3.1, below.

[81] One of the objectives of this chapter is to show that this last interpretation is the most faithful to Thomas Aquinas himself. For an overview of the history of the interpretation of

3.1.3.1   The Metaphysics of Essence

In the first group, we could include Boethius, whose attempt to translate Aristotle's works into Latin was tragically cut short by his death at the hands of Theodoric, king of Ostrogoths.[82] In his translations, he sometimes interpreted τὸ εἶναι as *essentia*;[83] and since *essentia* was commonly used already in ancient times to translate οὐσία,[84] an identification was naturally made between τὸ εἶναι (*esse*) and οὐσία (*essentia* or *substantia*). Boethius seems to have confirmed this interpretation with a famous expression from his *De Hebdomadibus*: "Diversum est esse et id quod est; ipsum enim esse nondum est, at vero quod est accepta essendi forma est atque consistit."[85] Here, *id quod est* is what we could call the *suppositum*, the concrete individual, the compound with all of its parts. *Esse* here does not mean the *actus essendi*, but can be identified rather with the form. Hence, *essentia*—which equates to τὸ εἶναι—is the abstract term for concrete *esse*—roughly the Thomistic concept of *esse commune*, albeit only on the "predicamental" level.[86] In the language of Scholasticism, therefore, there is no real distinction between between *esse* and *essentia*, because the latter "contains" the former.

Boethius' metaphysics was, therefore, one of essences in act, a model followed by the tradition that we could call the metaphysics of essence or "essentialism." For example, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), in reaction to Avicenna, denied that existence could

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[*esse* and an introduction to the metaphysics of intensive being, see Fabro, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy".]

[82] See *ibid.*, 458.

[83] See, for example, his translation of Aristotle's *Categories* (Boethius, *In Categorias Aristotelis Libri Quatuor*, in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 64, Migne, Paris 1891 [henceforth cited as *In Categorias*], 285D–286C [=M, 14b10–25 in Aristotle]).

[84] Seneca made the first recorded translation of οὐσία using the term *essentia*, in analogy with the Greek etymology. See É. Gilson, *L'Être et l'essence*, Vrin, 1972³, 339-340. Boethius himself translated οὐσία with *substantia*.

[85] Boethius, *Quomodo Substantiae in eo quod sint bonae sint cum non sint substantialia bona*, in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 64, Migne, Paris 1891 (henceforth cited as *De hebdomadibus*), 1311B.

[86] For a concise explanation of Boethius' distinction between *esse* and *id quod est*, see É. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Sheed and Ward, 1980², 105, and de Finance, *Être et agir* …, 83–85.

be an "accident" of essence, on the grounds that it is absurd to consider existence as one of the nine genera of accidents, much less a special category of accident common to all ten categories. Hence, *esse* is not a "perfection," he argues, but merely the *copula*, and therefore existence is really simply an *ens rationis*.[87] Henry of Ghent, on the other hand, considers that essences have a certain consistency (*certitudo*, *ratitudo*) even in the mind of God before they are created; they possess, that is *esse essentiae*, the "being" proper to essence. When God creates, he simply grants the essence *esse existentiae*. For Henry, therefore, *esse* is simply a relation (*respectus*) to the creator. For this reason, he specifically rejects any theory that posits a real distinction between essence and *esse*, particularly that of Giles of Rome, but also that of Thomas Aquinas.[88] Duns Scotus does not deal with the problem of the real composition at length, but he distinguishes between *esse existentiae* and *esse essentiae*, which he describes as *modi* of *esse*—differences in the "intensity" of *esse*, much as *finitus* and *infinitus*, for Scotus, are *modi* of *ens*.[89] He defines *ens* in such a way that it includes not only real, actual things but also *possible* things; as a practical matter, *ens* is reduced to *essence*, which is either merely possible—in which case it has *esse essentiae*—or real—in which case it has *esse existentiae*.[90] Finally, F. Suárez is well known for denying the real distinction between existence and essence, on the

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[87] See Gilson, *L'Être et l'essence*, 68–69.

[88] See F. Copleston, *History of Philosophy: Augustine to Scotus*, vol. 2, Newman, Westminster (Maryland) 1950, 474–475. For a summary of Henry of Ghent's consideration of *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*, see Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 450–451, and P. Porro, "Henry of Ghent", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall, 2008), ed. by E.N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/henry-ghent/ [28-4-2014], 6–7.

[89] For a concise description of Scotus' modal distinction, see T. Williams, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, Cambridge University, 2003, 25–26.

[90] See Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, vol. 25–26, Opera Omnia (Wadding), Vivès, Paris 1891, q. 3, [2], n. 1: "*Ens ergo vel res* isto primo modo accipitur omnino communissime, et extendit se ad quodcumque quod non includit contradictionem, sive sit ens rationis, hoc est praecise habens esse in intellectu considerante, sive sit ens reale, habens aliquam entitatem extra considerationem intellectus. Et secundo, accipitur in isto membro minus communiter pro ente quod *habet vel habere potest aliquam entitatem* non ex consideratione intellectus" (emphasis added). Note that he practically equates *ens* and *res*; this equivalence shows how *ens* practically reduces to essence. Moreover, *ens* can be not only *ens in actu*, but even *ens possibile* (*quod habere potest aliquam entitatem*).

grounds that having two principles in *ens* would amount to having two *res*.[91] In all of these philosophers, as can be seen, the emphasis of metaphysics is placed nearly entirely on essence; whether it exists or not almost seems to make no difference.

3.1.3.2   The Metaphysics of Dual Act

Paradigmatic of the second group is Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna),[92] who interprets τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (quidditas) as *esse proprium*, and τὸ εἶναι or τὸ ὑπάρχειν (existentia) as *esse affirmativum*.[93] Avicenna is well known for considering *esse affirmativum* as an "accident" of *esse proprium*, in the sense that (at least in creatures), the existence is not included in the very essence of a thing but rather "happens" (*accidit*) to it—in other words, all creatures are "possible" (contingent, in Thomistic parlance).[94] Hence, unlike Boethius and Averroes (who critiqued Avicenna on this point), he considers the two principles to be really distinct, and that *esse affirmativum* has a certain priority over *esse proprium*.[95] Nevertheless, both are *esse*, and hence a type of act; therefore, the composition is between an "existential" act and a "formal" act.

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[91] See Gilson, *L'Être et l'essence*, 148–149. Suárez was not entirely wrong, in my opinion, in making this critique. The real distinction that he knew was undoubtedly the one espoused by Cajetan. Since Cajetan proposes two original acts, as we will see below, the two principles really *do* appear to be two *res*.

[92] For a summary of Avicenna's doctrine on *ens*, see *ibid.*, 124–132. See also A. Contat, "L'Étant, l'*esse* et la participation selon Fornelio Fabro", in *Revue Thomiste* 111 (2011), 375–376.

[93] See Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), *Liber de Philosophia Prima sive Scientia Divina: Édicion critique de la traduction latine médiévale*, ed. by S. Van Riet, Peeters, Louvain 1977, Tract. I, sec. 5, [31], 34-35: "Dico ergo quod intentio entis et intentio rei imaginantur in animabus duae intentiones; ens vero et aliquid sunt nomina multivoca unius intentionis nec dubitabis quin intentio istorum non sit iam impressa in anima legentis hunc librum. Sed res et quicquid aequipollet ei, significat etiam aliquid aliud in omnibus linguis; unaquaeque enim res habet certitudinem qua est id quod est, sicut triangulus habet certitudinem qua est triangulus, et albedo habet certitudinem qua est albedo. Et hoc est quod fortasse appellamus *esse proprium*, nec intendimus per illud nisi intentionem *esse affirmativi*, quia verbum ens significat etiam multas intentiones, ex quibus est certitudo qua est unaquaeque res, et est sicut *esse proprium* rei" (emphasis added).

[94] See Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 190-192 and Gilson, *L'Être et l'essence*, 68. It is perhaps unfair to accuse Avicenna of considering existence as an accident, in the same sense as the nine non-essential categories are accidents; he seems to have understood that it transcends the categories somehow. He did not, however, consider *esse* the source of all proper perfections, as Thomas did.

[95] See Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 191.

Avicenna introduces this distinction because of an old problem raised by Protago-
ras: we can conceive of things without knowing whether they really exist or not.
Esse affirmativum, argues Avicenna, founds the *esse* of judgments (which explains
its name) and *esse proprium* designates *what* a thing is.[96] It follows that, although
esse affirmativum has the priority, a complete *reductio ad unum* is impossible.

A similar doctrine was formulated by Thomas de Vio (known as Cajetan), the fa-
mous commentator of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*.[97] Taking his cue from
the Thomistic maxim *forma dat esse*, he maintains that the essence (whose more
noble part—among composed substances—is the form) must be a kind of act. Nat-
urally, *esse* is also an act, since it is the *actus actuum*, although he interprets *esse*
as *existentia*, the mere "fact" of being or "placement" of the essence outside its
causes.[98] There are, therefore, *two* acts and *two* potencies in *ens*:

> Sicut enim duplex est actus, scilicet esse et forma, ita duplex est potentia
> receptiva, scilicet essentia et materia. Et ita duplex est receptio et irreceptio:
> et similiter duplex est finitas et infinitas.[99]

Although he vigorously defends the real distinction between *existentia* and *essentia*,
he borrows from Scotus the notion of *esse* as *esse existentiae actualis*.[100] Neverthe-
less, because he considers essence to be an original act that is communicated to the
ens directly by God, it is impossible for the *existentia* to do more than "actuate" the
essence; that is, essence already has a consistency, in a way, "before" it is "placed"

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[96] This argument is taken up in Thomas Aquinas' earlier works, as we will see.

[97] Regarding late-Scholastic and neo-Scholastic interpreters of Saint Thomas, See A.
Contat, "Le figure della differenza ontologica nel tomismo del Novecento", in *Alpha
Omega* 11 (2008), 77–129, 213–250, especially the portions on Jacques Maritain and John
of Saint Tomas (98–115); C. Fabro, "L'obscurcissement de l' 'esse' dans l'école thomiste",
in *Revue Thomiste* 58 (1958), 443–472; and C. Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità*, Editrice
del Verbo Incarnato, Segni 2010, 604–628, an expanded version of the article in *Revue
Thomiste*.

[98] In this regard, Cajetan's conception of *esse* is very similar to that of the "essential-
ists," particularly that of Scotus. See É. Gilson, "Cajétan et l'existence", in *Tijdschrift voor
Philosophie* 15 (1953), 272.

[99] Thomas de Vio (Cajetan), *Commentaria Thomae de Vio Caietani Ordinis Praedica-
torum: pars prima Summae Theologiae a quaestione I ad quaestionem XLIX*, vol. 4, Opera
omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Typographia Polyglotta, Rome 1888, 73b, X.

[100] Gilson, "Cajétan et l'existence", 272–273.

into existence outside its causes.[101] A common thread in this second group is the reduction of *esse* to *existentia*, which becomes practically a formal, almost a univocal notion: all it does, so to speak is make the essence exist. The resulting conception of *ens* is rather static: since a substance's *existentia* cannot communicate itself, it follows that the accidents must also be composed of existence and essence and, in fact, be created directly by God, in accord with a certain aptness (*aptitudo* or *dispositio*) in the substance.[102] Even *operari* must be brought about by divine motion.[103] In fact, the positions of both the metaphysics of essence and of dual act place their emphasis on the essence, and as a result both systems suffer from a similar "staticness" that makes it difficult for them to explain *operari*.[104]

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[101] See GILSON, "Cajétan et l'existence", 274. We can illustrate the system with an image—valid for both the metaphysics of essence and that of dual act—influenced by a passage in C.S. Lewis' *Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*: we are to imagine a storehouse with stone statues. These represent the essences "before" they are created, as they "exist" in God's mind. When God decides to create one of them, he "breathes" (communicates) his existence, and they come to life. As can be seen, there are two distinct participations involved: the exemplar (statue) that participates in God's essence by imitation, and the existence (breath) that participates in God as *Ipsum Esse*. In Cajetan's system, these participations are irreducible. To see an example of this precise argument, see L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin*, Vrin, Paris 1953², 36–73.

[102] See GILSON, "Cajétan et l'existence", 278.

[103] In this context, one understands why Baroque theologians such as Domingo Báñez and Luis de Molina had a difficult time understanding how actual grace could coexist with human freedom. If the actuation of the will depends on a divine motion for its very existence, and God's actions never fail, Báñez' theory of *praemotio physica* seems almost inescapable: it is a case of the problem of *concursus divinus* (two coinciding efficient causes, divine and created). De Molina was forced to assert, in essence, that God ordains the divine motion *in genere*, leaving room for man to "specify" it. It seems to me that the problem can be entirely avoided by following the position described in this paper: the soul's powers, inasmuch as they are *accidentia propria*, receive their *esse* ultimately from the substance's *actus essendi*, and they can be the subject of *esse accidentale* received from outside. We touch on this topic briefly in section 5.2.4, below. For an overview of the *De auxiliis* controversy, see F. COPLESTON, *History of Philosophy: Ockham to Suárez*, vol. 3, Newman, Westminster (Maryland) 1953, 342–344.

[104] In my opinion, if we are going to place Plato in one of these three groups, he would best fit among those who make *esse* a "formal" reality (that is, the metaphysics of essence), even though some characteristics of his metaphysics are unique, in particular his quasi-hypostatization of the ideas. However, he has the following affinities to the metaphysics of essence: first, in his system, the fundamental realities—the ideas—are above all *formal*, not actual; second, *ens* is for all intents and purposes *extrinsic* to what we would call essence (namely, the formal contents of the ideas). It is like another property or "accident" of an essence.

3.1.3.3   The Metaphysics of Action

Cajetan's interpretation of Thomas became practically the dominant one among Thomists, and persisted with different variations (especially as regards the priority of one act over the other) until the twentieth century, when various scholars—in large part thanks to the insight of M. Heidegger regarding the priority of being—sought to place the emphasis of metaphysics on actuality, not essence. These authors, who constitute what I call the metaphysics of action, agree with Heidegger that the other schools (the metaphysics of essence and classical Thomism) place an inordinate emphasis on essence and hence are insufficient to explain *esse* and *operari*. M. Blondel well represents this current, even though he is more interested in theodicy than the intrinsic structure of *ens*. Convinced that modern philosophy's experiment with the rationalism had failed, he proposed a philosophy based, no longer on the *via intellectiva*, but on the *via volitiva*.[105] Whereas Descartes considers the most evident and fundamental notion to be the *cogito*, Blondel considers it to be the *volo*, the fact of the freedom of the will. He distinguishes between the *volonté voulante*, signifying the will itself, which desires an infinite but unreachable ideal goodness; and the *volonté voulue*, which signifies the real object of the will, those finite, limited, and ultimately unsatisfying goods that man *actually* obtains. Hence, man is internally conflicted by an interior dialectic between the limited goods he can really obtain and the unrealizable ideal that he actually wants. Blondel's reasoning leads to what he calls *l'antibolie*:[106] if there really is an Absolute capable of fulfilling the ideal, then man's life has meaning; otherwise, life is absurd, because no number of limited goods can possibly give it meaning. Since the second option is repugnant, the ideal must in fact exist. In Blondel's own words:

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[105] For an overview of the philosophical background of Blondel's works, see S. Nicolosi, "L'azione como via alla trascendenza: Il processo di ritorno all'assoluto", in *Sapienza* 50 (1997), 257–283, especially 263–270.

[106] Blondel explains this notion in M. Blondel, *L'Action (1893): Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1950, 323–324. See also a description in Nicolosi, "L'azione como via alla trascendenza", 274–276.

> Dans notre connaissance, dans notre action, il subsiste une disproportion constante entre l'objet même et la pensée, entre l'œuvre et la volonté. Sans cesse l'idéal conçu est dépassé par l'opération réelle, et sans cesse la réalité obtenue est dépassée par un idéal toujours renaissant. Tour à tour, la pensée devance la pratique, et la pratique devance la pensée ; il faut donc que le réel et l'idéal coïncident, puisque cette identité nous est donnée en fait ; mais elle ne nous est donnée que pour nous échapper aussitôt.[107]

At its root, this reasoning constitutes an ontological argument, very similar in structure to Descartes', albeit using the will; its starting point is therefore entirely immanent.[108] Blondel applies a very similar argument to being in his chief metaphysical work, *L'être et les êtres*. Being (*l'être*), he argues, is an unalterable given, so much so that nothingness cannot even be thought of.[109] The mind is confronted with an expectation of unity and permanence, but a reality that is manifold and contingent.[110] This

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[107] BLONDEL, *L'Action*, 344–345.

[108] There are profound structural similarities between Blondel's system and that of Heidegger and Sartre. Heidegger's *Sein* is like Blondel's unrealizable ideal, and the limited goods correspond to *Seiendes*. Similarly, the real but limited goods would correspond to Sartre's *être-en-soi*, whereas the ideal would correspond to the impossible *être-en-soi-pour-soi* (that is, God). Sartre, of course, essentially chooses the opposite side of Blondel's *antiboulie*, opting for the absurd. Regarding Sartre's rejection of the existence of God, see R. LUCAS LUCAS, *Orizzonte verticale: Senso e significato della persona umana*, San Paolo, Milan 2007, 32–35. Regarding the *être-en-soi* and *être-pour-soi*, see J. DE FINANCE, *Essai sur l'agir humain*, Presses de l'Université Grégorienne, 1962, 115–119.

While it seems to me that Blondel's argument suffers from the same problem that all "ontological" arguments face—namely, that it starts with the immanent acts of the soul and hence is unable to demonstrate the reality of anything outside the intellect and will—it would still be valid as an argument of fittingness or *convenientia*. In proving the incorruptibility of the soul, Thomas says, "Potest etiam huius rei [i.e., incorruptibilitatis animae] accipi signum ex hoc, quod unumquodque naturaliter suo modo esse desiderat. Desiderium autem in rebus cognoscentibus sequitur cognitionem. Sensus autem non cognoscit esse nisi sub hic et nunc, sed intellectus apprehendit esse absolute, et secundum omne tempus. Unde omne habens intellectum naturaliter desiderat esse semper. *Naturale autem desiderium non potest esse inane*. Omnis igitur intellectualis substantia est incorruptibilis" (emphasis added). A natural desire is, however, only a *sign* of the soul's incorruptibility. The profound reason is the simplicity and nobility of the soul.

[109] See M. BLONDEL, *L'être et les êtres: Essai d'ontologie concrète et intégrale*, F. Alcan, Paris 1935, 8: "En ce sens, antérieur à toute doctrine et à toute volonté, il n'est point de nihilisme possible. L'être ne fait point question pour qui est ; et ce qu'on appelait naguère la présence totale de l'être à lui-même élimine la possibilité de sortir du réel, fût-ce pour la pensée la plus experte en critique, en négation, en destruction." The point is explained more fully in *ibid.*, 37–38.

[110] See BLONDEL, *L'Action*, 67–68: "D'un côté nous paraissons trouver l'être en nous et autour de nous dans les réalités qui s'imposent à notre expérience et à notre action ; comme si c'était de ces données impérieuses que nous abstrayions ensuite une notion plus ou moins

dialectic is, of course, analogous to that between the ideal of the *volonté voulante* and the reality of the *volonté voulue*, and it is never resolved intrinsically to *l'être*, but only in *l'Etre absolu* (God).[111] For Blondel, the most authentic or fundamental meaning of the term *l'être* is that of the active-voice verb, and especially not that of the noun or the "result" considered passively:

> [L'Etre] c'est une source de réalité et, s'il y a dans la pensée priorité au point de vue de l'émergence préalable à la réflexion, c'est donc à la spon- tanéité du verbe actif, plutôt qu'à l'enregistrement du fait d'exister, que doit être reconnue cette originalité foncière.[112]

In other words, for Blondel, the "act" of being is much more important than the "fact" of being.[113] It should be noted, however, that for Blondel, as for all the authors of the metaphysics of action that we are considering, the act of being (*l'être* as action) cannot truly be characterized as an intrinsic principle of *ens*, but only something that it *does*.

The "transcendental" school of Thomism places a similar emphasis on *operari*. J. Maréchal, for example, seeks to overcome Kant's immanentism by analyzing the dynamics of the intellect. Man, he argues, is driven toward knowledge of what is absolute (literally "unbound") and unconditional, just as by his volition he implicitly

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généralisée et estompée de l'être. — Mais d'autre part nous ne pouvons nous empêcher de conférer à l'être des attributs tout à fait différents de ceux que les réalités expérimentées en nous et hors de nous nous suggèrent. Ces notions mêmes et les principes qui servent à les mettre en œuvre et à susciter le développement de notre connaissance sont transcendants à l'ordre immanent de ce monde : idée d'unité, de permanence, d'absolu, d'autonomie, de cause productrice de finalité suprême, de substantialité et de perfection, voilà des évidences qui, avant même d'être explicitement reconnues et attribuées à un être, à « l'Etre en soi et par soi », sont réellement et nécessairement impliquées en nous et pour nous."

[111] Blondel's ontological argument for *l'Etre absolu* is summed up in the introduction to the second part of his work, in three questions. See BLONDEL, *L'Action*, 149: "[L]'Etre absolu est-il vraiment conçu par nous ? […] [L]'Etre absolu peut-il être effectivement af- firmé ? […] [E]st-il possible et comment est-il obligatoire de reconnaître en cet Etre le Dieu de charité ?"

[112] BLONDEL, *L'être et les êtres*, 48–49.

[113] Together with Fabro, we assume the notion—well explained here by Blondel—of *esse ut actus* or *actus essendi* as "emergent" act. The difference between the metaphysics of "intensive" *actus essendi* and the metaphysics of action is that the former (which we are assuming in this paper) considers *actus essendi* to be an intrinsic principle that mediates between *Ipsum Esse* and the "fact" of being (*esse in actu*).

desires beatitude. In the affirmation of *esse*, therefore, man has a certain anticipation or foretaste of God.[114] J.B. Lotz' point of departure, on the other hand, is the act of affirmation, of which he considers the conditions of possibility.[115] Focusing (like Blondel) on the *copula*, he deduces (like Maréchal) that each affirmation "anticipates" an absolute and unlimited "horizon," which encompasses all of the possible *ennunciati* allowed by the principle of non-contradiction.[116] In this way he hopes to overcome (in a process not unlike Hegel's *Aufhebung*) the critique of Kant and in this way "recover"—through a recapitulation of philosophical history—a position of Thomistic realism.[117] In contrast to Cajetan's position, and in harmony with metaphysics of "intensive" *actus essendi*, transcendental Thomism sees essence as a type of potency. Its function, however, is chiefly negative: it imposes a limit on *esse*, which otherwise would be free to expand infinitely so as to fill the entire "horizon." [118] This limitation produces a sort of "nostalgia" in the substance for the limitless *esse* that it is unable to reach, which impels it to "recover" its "lost" *esse* through *oper-*

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[114] This doctrine is found especially in J. Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique. Cahier V: le Thomisme devant la Philosophie critique*, Desclée, Paris 1959. For a concise summary on Maréchal, see F. Copleston, *History of Philosophy: Maine de Biran to Sartre*, vol. 9, Newman, Westminster (Maryland) 1974, 265–269. For a summary of his theory of knowledge, see W.R. Darós, "Lo a-priori en la teoría tomista del conocimiento según J. Maréchal", in *Pensamiento* 36 (1980), 401–423, especially 404–403.

[115] For an overview of Lotz' ontology, see A. Contat, "La quarta via di san Tommaso d'Aquino e le prove di Dio di sant'Anselmo di Aosta secondo le tre configurazioni dell'ente tomistico", in *Sant'Anselmo D'Aosta "Doctor Magnificus"*, ed. by C. Pandolfi and J. Villagrasa, IF Press, Rome 2011, 116–119; also A. Contat, "Il confronto con Heidegger nel tomismo contemporaneo", in *Alpha Omega* 14 (2011), 216–229.

[116] See Contat, "La quarta via di san Tommaso d'Aquino e le prove di Dio di sant'Anselmo di Aosta secondo le tre configurazioni dell'ente tomistico", 117–118: "Di conseguenza, la condizione ultima di possibilità di giudizio è l'anticipazione di un orizzonte senza il quale il finito non può manifestarsi alla coscienza, ma che non è finito in se stesso."

[117] This doctrine is exposed especially in J.B. Lotz, *Esperienza trascendentale*, ed. and trans. by M. Marassi, Vita e pensiero, Milan 1993.

[118] See *ibid.*, 104–105: "Però, questa espressione [*esse commune*] non va intesa nel senso di un concetto universale, ma come una *pienezza assoluta* od onnicomprensiva, che per se stessa non ammette aggiunta alcuna (*sine additione*) o non implica nulla di determinato." The key expression is *pienezza assoluta*: for Lotz, *esse commune* is not hindered by any sort of determination whatsoever. We will see below that Saint Thomas, at least, would disagree, for he holds that *esse commune* is, in fact, *always* determined by an essence; it is merely *considered* without *additione*.

ari.[119] The relationship among *actus essendi*, *essentia*, and *operari* is best described as dialectic—in the style of Hegel's thesis, antithesis, and synthesis—rather than one of composition and participation.[120]

3.1.3.4 The Metaphysics of Actus Essendi

Finally, the metaphysics of *esse* as "intensive" act—which is the one that we will adopt—recognizes that *actus essendi* is an intrinsic principle that is the source of all actuality in a substancem, containing that actuality virtually. Each substance "possesses" an *actus essendi* as its own, to a degree of intensity that is determined by the essence. Hence, essence is revealed as the receptive capacity or measure of *esse* in a substance. The *actus essendi* is dynamic and "fruitful": it has far more actuality than that required to make the essence "exist," and hence is able to communicate itself (indeed, it cannot help but do so). In so doing, it produces the various levels of actuality: substance, first of all, then accidents (especially "proper" accidents), and finally *operari*. Although essence imposes a limit and functions as a potency (on the "transcendental" level, as we will see) its role is chiefly a positive one: it *permits* the substance to "receive" its act of being (otherwise it could not be distinct from God). The tendency of the *actus essendi* to expand results in an impetus for the substance to fulfill itself in its operation (in this the metaphysics of "intensive" *actus essendi* is in agreement with the metaphysics of action); however, the final cause of this expansion is the *actus essendi* itself, not an ideal "horizon" of *esse*. Creatures

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[119] See CONTAT, "Il confronto con Heidegger …", 227-228.

[120] One cannot help but notice the structural similarity between transcendental Thomism and the various modern systems that employ dialectic: Kant's (pre-dialectic) system of categories, all of which entail a *positio*, a *negatio*, and synthesis between the two; Hegel's dynamic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis; and Heidegger's dynamic of *Sein*, which "withdraws as it discloses itself" in *Seiendes* to *Dasein*. We could say that Lotz' substance is a "thrown projection" just like *Dasein*: it is *actus essendi* thrown into *essentia* and must labor to recover the unreachable *esse*. It is also interesting that, like Kant's transcendental ideas and Heidegger's *Sein*, the fullness of *esse*—the "horizon"—is unreachable by operation, at least by operation alone. Of course, Lotz wishes to be fully Christian, and so he "baptizes" the "horizon of being," practically identifying it with *Ipsum Esse*. Regarding this similarity, see *ibid.*

are, so to speak, happy to remain the creatures they are and do not (or should not) seek to exceed the limits imposed by their essence.

As can be seen, each position emphasizes one of the three great metaphysical domains that arise from the three types of extrinsic causality: *esse*, *essentia*, and *operari*. The essentialist and classical Thomist positions both place the emphasis on *essentia*, and in so doing compromise both *esse* and *operari*. The metaphysics of action emphasizes *operari* at the expense of both *esse* and *essentia*. The metaphysics of intensive *actus essendi*, however, emphasizes *esse*, and in so doing can safeguard both *essentia* and *operari*. Just from this very brief survey of the history of the notion of *esse*, therefore, we can see that *esse* is the keystone of any metaphysical system. We will see, moreover, that it is the metaphysics of *esse* as intensive act that, it seems to me, best characterizes Thomas' own position regarding *actus essendi* and—more importantly—best explains substance as such, as well as its tendency to seek its own fulfillment.[121] In the remainder of this chapter, we will propose a *resolutio secundum rationis* of *ens* into its radical principles—*esse ut actus* and *essentia*, perform a *compositio* to see how *esse ut actus* is communicated to the various "expansions" of *esse* (substance, accident, operation), and show that the *esse ut actus* can be considered a kind of *quantitas virtualis* or *virtutis* that varies in intensity according to the ontological degree of the substance in question.

3.2 *Resolutio Secundum Rationem* of *Ens*

The *resolutio* of *ens* into its intrinsic principles being proposed requires three stages: first, a logical and semantic analysis that examines how the verb *to be* (εἰμί, *sum*) is used in making enunciations; second, a reduction of the relevant meanings to intrinsic principles that underly them (or, to put it another way, the ontological foun-

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[121] For an overview of how Thomas' metaphysics of *actus essendi* makes a coherent whole or "Gestalt," see J. Villagrasa, "La Gestalt metafisica di Tommaso d'Aquino secondo Cornelio Fabro", in *Alpha Omega* 14 (2011), 407–418.

dations of the results discovered by the logical analysis); and third a "radicalization" and "intensification" of these principles, so as to discover the ultimate, radical intrinsic causes (which we will discover to be *esse ut actus* and *essentia*). In performing the first two stages we will be following the masterful analysis done by Aristotle on τὸ ὄν in *Metaphysics* Δ, 7, with supporting passages in Books Γ, Z, and Θ. The third stage will follow the "intensification" of *esse* performed by Saint Thomas Aquinas, in a number of locations throughout his works.

3.2.1 The Fourfold Division of *Ens*

We begin our logical and semantic analysis with the famous passage from *Metaphysics* Γ, 2: "τὸ δὲ ὂν λέγεται μὲν πολλαχῶς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἓν καὶ μίαν τινὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐχ ὁμωνύμως."[122] As we did with *bonum*, we simply observe that *ens* is a most fundamental notion—indeed the most fundamental—and that it is grasped *in actu exercito* in every act of knowledge. It is clearly not known explicitly ("thematically" or, to use Scholastic terminology, *in actu signato*)—for such a thesis would be tantamount to ontologism—however, simple reflection reveals that the simplest, most incontrovertible fact that the intellect learns about a thing is that it simply *is*. At least logically (not yet ontologically), it is clear that the verb *to be* contains all other types of predication virtually; every declarative sentence could be reduced to the form "*S* is *P*."[123] It follows that the notion of *ens* (*ratio entis*) acts as a mediator, logically speaking, for every other notion; in other words, every other *ratio* must "add" something to *ens* (including *bonum*, as we saw in the previous chapter). Every predication is an explicit or implicit use of *to be*, but clearly not every predication has the same value: it is not the same thing to say "John is a man" as to say "John

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[122] *Metaphysics*, Γ, 2, 1003a33-24: "*Ens*, however, is said in many ways, but in reference to one and only nature, not as a [mere] homonym" (my translation).

[123] The English language is probably clearer in this regard than Latin and its derivatives, or even Aristotle's Greek, because of the frequent use of the so-called "present progressive" tense. What in French would be "Étienne dort," or in Italian "Stefano dorme," English would render "Stephen *is* sleeping."

is sleeping," or even "Fifi is a cat." Nevertheless, there clearly is something in common. An analogy of proportionality can be be made between "John is a man" and "Fifi is a cat" or between "John is sleeping" and "Fifi is sleeping;" and even between "Fifi is sleeping" and "Fifi is black in color." Aristotle implicitly makes these types of analogies when he gives the following description of τὸ ὄν:

> ὄντα λέγεται, τὰ δ᾽ ὅτι πάθη οὐσίας, τὰ δ᾽ ὅτι ὁδὸς εἰς οὐσίαν ἢ φθοραὶ ἢ στερήσεις ἢ ποιότητες ἢ ποιητικὰ ἢ γεννητικὰ οὐσίας ἢ τῶν πρὸς τὴν οὐσίαν λεγομένων, ἢ τούτων τινὸς ἀποφάσεις ἢ οὐσίας[124]

As Aristotle observes, every use of the verb *to be* is in some way related to what he calls οὐσία ("substance," in this context), referring to what Aquinas called *ens simpliciter*: the things that can be said to "be" without qualification, without a need for a substrate to sustain them: for example, rocks, trees, animals, and men. All other uses of "to be" imply a greater or lesser ontological "distance" from οὐσία, ranging from "zero" (οὐσία itself) to practically infinite (when one says that non-being is non-being). From an initial analogy of proportionality, therefore, Aristotle deduces an analogy of reference (what Cajetan would call an analogy of attribution): τὸ ὄν in its manifold meanings refers to *one* (πρὸς ἕν); that is, to οὐσία.[125]

In order to study the relation among the various meanings of τὸ ὄν in greater detail, it is necessary to turn to Aristotle's much more systematic analysis found in *Metaphysics* Δ, 7: the so-called fourfold division of τὸ ὄν.[126] Aristotle begins by noting that τὸ ὄν can be predicated either *per accidens* (κατὰ συμβεβηκός) or *per se*

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[124] *Metaphysics*, Γ, 2, 100ba8-10: "For some things are said to 'be' because they are substances; others because they are modifications of substance; others because they are a process towards substance, or destructions or privations or qualities of substance, or productive or generative of substance or of terms relating to substance, or negations of certain of these terms or of substance." (translation from *Metaphysics,* tr. H. Tredennick).

[125] It remains to be seen whether the analogy of reference is merely "extrinsic" (if *ens* is to be found only in οὐσία, the way "health" is found—strictly speaking—only in the animal) or whether it is "intrinsic" and hence entails a participation of more "distant" *entia* in οὐσία.

[126] The passage is found at *Metaphysics*, Δ, 7, 1017a7-1017b9. Also of note is F. Brentano, *Sui molteplici significati dell'essere secondo Aristotle*, ed. and trans. by G. Reale, Vita e Pensiero, Milan 1995, especially the chapters regarding τὸ ὄν as predicated according to the figures of the categories, pages 91–194.

(καθ᾽ αὑτό). As Thomas Aquinas notes in his commentary, by κατὰ συμβεβηκός, Aristotle does not mean the division into substance and accident (which, in any case, he categorizes as a *per se* predication further on).[127] Based on the examples he gives, we can see that Aristotle is referring to the "accident of predication": statements of fact that do not imply a necessary link between the subject and predicate. When, on the other hand, τὸ ὄν is predicated *per se*, the link is necessary.[128] Aristotle divides this type of predication into three:[129] it can signify what is indicated by the "figures of predication" (τὰ σχήματα τῆς κατηγορίας)—that is, the ten categories; it can signify truth or falsehood;[130] or it can signify act and potency.[131]

Since a science is necessary, certain, and universal knowledge of an object's causes and properties, it follows that τὸ ὄν predicated *per accidens* cannot be the object of any kind of science, least of all the First Science.[132] Moreover, Aristotle

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[127] See Thomas Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, ed. by R. Cathala and R.M. Spiazzi, Marietti, Turin 1971² (henceforth cited as *In Metaph.*), lib. 5, l. 9, n. 1 (Marietti n. 885): "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."

[128] For example, when I say, "The musician is building a house," the predication is *per accidens*, because it is not necessary in any way for the builder to be a musician; he just "happens to be" one. On the other hand, "The builder is building" is a *per se* predication, because one needs training—that is, be a builder—in order to build a house properly. Some statements are "mixed;" that is, there is a link of necessity only from a certain point of view: for example, if I say, "The musician is playing a piano sonata by Beethoven," there is nothing stopping the musician from playing instead a piano sonata by Mozart (hence in this respect the statement is *per accidens*), but only a musician can play a piano sonata properly (and hence in this latter respect the statement is *per se*). A statement can be part of a science as long as there is some necessity—as long as it is *per se* to some degree.

[129] Throughout this passage, Aristotle subtly switches between τὸ εἶναι and τὸ ἔστιν, in addition to one use of τὸ ὄν. This alteration shows that he is, linguistically speaking, analyzing the use of the conjugated verb εἰμί. He will eventually show that it can be reduced through analogy to οὐσία and ἐνέργεια.

[130] This is what we could call the "logical" use of the copula—the only meaning accepted, for example, by Kant. It reflects the use of the operation of composition or division. In this sense, "is" signifies a composition, and "is not," a division.

[131] What Aristotle means by this is that sometimes we predicate *to be* of things that are right now (for example, "The builder is building") and sometimes of things that could be in the future ("Hermes is in the block of marble.")—in other words, things that are *in actu* or *in potentia*.

[132] See *Metaphysics*, E, 2, 1026b1-3: ἐπεὶ δὴ πολλαχῶς λέγεται τὸ ὄν, πρῶτον περὶ τοῦ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς λεκτέον, ὅτι οὐδεμία ἐστὶ περὶ αὐτὸ θεωρία, "Precisely since τὸ ὄν is

argues that *ens* as true and *non-ens* as false (τὸ δὲ ὡς ἀληθὲς ὄν, καὶ μὴ ὂν ὡς ψεῦδος), which refers to something—namely, composition and division (σύνθεσις καὶ διαίρεσις)—that occurs in the intellect, is not a "proper" meaning of τὸ ὄν at all. We might say that truth and falsehood belong to the science of gnosiology or epistemology, not the First Science, which studies *ens* as such.[133]

3.2.2   Reduction to the Intrinsic Principles

3.2.2.1   Reduction of *Ens* to Substance

We are left, therefore, with *ens* as divided into the ten categories and as act and potency. We have already seen that Aristotle in Γ, 2, considers οὐσία as the most proper meaning of τὸ ὄν, with the other categories implying a greater or lesser "distance" from οὐσία. This doctrine is verifiable by simple reflection on sensible experience; for example, we never see colors, shapes, or sizes independently of some substrate, but we do see trees, animals, stones, and men—all of which exhibit properties such as color, shape, and size. Nevertheless, Aristotle provides a more rigorous justification in Z, 1.[134] He argues that the essential "properties" of οὐσία are its being τόδε τι (literally, "this what") and χωριστόν ("separately"): in other words, substance (οὐσία) is both a definite, determined thing and something that can stand by itself. It is "primary" precisely because none of the other categories can do so. Therefore, Aristotle argues, οὐσία enjoys a priority in every respect: "ὅμως δὲ

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said in many ways, it is first to be said about it [when it is predicated] *per accidens*, that in no way can there be speculation about it" (my translation).

[133] We might also use a slightly different strategy, which seems to have been followed by Saint Thomas: there is a type of truth that is intrinsic to *ens*, and in fact is coextensive with it, just like *bonum*. We could call it the intrinsic intelligibility of *ens*, the *verum* as a transcendental. Of course, the most proper meaning of "truth" is the "formal" kind, the *adaequatio* of the intellect to reality, and this is indeed the subject of epistemology. However, as we saw above, *verum* is founded on *ens* and in that sense reduces to it. See *De verit.* q. 1, a. 1, co.: "Illud autem quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum, et in quod conceptiones omnes resolvit, est ens."

[134] See *Metaphysics*, Z, 1, 1028a10–1028b8. These texts are not chosen at random from the *Metaphysics*; it seems clear that Aristotle himself connected them, because all of them— Γ, 2; Δ, 7; E, 2; and Z, 1—begin with a variation on "τὸ ὂν λέγεται πολλαχῶς."

πάντως ἡ οὐσία πρῶτον, καὶ λόγῳ καὶ γνώσει καὶ χρόνῳ." [135] It is first in "time" in the sense that it has an ontological priority, for, as we noted, only substance can exist separately (and of course, some accidents only appear some time after the substance has been generated). It is first in "notion" because the accidents are always predicated as inherent in a substance; that is, the logical structure of substance and accident follows the ontological. Finally, it is first in knowledge, because knowledge of the accident presupposes knowledge of the substance.[136]

3.2.2.2 Reduction of Potency to Act

Aristotle makes a similar reduction of potency to act in Book Θ. As with substance, act can be said to be prior to potency in three ways: in notion, in substance, and (sometimes) in time.[137] Aristotle argues that the notional priority is evident: potency is understood precisely because it *can be* act; in other words, potency is for the sake of act.[138] Aristotle does not explain explicitly why act is prior "in substance"—that is, ontologically—but we can deduce such a priority from what he says about its

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[135] *Metaphysics*, Z, 1, 1028a33: "But nevertheless, οὐσία is first in every way: in notion, in knowledge, and in time" (my translation).

[136] This doctrine is very important, because it signals a point of divergence between Aristotle and Thomas, on the one hand, and most of the philosophers since Duns Scotus, on the other. Thanks to their theory of intentional identity, Aristotle and Aquinas both assert that knowledge is first of the *whole*—however confused it may be—and only afterwards of the parts (accidents and so forth). An example illustrates: suppose I awaken in the middle of the night in the dark, and I decide to rise and walk over to my desk. Suppose that on the way, I trip over something on the floor (without injuring myself). At the moment of contact, I have no idea what the object is, but I do know immediately and infallibly that *something* has made me trip. Until I examine it and reflect on it, I know practically nothing about it except that it *is*—*ens*, as we saw, is the *primum cognitum*—and only gradually do I fill in the details: it is material, hard, mobile (I heard it slide a few feet after I tripped on it), inanimate (it did not scamper away), and so on. Although I only discover that it is a book—Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, in fact—after I reach down to feel the object, or turn on the light, I know the thing, the *whole* thing (however confusedly), from the beginning.

[137] See *Metaphysics*, Θ, 8, 1049b11–12: πάσης δὴ τῆς τοιαύτης προτέρα ἐστὶν ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ λόγῳ καὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ· χρόνῳ δ' ἔστι μὲν ὥς, ἔστι δὲ ὡς οὔ, "To every one [of the potencies mentioned above] such as these, act is prior both in notion and in substance; in time, however, it is sometimes, and sometimes it is not" (my translation).

[138] Using Aristotle's own example, "builder" signifies a potency, because it need not be actuated at all times. I know a man is a builder precisely because I know he *can in fact* build houses.

(partial) priority it time. Act is prior in time, in the sense that only a thing *in actu* can reduce a potency to act (in something else). Using Aristotle's own example, it takes a (different) full-grown plant to produce a seed; in this case, something *in actu* (the full-grown, fully developed plant) is chronologically prior to something *in potentia* (the seed). It takes an individual that has reached the fullness of the form allowable by its species (the full-grown plant), to produce a new individual (the seed).[139] As can be seen, this chronological priority is, in reality, an ontological one. On the other hand, in a given individual, it is potency that has the priority in time: returning to the example of a seed, the plant starts out as a seed, then germinates, develops, and finally becomes a fully grown plant, whereas in the beginning it is only a full-grown plant *in potentia*.

Aristotle does not discuss ἐνέργεια extensively; most of the relevant passages can be found in Book Θ, 6–8. He recognizes that ἐνέργεια implies an order to an end, because he employs the term ἐντελέχεια ("fulfillment") synonymously.[140] As we saw above, Aristotle practically equates actuality and existence (τὸ ὑπάρχειν), when taken with respect to the "thing" (τὸ πρᾶγμα). This identification is in the context of his description of act in Θ, 6, in which he never arrives at a definition,

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[139] Aristotle, perhaps because of his reaction against Plato, seems to resist speaking in terms of participation. However, he has stumbled upon an example of what Fabro calls "predicamental participation;" that is, the participation of an individual in its species. It should be noted that the form has the role of "measuring" the maximum extent of this fullness. Regarding participation present at least implicitly in Aristotle, see Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità*, 307–316, and Fabro, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy", 456: "However, one must bear in mind that Aristotle came to realize the inadequacy of the Platonic doctrine of participation only gradually, since he himself had adhered to it in his youthful dialogues of Platonic inspiration. The very titles of these dialogucs (*Eudemus*, *Symposion*, *Eroticus*, *Protreticus*, *Politicus*, *Sophistes*, etc.) seem to bear out this view. Moreover, traces of that doctrine can still be found in the *Organon* where he discusses the logical relation of universals, i.e., of individuals to species and of species to genus. From these latter there arose that important nucleus of the Thomistic doctrine of predicamental participation."

[140] See *Metaphysics*, Θ, 6, 1050a23: διὸ καὶ τοὔνομα ἐνέργεια λέγεται κατὰ τὸ ἔργον καὶ συντείνει πρὸς τὴν ἐντελέχειαν, "Therefore, the term ἐνέργεια is said according to [i.e, is derived from] τὸ ἔργον ['work'], and leads toward ἐντελέχεια ['fulfillment']" (my translation). As can be seen, ἐντελέχεια, derived from τὸ τέλος, has the connotation of "finished product" or "perfection."

Active Principle	Potential Principle
Existence (τὸ ὑπάρχειν)	Thing (τὸ πρᾶγμα)
Something actually building	Something that can build
Something awake	Something asleep
Something that sees	Something with eyes shut
Motion (κίνησις)	Potency (δύναμις)
Substance (οὐσία)	Particular matter (τις ὕλη)

Table 3.1: The analogy of act in *Metaphysics* Θ, 6

but rather makes an analogy of proportionality with various examples (Table 3.1).[141] Aristotle is making a comparison of four general "species" of compositions: existence with "thing" (which from the context is understood as the concrete individual); operation with substance; operation with potency; and form with matter. The first "species" seems to be the "root" of all the others. Nevertheless, Aristotle is not perfectly clear on this point, and he does not investigate the matter much further.

3.2.2.3 Reduction of οὐσία to τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι

Having established that *ens* can be reduced to substance (οὐσία) and act (ἐνέργεια), Aristotle turns his attention to the precise meaning of οὐσία: this is the central topic of Book Z. He must first refute two proposals made by previous philosphers: substance as universal (τὸ καθόλου) and as substrate (τὸ ὑποκείμενον).[142] The former refers to Plato, who—as we saw—considered the intelligible, separate ideas (which function as genera or universals for particular, sensible things) to be the primary *locus* of reality. The latter, we might say, brings together the speculations of the Physicists, who sought the underlying ἀρχή of all reality (water, air, ἄπειρον, fire, some combination of these, and so on), which, in Aristotelian terms, means attempting to explain reality only in terms of material causes. Aristotle makes use of the characteristics of substance that he has discovered in Z, 1—τόδε τι and

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[141] See *Metaphysics*, Θ, 6, 1048a25–1048b35.
[142] See *ibid.*, Z, 3, 1028b33–35.

χωριστόν—as his criteria. Although Aristotle does not dwell on this fact, the universal fails the test, because although (according to Plato) it is separate (χωριστόν), it is abstract, not τόδε τι.[143] The substrate (τὸ ὑποκείμενον) fails as well, because it is insufficient: he says, "λέγω δ᾽ ὕλην ἣ καθ᾽ αὑτὴν μήτε τὶ μήτε ποσὸν μήτε ἄλλο μηδὲν λέγεται οἷς ὥρισται τὸ ὄν." [144] In this context, "matter" (ὕλη) is synonymous with "substrate," but although substrate in a way is "separate" (it is not an accident that inheres in something else), it is also not a "what"—not τόδε τι, not definite. It can only be definite if there is a form to define it. As Aristotle puts it, "ἐκ μὲν οὖν τούτων θεωροῦσι συμβαίνει οὐσίαν εἶναι τὴν ὕλην: ἀδύνατον δέ: καὶ γὰρ τὸ χωριστὸν καὶ τὸ τόδε τι ὑπάρχειν δοκεῖ μάλιστα τῇ οὐσίᾳ." [145]

Substance, therefore, can be identified neither with the Platonic καθόλου (at least not primarily), nor with the Physicists' ὑποκείμενον. Aristotle proposes his own solution: the curious phrase τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι—sometimes shortened to τί ἐστι—which literally could be translated "the being of what it is." Aristotle uses this because, if οὐσία is both τόδε τι and χωριστόν, then it must be predicable καθ᾽ αὑτό ("according to itself," or *per se*).[146] No mere attribute (such as "musical") will do, but only that which makes a thing what it is; as Aristotle succinctly puts it, τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι is "ὃ ἄρα κατὰ σαυτόν" ("what [you are] according to yourself"), or "what you are

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[143] As we saw above, Aristotle rejected the separateness of the ideas anyhow; form (in this case εἶδος, just like Plato's "idea") is always the form *of a substance*. See *Metaphysics*, Z, 3, 1029a30–33.

[144] *Ibid.*, Z, 3, 1029a20: "But by 'matter' I mean what is *per se* neither a 'what,' nor a 'how much,' nor is anything else meant by which *ens* is defined" (my translation).

[145] *Ibid.*, Z, 3, 1029a28–29: "Therefore, from this reasoning, it follows that substance is matter; however, this is impossible. For both 'separately' and 'this what' are considered especially proper to substance" (my translation).

[146] See *ibid.*, Z, 3, 1029b14-15: ἐστὶ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι ἑκάστου ὃ λέγεται καθ᾽ αὑτό. οὐ γὰρ ἐστι τὸ σοὶ εἶναι τὸ μουσικῷ εἶναι: οὐ γὰρ κατὰ σαυτὸν εἶ μουσικός, "The essence [τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι] of each is what is said according to itself [*per se*]. Being 'musical' is not being 'you': for you are not musical according to yourself [*per te*]" (my translation). In the translation, the parallel between τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι and the other uses of the infinitive τὸ εἶναι—τὸ σοὶ εἶναι and τὸ μουσικῷ εἶναι—is lost. The term *per se* (καθ᾽ αὑτό, and its variant for the second person, κατὰ σαυτόν) used here would seem to refer to what is commonly called *primo modo per se*, in which the predicate is contained analytically in the subject. See Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Posteriorum*, vol. 1/2, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Vrin, Paris 1989² (henceforth cited as *Super Post. An.*), I, 10.

inasmuch as you are *you*."[147] After eliminating the other candidates and seeing that nothing else makes a substance a substance, we conclude that οὐσία is best described as τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι. Aristotle justifies his choice positively in Z, 17.[148] He notes that in order to be able to ask *why* something is the way it is (seek its causes), we must first verify the fact, and then ask the question "Why?" To use Aristotle's own example, we first observe a musical man, and then ask, "Why is he musical?" In our case, the "fact" is something that is (τὸ ὄν); by analogy, the question is, "Why is this *ens* what it is?" What particularly interests Aristotle is the unity of compounds: to use his own example, why do bricks and stones make a house? Clearly the house cannot be reduced to its components, for if they were not arranged in a very particular way, they would be something else (perhaps an office building or a formless mass). In a way, it is the house itself (more precisely, the accidental form of the house) that makes these things a house. In a similar way, what makes the various components of *ens*—all of its accidents and operations—a unique substance (οὐσία)? Aristotle argues that the answer can only be τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (what it is simply because it is), which must, therefore, be identifiable with οὐσία.[149]

3.2.2.4 Conclusions Regarding οὐσία and ἐνέργεια

The final result of Aristotle's investigation into the intrinsic causes of τὸ ὄν is that it can be reduced to οὐσία (specified as τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι) and ἐνέργεια, or better said, to substance in act, which amounts to things (πράγματα) that exist (ὑπάρχοντα). It is important to note that he is not considering *ens* primarily as a *possible* being—as many late Medieval philosophers, such as Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus, did—but *ens in actu*. By saying that οὐσία is τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, he shows that τὸ εἶναι is central to the very notion of substance. Aristotle leaves many questions open: in particular, the relationship between the two principles. As we saw, Boethius and

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[147] *Metaphysics*, Z, 3, 1029b16.

[148] See *ibid.*, Z, 17, 1041a5–1041b31.

[149] This is a powerful argument against the nominalism of Ockham, Locke, and Hume: a substance (even an artificial substance) cannot be reduced to its components.

Averroes tended to identify οὐσία and ἐνέργεια, thus paving the way for the essentialism of Henry of Ghent, Scotus, and Suárez, whereas Avicenna tended to separate them. Saint Thomas Aquinas proposed a unique solution that interpreted ἐνέργεια (understood as τὸ εἶναι or *esse ut actus*) and οὐσία as a true and radical act-and-potency pair; this intensification and radicalization of the principles discovered by Aristotle are the topic of the next section.

3.2.3   Intensification of the Principles

Although Aristotle reduces τὸ ὄν to οὐσία and ἐνέργεια, the most radical composition of act and potency that he discusses is that of substantial form and prime matter. Therefore, many interpreters—in particular the Franciscan school, including Saint Bonaventure—posited a universal hylomorphism of all creatures.[150] Thomas Aquinas has at least two reasons for rejecting this view: first of all, angels are beings without bodies, and so attributing to them a "subtle" matter is incongruous. Second, the matter-form distinction is sufficient to account for multiple individuals in a single species; however, it is incapable of accounting for different ontological "grades," especially the most evident difference, that between non-rational creatures and man.[151]

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[150] Authors who adhere to this doctrine generally consider Augustine to be their inspiration. Other important proponents include Solomon Ibn Gabirol (Avicebron), Dominic Gundisalvi, Thomas of York, and the *Summa philosophiae* (apparently falsely) attributed to Robert Grosseteste. See P.V. Spade, "Binarium Famosissimum", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall, 2008), ed. by E.N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/binarium/ [28-4-2014].

[151] In order to prove that angels are incorporeal, he shows first that any substance possessing an intellect—which is capable of knowing things in an immaterial way—must itself be immaterial. If there is a creature intermediate (so to speak) between God an man, then it must be incorporeal and hence without matter. See *S.Th.* I, q. 50, a. 1, co., and a. 2, as well as Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica …*, 208. For a discussion of the ontological grades that give rise to this *resolutio*, see Izquierdo, "La vita che si apre all'agire", 209–212; also Lucas Lucas, *El hombre espíritu encarnado*, 38–43.

We could also add a third, theological reason for the insufficiency the matter-form composition: it does a poor job of explaining man's intermediate eschatology. How can a man be the same man when his body has been dissolved in death? Unless his soul—now a pure form, albeit *in potentia* toward a body—is *this* essence actuated by *this actus essendi*, it would be impossible to distinguish from other souls before the resurrection of the body.

3.2.3.1 Arguments Used to Demonstrate the Real Composition

Aquinas makes use of three arguments to prove that there is a composition between *essentia* and *actus essendi* that is more radical than the matter-form composition.[152] The first one, inspired by Avicenna and found only in his earlier works, most notably his *De ente et essentia*, argues from the *intellectus essentia*.[153] It is evident, he argues, that whatever belongs to something, but is not contained in thing's *quidditas*, must be composed with it (for example, whiteness with respect to "cat"), but *esse* is never contained in a *quidditas*. This fact can be proved by the example of the Phoenix, whose quiddity is understandable, but which does not exist.[154] This argument, however, is notably absent from later works such as the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *Summa theologiae*, indicating a possible maturation in Thomas' thought. The *intellectus essentia* argument is in line with the correlation that Thomas finds between the *esse–essentia* composition and the two operations of the intellect:

> [D]uplex est operatio intellectus. Una, quae dicitur intelligentia indivisi-
> bilium, qua cognoscit de unoquoque, quid est. Alia vero, qua composition et

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[152] For a discussion of arguments in favor of the real composition, see Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica …*, 211-215, and J.F. Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 10, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, 1984, 133–161. An excellent analysis of the relevant texts can be found in de Finance, *Être et agir …*, 94-107.

[153] It can also be found in his commentary on the *Sentences*. While listing ways to demonstrate the existence of God, he makes explicit reference to Avicenna: "ita tamen quod ipsarum rerum naturae non sunt hoc ipsum esse quod habent: alias esse esset de intellectu cujuslibet quidditatis, quod falsum est, cum quidditas cujuslibet rei possit intelligi esse non intelligendo de ea an sit. […] haec est via Avicennae" (Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Parisiensis*, ed. by P. Mandonnet and M.F. Moos, vol. 1–4, P. Lethielleux, Paris 1929–1929–1956–1947 [henceforth cited as *Super Sent.*], lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, co.).

[154] Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, vol. 43, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Editori di San Tommaso, Rome 1976, 315–381, cap. 3: "Quicquid enim non est de intellectu essentiae vel quiditatis, hoc est adveniens extra et faciens compositionem cum essentia, quia nulla essentia sine his, quae sunt partes essentiae, intelligi potest. Omnis autem essentia vel quiditas potest intelligi sine hoc quod aliquid intelligatur de esse suo; possum enim intelligere quid est homo vel Phoenix et tamen ignorare an esse habeat in rerum natura. Ergo patet quod esse est aliud ab essentia vel quiditate, nisi forte sit aliqua res, cuius quiditas sit ipsum suum esse." For a discussion of the real distinction in *De ente*, see Chapter V of Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes I*, 107–132. For a general overview of *De ente*, see C. Giorgini, "Ente ed essenza in un saggio giovanile di Tommaso d'Aquino", in *Sapienza* 50 (1997), 129–146, especially, as regards our topic, 138–146.

dividit, scilicet enuntiationem affirmativam vel negativam formando. Et hae quidem duae operationes duobus, quae sunt in rebus, respondent. Prima quidem operatio respicit ipsam naturam rei. […] Secunda vero operatio respicit ipsum esse rei.[155]

Perhaps Thomas realized that it can never be more than a probable argument, because, speaking rigorously, the Phoenix (or any other *ens rationis*) is not an essence, but merely a figment. Hence, although it is true that *esse* is not included in the *ratio* of a thing, still there is no such thing as an essence devoid of *esse*.[156]

More rigorous and "metaphysical" is an argument that starts with the fact that God, who is Pure and Limitless Act, hence utterly simple, cannot have any composition whatsoever. Hence—like the *albedo subsistens*, if there were any—there can only be one *Esse Subsistens* whose *esse* is identical with his *essentia* (because any multiplicity would entail a potency). It follows that any other substance—one really distinct from *Esse Subsistens*—must be composed of a really distinct *esse* and *essentia*:

Ostensum est autem supra,[157] cum de divina simplicitate ageretur, quod Deus est ipsum esse per se subsistens. Et iterum ostensum est quod esse subsistens non potest esse nisi unum, sicut si albedo esset subsistens, non posset esse nisi una, cum albedines multiplicentur secundum recipientia. *Relinquitur ergo quod omnia alia a Deo non sint suum esse, sed participant esse.* Necesse est igitur omnia quae diversificantur secundum diversam participationem essendi, ut sint perfectius vel minus perfecte, causari ab uno primo ente, quod perfectissime est. Unde et Plato dixit quod necesse est ante omnem multitudinem ponere unitatem.[158]

Thomas argues, it should be noted, that since only God is *esse per essentiam*, it follows that all creatures *participant esse* (possess *esse per participationem*): whatever

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[155] *In Boeth. De Trin.* pars 3, q. 5 a. 3 co.

[156] Hence, although the *ratio* of this or that essence does not contain *esse*, the *ratio ipsae essentiae* (the notion of essence itself)—if I may use that term—does.

[157] The reference is to *S.Th.* I, q. 3, a. 4, which asks whether *essentia* and *esse* are the same in God. Thomas argues that anything outside the essence of a thing must come either from itself (as in the case of a *proprium*) or from outside itself. If its *esse* is distinct from its essence, the *esse*, therefore, must come from outside itself. This case cannot apply to God, who is First Cause. The argument is not circular, because it depends on the proofs for the existence of God (*ibid.*, I, q. 2, a. 3).

[158] *Ibid.*, I, q. 44, a. 1, co. (emphasis added).

is the ultimate cause of a perfection must possess it as a *proprium* and *maxime*, and all others receive it by participation.[159] Thomas renders this point more explicit in his *Compendium theologiae*: "Omne quod habet aliquid per participationem, reducitur in id quod habet illud per essentiam, sicut in principium et causam; sicut ferrum ignitum participat igneitatem ab eo quod est ignis per essentiam suam."[160]

The argument just described is, in a way, somewhat unsatisfying for our investigation because in reality it works *in via iudicii*, assuming that we have already worked out the extrinsic causes, and indicating the foundation *propter quid*. It would be desirable, therefore, to have a rigorous demonstration *in via inventionis* (or *quia*) that establishes the fact of the composition from less radical principles.

Beginning, therefore, at the point where Aristotle left off, we note that substance, or οὐσία—which in its most proper sense is the same as essence in act (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι)—has its being thanks to an original ontological act (ἐνέργεια) that we can call *esse* (τὸ εἶναι or τὸ ὑπάρχειν)—more precisely *actus essendi* or *esse ut actus*. The *entia* that we encounter in ordinary experience without a doubt are limited, if only because they are multiple and (for the substances we can know immediately by abstraction) material. The very notion of act, however, makes it clear that act, inasmuch as it is act, cannot be limited except by a distinct potency: *Actus non limitatur nisi per potentiam subiectivam realiter distinctam*. Thomas never formulates this axiom explicitly, but a number of texts suggest it (all of which show profound the influence of the Dionysian notion of the "generosity" and "fruitfulness" of the Supreme Cause). Perhaps the best examples can be found in texts in which Thomas

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[159] See *S.Th.* I, q. 44, a. 1, co.: "Si enim aliquid invenitur in aliquo per participationem, necesse est quod causetur in ipso ab eo cui essentialiter convenit; sicut ferrum fit ignitum ab igne." Of course, *esse* is unique among perfections in that *only* the Creator possesses it as a *proprium* and *only* he can communicate it; hence there are no "intermediate" beings that transmit their *esse* to the next rank, as Plotinus posited. "Transcendental" and "perfect" perfections such as goodness and life are similar, but that is because they convertible with and follow from *esse*.

[160] Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae seu Brevis compilatio theologiae ad fratrem Raynaldum*, vol. 42, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Editori di San Tommaso, Rome 1979, 5–205 (henceforth cited as *Compendium*), I, cap. 68.

demonstrates the infinity of God.[161] For instance, in the *Summa contra gentiles* he argues that if there were an *albedo subsistens*, it would be unique and would lack none of the *virtus* of whiteness: "Actus igitur in nullo existens nullo terminatur: puta, si albedo esset per se existens, perfectio albedinis in ea non terminaretur, quominus haberet quicquid de perfectione albedinis haberi potest."[162] An act that "exists" in nothing (that is not "received" by something) is not "terminated" (limited) either. In the *Summa theologiae*, he is even more explicit: "Cum igitur esse divinum non sit esse receptum in aliquo, sed ipse sit suum esse subsistens, ut supra ostensum est; manifestum est quod ipse Deus sit infinitus et perfectus."[163] Unless the *esse* is received in something, says Thomas, it is infinite. This potential principle—which cannot be the matter, because there are substances without it—must be really distinct; we can call it *essentia*, or even *potentia essendi*.

3.2.3.2   Real Composition as Participation in *Ipsum Esse*

Using the Fourth Way for demonstrating the existence of God,[164] we can go a step further. The *a posteriori* fact that Thomas uses to begin his demonstration is the degrees that are found in reality: "Invenitur enim in rebus aliquid magis et minus bonum, et verum, et nobile, et sic de aliis huiusmodi."[165] Perhaps the most puzzling affirmation is that what is *magis et minus* should always be in reference to a *maxime*: "Sed magis et minus dicuntur de diversis secundum quod appropinquant diversimode ad aliquid quod maxime est."[166] Clearly heat can be greater or lesser in

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[161] For a complete survey of the texts that contain this principle implicitly, see J.F. WIPPEL, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II*, vol. 47, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, 2007, Chapter V, "Thomas Aquinas and the Axiom that Unreceived Act Is Unlimited", 123–151. See also DE FINANCE, *Être et agir …*, 51-56. For a contrary opinion, see J.-D. ROBERT, "Le principe : «Actus non limitatur nisi per potentiam subjectivam realiter distinctam»", in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 47 (1949), 44–70.

[162] *Contra Gent.* I, cap. 43, n. 5 (Marietti n. 360).

[163] *S.Th.* I, q. 7, a. 1, co.

[164] See *ibid.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co.

[165] *Ibid.*

[166] *Ibid.* For a discussion of this problem, see V. DE COUESNONGLE, "Mesure et causalité dans la 'quarta via' ", in *Revue thomiste* 58 (1958), 55–75, 244–284. De Couesnongle

intensity, but there is no such thing as a "maximum temperature." It is important to keep in mind that the perfections mentioned—*bonum*, *verum*, and *nobile*—as should be clear by now, are *transcendentia*, and hence coextensive with and consequent to *ens*. Therefore, the variations in goodness, truth, and nobility that we encounter are not limited to "predicamental" differences (differences among the categories of the same substance, or between individuals of the same species) but apply as well to "transcendental" differences (among species). Certain classes of creatures are simply more perfect thanks to the type of creature they are: angels are more perfect than men, who are more perfect than non-rational animals, which are more perfect than plants, which are more perfect than inanimate objects. This differential in perfection turns out to be based on *esse* (based on the type of *resolutio* we did above with *bonum*).

From what we saw above, this *esse* is "received" by a potential principle called *essentia*; hence *esse* can vary in intensity, in accord with the "measure" provided for it by the essence that receives it. *Esse*, or *esse ut actus*, however, is a unique perfection, because it provides not an *actus secundus* that inheres in a substance, but a radical act that makes the substance "be" in absolute terms. The *subiectum* does not produce *esse* (as it would a *proprium*); hence, the *esse* must come from something that is *esse per essentiam*, which—thanks to the inherent unlimitedness of act—possesses that perfection *maxime*. That *esse per essentiam* is, of course, *Ipsum Esse*. It follows from this reflection that the *esse* received by substances at differ-

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holds that the "measure" of the degrees of *ens* is insufficient as a proof for the existence of God: "Concluons la première partie de ce travail. La *quarta via* parle de connaissance de degrés par référence à un maximum. Cette présentation, croyons-nous, n'annonce pas, dans l'esprit de celui qui a rédigé cette preuve, une interprétation par la théorie de la mesure, celle-ci suffisant pour assurer la conclusion" (p. 75). Instead, he argues, Thomas must be implicitly making recourse to a causal argument: "Pour saint Thomas, le passage des degrés au Maximum, l'affirmation de l'existence de Dieu comme Maximum, se fait à la lumière de la métaphysique de l'être : le maximum est affirmé comme cause de l'existence des degrés" (p. 284). We will see below what seems to me a more convincing way to understand this principle: the *maximum* in a genus is whatever possesses the perfection in question *proprie et per se*. The other members all possess it by participation in the first one, as Thomas' analogy with the fire (the *maxime calidum*) expresses perfectly.

ent levels of intensity (*magis et minus*) indicates a participation of the substance in *Ipsum Esse*: he communicates his *esse per essentiam* to his creatures, who possess *esse per participationem*. In other words, *Ipsum Esse* creates by communicating his *esse* and "co-creates" the essence at the same time, so as to provide for it a measure and receptive capacity.

3.2.3.3 Intensification of *Esse* and *Essentia* as Act and Potency

The final stage in the *resolutio* is to show that the principles discovered—*actus essendi* and *essentia*—are a true act-and-potency pair, indeed the most radical one possible. It should be clear by now that every perfection found in a substance can be reduced to a type of *esse*: the redness, sweetness, size, figure, and even the substance of an apple are such above all simply because they *are*; all of these are *ens*. To use terminology adopted by C. Fabro, we can characterize this reduction as "formal," because it stems from the notions of perfection and *ens*.[167] The perfections participate in *esse*, certainly, but the participation is "static," accessible by making an analogy of proportionality; in other words, each perfection has, so to speak, its own parcel of *esse*. However, as we have seen, potency cannot be reduced to act except by something in act. By analogy to the way *esse per participationem* receives its *esse* from *esse per essentiam*, the individual perfections internal to a substance must flow from a single source. This source, the *actus essendi* or *esse ut actus*, is therefore an "original," radical act. Moreover, being the source of all perfections, it is act with respect to the entire substance, which must be regarded, from this point of view, as a radical *potentia essendi*. The *actus essendi* communicates itself to the perfections, and hence effects a "dynamic" participation. Fabro calls the reduction

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[167] We used this type of reasoning to resolve *bonum* into *esse* above.

of individual perfections to the *actus essendi* a "real" reduction, which brings the Aristotelian notions of act and potency to their theoretical limits.[168]

A good source for seeing this "real reduction" is Aquinas' famous passage from *De potentia* q. 7, in which he shows that he is well aware of his contribution to Metaphysics:

> [H]oc quod dico esse est inter omnia perfectissimum: quod ex hoc patet quia actus est semper perfectio[r] potentia. Quaelibet autem forma signata non intelligitur in actu nisi per hoc quod esse ponitur. Nam humanitas vel igneitas potest considerari ut in potentia materiae existens, vel ut in virtute agentis, aut etiam ut in intellectu: sed hoc quod habet esse, efficitur actu existens. Unde patet quod hoc quod dico esse est actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum. Nec intelligendum est, quod ei quod dico esse, aliquid addatur quod sit eo formalius, ipsum determinans, sicut actus potentiam: esse enim quod huiusmodi est, est aliud secundum essentiam ab eo cui additur determinandum. [169]

Quaestio 7 has to do with whether God's substance or essence is the same as his *esse*, which Aquinas naturally answers in the affirmative. The ninth objection attempts to refute this claim by saying that *esse*, like prime matter, is maximally determinable, and hence very imperfect, because it can be determined by all of its proper predicaments.[170] Therefore, the reasoning goes, *esse* should not be ascribed to God.[171] Thomas answers that, on the contrary, *esse* (or "hoc quod dico esse") is the most

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[168] For Fabro's notions of "formal" and "real" reduction, see C. FABRO, "La problematica dello 'esse' tomistico", in ID., *Tomismo e pensiero moderno*, Pontificia Università Lateranense, Roma 1969, 108-109, and FABRO, *Partecipazione e causalità*, 186-187.

[169] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, ed. by P.M. PESSION, vol. 2, Marietti, Turin 1965[10] (henceforth cited as *De pot.*), q. 7, a. 2 ad 9. The edition I used has *semper perfectio potentia*, but it only makes grammatical (and philosophical) sense if *perfectio* is edited to *perfectior*. This is, in any case, the same expression used in q. 1, a. 1, arg. 4: "habitus est perfectior potentia"—which is a special case of the principle in question, applied to operative potencies and their dispositions.

[170] In other words, using the language from *De veritate*, *esse*, considered in general, can be "contracted" into any of the ten categories. We will discuss *contractio* in detail in section 3.3.2.

[171] See *De pot.* q. 7, a. 2 ad 9: "Sed esse est imperfectissimum, sicut prima materia: sicut enim materia prima determinatur per omnes formas, ita esse, cum sit imperfectissimum, determinari habet per omncreatedia propria praedicamenta." The objection sounds strange (if God has no *esse*, it seems that he would not exist), but Thomas probably has in mind the metaphysical systems of a Platonic stripe that place the priority on the One or the Good, which usually hold that God is "beyond" *esse*.

perfect of all perfections ("inter omnia perfectissimum"). He justifies this reduction using a method similar to Aristotle's reduction of accident to substance and potency to act (as we saw in section 3.2.2.3 above), establishing its noetic and ontological priority.[172] Indeed, Thomas' reasoning presupposes Aristotle' reductions, for "patet quia actus est semper perfectior potentia." *Esse* is noetically prior because "Quaelibet autem forma signata non intelligitur in actu nisi per hoc quod esse ponitur": any form discovered to be *in actu* presupposes *esse*, for it cannot exist unless it has *esse*. The noetical priority is founded on an ontological priority: "Unde patet quod hoc quod dico esse est actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum." What Thomas calls *esse* is much more than the simple fact of existence, but the root and source of all perfections. It is not a potential principle that can be determined by an ulterior act, but rather an act that is determined by potency.[173] This potency, of course, is the limiting, measuring principle that we call essence. If the *actus essendi* is truly an act, and the ultimate act, then it must truly communicate act: as Thomas says, in the context demonstrating that a body can be active,

> Secundum enim quod participatur aliquid, secundum hoc est necessarium quod participetur id quod est proprium ei, sicut quantum participatur de lumine, tantum participatur de ratione visibilis. Agere autem, quod nihil est aliud quam facere aliquid actu, est per se proprium actus, inquantum est actus, unde et omne agens agit sibi simile.[174]

Things communicate whatever it is proper to them (as fire communicates heat), but proper to any action is act; hence, it must communicate act. (Thus Thomas justifies the maxim *omne agens agit sibi simile*.) This reasoning applies to any act, but especially to the act of acts. We have, then, at last achieved the desired *reductio ad unum*

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[172] Why no chronological priority? Perhaps because he felt that Aristotle dealt with it sufficiently with respect to all act, or more likely because in creation there is never a "temporal" priority as such: the essence is co-created together with the *actus essendi*.

[173] See *De pot.* q. 7, a. 2 ad 9: "Unde non sic determinatur esse per aliud sicut potentia per actum, sed magis sicut actus per potentiam."

[174] *S.Th.* I, q. 115, a. 1, co.

of *ens* to its most formal intrinsic principle: the *actus essendi*, or as we will call it whenever we need to distinguish it from other perfections, *esse ut actus*.[175]

3.3 *Compositio* of *Ens*

3.3.1 God as Efficient, Exemplary, and Final Cause of all *Entia*

With the discovery of *actus essendi* and *essentia* as the original act and potency, the *resolutio* of *ens* to its intrinsic principle is complete. The next stage is to begin to investigate how the *actus essendi* communicates itself and "expands" into the *suppositum*'s various levels of actuality (*esse in actu*). To do this, we begin with God, who is *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. As can be discovered by applying the method of *resolutio secundum rem* (the analysis of extrinsic causes),[176] Ipsum Esse is *esse*—which we found in our *resolutio secundum rationem* of *bonum* and *ens* to be the fullness and foundation of act—without any limitation or "measurement" whatsoever, hence pure and infinite act. He possesses *esse* (with the caveat that it is better to say that he *is* his own *esse*) *proprie et per se*. He is, however, the only one who can claim that privilege, because, as we saw, in every other being the *actus essendi* is ontologically prior to and really distinct from the *essentia* that receives it and is co-created with it. When God, who is *esse per essentiam*, creates something, he produces an *actus essendi* in his creature, hence giving it its *esse per participationem*, as we saw:

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[175] For more on this principle, see also *Contra Gent.* II, cap. 54. This is, incidentally, the only place in the entire *Corpus Thomisticum* that contains the phrase *esse ut actus*: "Deinde quia ad ipsam etiam formam comparatur ipsum esse ut actus" (no. 5 [Marietti n. 1291]).

[176] Thomas' method of *resolutio secundum rem* follows a path similar to the one described in this paper for *resolutio secundum rationem*: a phase that follows Aristotle's analysis of extrinsic causes (chiefly the "efficient" and "final" causes), and then—with the help of the extrinsic "exemplary" cause borrowed from Plato through Neoplatonism—a radicalization of those causes so as to reach the ultimate extrinsic cause, which is *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. The most concise expression of this *resolutio* is found in the demonstrations of the existence of God, to be found in *S.Th.* I, q. 2, a. 3, and *Contra Gent.* I, cap. 13. For a good overview of *resolutio secundum rem*, see J. Mitchell, "*Resolutio secundum rem*, the Dionysian *triplex via* and Thomistic Philosophical Theology", in *Proceedings Metaphysics 2009*, 398–406.

"Creare autem est dare esse rei creatae." [177] This aspect of the act of creation, which we could call "production," is evidently an efficient or agent cause. However, it also entails, on the creature's part, imitation and participation in the divine *Esse*.

In order to create a creature distinct from himself, God co-creates an essence that can receive the act of being, using his own divine essence—which with respect to the creature created is termed a "divine idea"—as the "model." [178] In this way, God is the exemplary cause of his creatures in two respects: as the *esse per essentiam* that produces *esse* in his creatures, and as the divine idea that is the model for their essences. As we saw in our *resolutio* of *bonum*, *esse* is at the foundation of perfection, which in turns founds *bonum*. Although not every perfection in a creature causes a corresponding desire in another creature, since God is the exemplar of *every* perfection, because he is *Ipsum Esse*, it follows that God is the also the universal *final* cause for all of his creatures.[179] All creatures seek their perfection and fulfillment in him, to the degree that their essence permits it.[180] God is, therefore, simultaneously the efficient, exemplary, and final cause of all things: *Ipsum Esse*, *Summum Verum*, and *Summum Bonum*.[181] We must stress that although there are

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[177] Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, ed. by R. Cai, Marietti, Turin 1972[6] (henceforth cited as *Super Io.*), cap. 1, lc. 5, n. 133.

[178] For a discussion of the divine ideas, see *S.Th.* I, q. 15. Thus, Plato's doctrine of ideas finds its fulfillment in Thomas. With respect to the creature, God's essence is a divine idea, but in reality, the idea is identical with God's essence. "Essentialist" philosophers such as Henry of Ghent tended to see the divine ideas as being quasi-independent even before they received the *respectus* or *modus* of existence. See Porro, "Henry of Ghent", 7.

[179] This reasoning is essentially that of the *quinta via*. See *S.Th.* I, q. 2, a. 3, co. "Ea autem quae non habent cognitionem, non tendunt in finem nisi directa ab aliquo cognoscente et intelligente, sicut sagitta a sagittante. Ergo est aliquid intelligens, a quo omnes res naturales ordinantur ad finem, et hoc dicimus Deum." Evidently, *a fortiori*, those creatures that *are* intelligent also have God as their end.

[180] It is difficult, therefore, to imagine the creation of a spiritual creature— whose crowning glory is the exercise of its intellectual power to become *quodammodo omnia*—that does not desire the Beatific Vision of its Creator as its ultimate end. The hypothesis of "pure nature," therefore, seems difficult to maintain. Our reflection does not deny either the gratuity of grace (or, for that matter, the gratuity of creation) or its necessity for reaching glory. In fact, the doctrine of intensive *esse* makes it clearer: the *actus essendi*, on its own, simply does not have the *virtus* to reach that end. We will take this topic up briefly in section 5.2.4, below.

[181] The very structure of the *Summa theologiae*, and even of the *prima pars* reflects the *exitus* from God and the *reditus* of creatures to him. Thomas deals with both the *exitus* and

three kinds of *causality*, they constitute a single act of *creation*. Properly speaking, therefore, only one perfection (the *actus essendi*) is communicated immediately to the creature; that the *esse per participationem* imitates God's *esse per essentiam* is a consequence of its being composed with *essentia* and being ordered to God's glory and its own fulfillment.[182]

3.3.2 The *Diremtion* and *Contractio* of *Esse*

We note immediately that when God creates something—even the most perfect of the angels—the creature must in a certain sense be internally divided, because (according to the argument by Thomas presented in section 3.2.3.1) no being really distinct from God can exist unless it has a potency (essence) to receive it.[183] This "division" intrinsic to every *ens per participationem*, Fabro calls *Diremtion*, borrow-

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the *reditus* of angles within the *prima pars*, but he leaves man's *reditus* for the second and third parts, since the *Summa* is intended especially to cover *man's* creation, redemption, and salvation. Regarding the structure of the *Summa*, see A. Patfoort, "L'unité de la Iᵃ Pars et le mouvement interne de la Somme théologique de S. Thomas d'Aquin", in *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 4 (1963), 513–544.

[182] L.B. Geiger argued for the opposite conclusion: "La limitation des formes est première dans son ordre, irréductible. On ne peut espérer en rendre raison par l'appel à une composition avec d'autres éléments, ou à l'inhérence dans quelque sujet, car ces éléments comme ce sujet doivent être eux-mêmes déterminés et limités pour être, et leur limitation demanderait à être expliquée à son tour" (Geiger, *La participation* …, 65). In other words, the participation of the essence in its exemplar is distinct from and prior to the participation of existence in *Ipsum Esse*.

Fabro's reply can be found in Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità*, 52–60. See Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica* …, 26–29, especially 28–29: "Sono persuaso per parte mia che una classificazione metodica dei testi combinata con l'armonia intrinseca alla dottrina del nostro comune Maestro, mette fuori dubbio che ogni partecipazione comporta e similitudine (meglio: similitudine–dissimilitudine) e composizione, altrimenti la similitudine sola porta difilato all'identità e all'immanenza formale, come fecero coerentemente il Platonismo e l'Averroismo."

See also Fabro, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy", 469: "To assert, as has been done (Geiger), that Thomas holds as distinct participation by similitude (*secundum similitudinem*) and participation by composition (*secundum compositionem*), is to break the Thomistic synthesis at its center, which is the assimilation and mutual subordination of the couples of act-potency and *participatum-participans* in the emergence of the new concept of *esse*."

[183] For those creatures that have a material nature, in addition, their substantial form must be received in matter.

ing a term from Hegel.[184] The concept is well described by the following passage
already quoted above:

> Et iterum ostensum est quod esse subsistens non potest esse nisi unum,
> sicut si albedo esset subsistens, non posset esse nisi una, cum albedines mul-
> tiplicentur secundum recipientia. Relinquitur ergo quod omnia alia a Deo non
> sint suum esse, sed participant esse.[185]

Only when *esse* is "split" does it admit of different degrees of intensity, and can
it be communicated to manifold subjects. In reality, *Diremtion* was discovered (or
first exposed) by Plato in the *Sophist*: as we saw, in order for the meta-idea of τὸ
ὄν to be communicated among many participants, it must be *different from* the ideas
that participate in it, and hence the *participans* must participate in both τὸ ὄν and τὸ
ἕτερον. In other words, participation requires an internal division in the *participans*.
Diremtion is the basis, therefore, for what Thomas calls *esse commune*: created *esse*
considered in general (or as Thomas puts it, *sine additione*)[186] and as common to all

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[184] For Fabro's use of the term, see especially FABRO, *Partecipazione e causalità*, 350:
"Ma l'esse partecipato è «caduto» nella *Diremtion* della differenza ontologica e quindi non
è più sufficiente in se stesso: se la forma delle cose materiali abbisogna della materia come
soggetto, altrettanto — anzi di più — l'*esse* ha bisogno della forma ovvero dell'atto formale
come sua potenza. Infatti con la *Diremtion* che fa cadere l'*esse* dalla sua semplice identità
nella differenza ontologica, con l'intervallo del nulla (creazione), l'esse diventa partecipato
e quindi commensurato e attribuito a «qualcosa»."

Fabro uses the term throughout this work. The term, a German word derived ultimately
from the Latin *dirimo*, etymologically means "separation," but can be used broadly as well
to mean "determination." Hegel uses it to refer to the Spirit's "self-denial" that is necessary
for its development towards the Absolute Spirit. *Diremtion* could similarly be applied to
the "outpouring" of the One proposed by Neoplatonist philosophers that results in its "di-
vision" among the participants. Thomas, of course, attributes neither "becoming" to the
Creator nor necessity to the act of creating, but we can consider the communication of *esse*
as a sort of "falling" from God that produces a "division" from him and within the creature.
For a good overview of how Fabro uses the term, see J. MITCHELL, *Being and Participation:
The Method and Structure of Metaphysical Reflection according to Cornelio Fabro* (doctoral
dissertation), Città Nuova, Rome 2012, 191–196.

[185] *S.Th.* I, q. 44, a. 1, co.

[186] See *Contra Gent.* I, cap. 26, n. 11 (Marietti n. 247): "id quod commune est vel univer-
sale [i.e., esse commune] sine additione esse non potest, sed sine additione consideratur."
Thomas is refuting the idea that God is the formal cause of all things, and hence identical
to *esse commune*. *Esse commune*, cannot, of course, subsist (*sine additione esse*), but it can
be considered without its *additiones*.

entia in different degrees.[187] The *Diremtion* does not entail an "emanation" of any sort (neither Neoplatonist, nor Spinozan, nor Hegelian)—God does not "lose" any of his *esse*, nor is he in any way obliged to act—but rather it results from the act of creation: by creating an essence together with its *actus essendi*, God provides the "space" or receptive capacity necessary for that creature to subsist and at the same time gives the creature its *esse*.[188]

Since every *ens* results from the first *Diremtion* of *esse* effected by God (which we can call the "transcendental" *Diremtion*), it is possible to consider its *esse* and *essentia* as they are "before" that *ens* is constituted.[189] From this point of view, *esse* and *essentia* are a true act-and-potency pair, such that the *essentia* is in no way *in actu* except through the *esse* that actuates it:[190] in this sense, we may, following Fabro, term the active principle *esse ut actus* and the passive principle, *potentia essendi*.[191] As we will see in greater detail in chapter 4, however, there is also what could be called a "predicamental" *Diremtion* in which the *esse ut actus*, which is always unique, becomes "divided" into various levels of *esse in actu* (what could

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[187] See Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità*, 379: "La «Diremtion» dell'essere si compie pertanto nel primo momento della costituzione del reale. È vero che il termine proprio della creazione è l'*esse*, ch'è perciò l'effetto proprio di Dio, ma si tratta dell'*esse commune*; perchè *l'esse per essentiam* è Dio stesso ch'è impartecipabile."

[188] See *ibid.*, 366: "Si deve ammettere che alla prima origine delle cose, è Dio stesso che fa la prima «Diremtion» dell'esse partecipato nei suoi princìpi e che procede da Dio non solo l'esse ma anche l'essenza e la forma che lo riceve."

[189] Naturally, the act of creation transcends time, and so the use of such temporal terms is strictly analogical.

[190] See C. Fabro, *Dall'essere all'esistente*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1965², 40-41: "Per S. Tommaso (a differenza di tutta la tradizione patristica e scolastica, prima e dopo di lui) l'essenza va detta potenza e in potenza rispetto all'*esse partecipatum* ch'è l'atto primo metafisico, derivato da Dio, ch'è l'*esse per essentiam*." In his essay "La verità dell'essere e l'inizio del pensiero" (*ibid.*, 11–69), Fabro makes a fascinating comparison between Hegel's dialectic of *Sein* and Thomas Aquinas' dialectic of *esse*.

[191] Thomas does not use the expression *potentia essendi* often, but it grasps the intended concept well. The only time it is used in the sense proposed in this paper is in Thomas Aquinas, *Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, vol. 2, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Typographia Polyglotta, Rome 1884 (henceforth cited as *Super Phys.*), VIII, lc. 21, n. 13: "In omni ergo substantia quantumcumque simplici, post primam substantiam simplicem, est potentia essendi. […] Non potest ergo evadere inconveniens per hoc quod dicit quod in corpore caelesti non est potentia essendi: hoc enim est manifeste falsum, et contra intentionem Aristotelis." See also A. Contat, "*Esse, essentia, ordo*: verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa", in *Espíritu* 61 (2012), 30.

be termed the "fact" of being): that of the substance itself, that of the inherent accidents inherent, and that of *operari*.[192] Therefore, when the *ens* is considered "after" its constitution (or better said, when one investigates "within" the *ens* itself) then the essence is *in actu*: it is the οὐσία, or τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, discovered and described by Aristotle.

Although Thomas does not always use the terms coined by Fabro—*esse ut actus* and *esse in actu*—it is Thomas' use of the term *esse* that suggests this distinction. Although, as we saw above, Thomas sometimes refers to *esse* as *actualitas omnium actuum* (which corresponds to our *esse ut actus*), he sometimes uses *esse* in expressions such as *esse substantiale* and *esse accidentale*, which must refer to the "divided" *esse* that is found "within" *ens*.[193] If one assumes that Thomas makes a quasi-univocal of the term *esse*, then the temptation is to conclude that each "level" of *esse*—substance, accident, and even *operari*—has its own, practically independent *actus essendi*.[194] It seems to me that the *resolutio* that we did in section 3.2.3.3, especially our analysis of the passage from *De potentia*, q. 7, shows clearly that Aquinas in fact made an *analogical* use of the term *esse*: an analogy of reference (or intrinsic attribution), with reference to the single original act that is the *actus essendi* or *esse ut actus*.

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[192] The distinction between *esse ut actus* and *esse in actu* is dealt with in Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità*, 60–68, and throughout the work; also in Fabro, "La problematica dello 'esse' tomistico", 117-125.

[193] For mature works with this terminology, see for example *S.Th.* I, q. 76, a. 4, s.c.: "unius rei est unum esse substantiale. Sed forma substantialis dat esse substantiale;" and *ibid.*, I, q. 28, a. 2, co.: "Si vero consideretur relatio secundum quod est accidens, sic est inhaerens subiecto, et habens esse accidentale in ipso." The former quotation is one of many formulations of the maxim *forma dat esse*. See also Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità*, 199: "Una conferma ed un'applicazione dell'*esse essentiae* (l'essenza metafisica), è la divisione dell'*esse* in *esse substantiale* ed *esse accidentale* che non può riguardare direttamente l'esse come *actus essendi*, il quale è l'atto proprio della sostanza completa (*substantia prima*)."

[194] Cajetan and his school came to this very conclusion. I say "quasi"-univocal, because Cajetan effectively admits an analogy of proportionality in *esse*. See Thomas de Vio (Cajetan), *De nominum analogia*, vol. 3, Scripta philosophica, Angelicum, Rome 1934, III, n. 29: "Scimus quidem secundum hanc analogiam rerum intrinsecas entitates, bonitates, veritates etc., quod ex priori analogia non scitur. Unde sine huius analogiae notitia, processus metaphysicales absque arte dicuntur."

A notion related to *Diremtion* and actually found in Thomas' *corpus* is that of *contractio*. As should by now be clear, the only way for *esse* to be "divided" is for it to be limited by a potency (that is, essence); created *esse* is, therefore, "smaller" than *Ipsum Esse*. Likewise, the instances of *esse in actu* posterior to *esse ut actus* are "smaller" than their original, because *esse in actu* is not identical to *esse ut actus* but only participates in it. The first important passage that talks about *contractio* is the one that discusses *additio* in *De veritate*, q. 21, a. 1:

> Alio modo dicitur aliquid addere super alterum per modum *contrahendi* et determinandi; sicut homo addit aliquid super animal: non quidem ita quod sit in homine aliqua res quae sit penitus extra essentiam animalis, alias oporteret dicere, quod non totum quod est homo esset animal, sed animal esset pars hominis; sed animal per hominem *contrahitur*, quia id quod determinate et actualiter continetur in ratione hominis, implicite et quasi potentialiter continetur in ratione animalis.[195]

In our *resolutio* of *bonum*, we saw that *additiones* can be *reales* or *rationis*, and we saw that the *ratio boni* adds something *sine contractione*. However, an *additio rationis* can also entail a *contractio*, in the sense of specifying concept's scope or extension. For example, adding *rational* to *animal* results in *man*, which is reduced in scope with respect to *animal*. As can be seen, *contractio* in this context is primarily a noetical notion. However, the passage from *De veritate* can be compared to one in Thomas' commentary on the *Metaphysics*, in which he comments the very passage we saw above Book Δ, 7:

> Sciendum est enim quod ens non potest hoc modo *contrahi* ad aliquid determinatum, sicut genus *contrahitur* ad species per differentias. [...] 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.[196]

Even though *ens* is not strictly speaking a genus, it is still possible to "contract" it according to the different ways that it can be predicated (namely, the "figures"

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or "schemata" of predication; that is, the categories). In as many ways as *ens* is predicated, argues Thomas, in just so many ways it signifies *esse*. To put it another way, whereas the *contractio* of a genus into a species, or of a larger genus into a smaller one, does not imply a *real* diminution of *esse* (because, for example, "animal" and "cat" both signify substances), the *contractio* of *ens* does, because different *modi* possess different degrees or "measures" of *esse*.[197] Therefore, the modes of predication of *ens* indicate ontological "degrees" of possession of *esse*. It should be noted that *contractio* applies to all of the categories without exception, including substance: a little later in the passage, Thomas says, "Quia igitur eorum quae praedicantur, quaedam significant *quid*, idest *substantiam*, quaedam quale, quaedam quantum, et sic de aliis."[198]

Coupling this reflection on *contractio* with Aquinas' notion of *esse commune* yields a fascinating result: the *esse* that is "contracted" in the various predications of *ens* must be *esse commune*—that is, *esse* considered "prior" to its *additiones* (which never, however, subsists without these *additiones*). However, *esse commune* can be considered, as it were, independently of the *modus entis* (category) that it belongs to, and even independently of the essence that determines it. In a substance, therefore, the *contractio* is twofold: first, *esse commune* has a (conceptually) limitless application to essence and is therefore "contracted" to a particular "level" or "measure" when it is considered together with this or that essence.[199] Second, *esse* considered as "within" a substance or "after" its constitution is "contracted" when applied to one of its categories. The first *contractio* we could term "transcendental," since it occurs "prior" to the division of *ens* into categories; the second, "predicamental" or

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[197] In fact, Aquinas defines *modus* as "quem mensura praefigit." Therefore, he says, "unde importat quandam determinationem secundum aliquam mensuram" (*S.Th.* I-II, q. 49, a. 2, co.). He is, in this context, describing the category of quality, so as to explain what a first-species quality (*habitus* or *dispositio*) is. Here, he describes quality as a "mode of a substance," but by analogy, the categories could be called "modes of *ens*."

[198] *In Metaph.* V, lib. 5, l. 9 n. 6 (Marietti n. 890) (emphasis added).

[199] Hence, when understood correctly, the term *modus essendi* is a most apt appellative for essence.

"categorial." It is telling that for Thomas even substance, which Aristotle consid-
ers *ens* in its fullness, entails a *contractio* in the second sense.[200] We can deduce
from this reflection that the "categorial" *esse* (*esse in actu*) of the various *modi entis*
flows from and participates in an ontological ἐνέργεια that is "prior" to all of the
categories (that is, transcendental) and contains them virtually: none other than *esse
ut actus*. The essence mediates between the two levels by receiving the *esse ut ac-
tus* and then communicating its own *esse in actu* to all of the other accidents, and
ultimately to its *operari*.

3.3.3 *Esse ut Actus* and *Esse in Actu*

A confirmation of this reflection can be found in Thomas' treatise on separated
substances, where he distinguishes between form and subject, even in angels:[201]

> ratio formae opponitur rationi subiecti. Nam omnis forma, in quantum
> huiusmodi, est actus; omne autem subiectum comparatur ad id cuius est
> subiectum, ut potentia ad actum. Si quae ergo forma est quae sit actus tantum,
> ut divina essentia, illa nullo modo potest esse subiectum; et de hac Boetius
> loquitur. Si autem aliqua forma sit quae secundum aliquid sit in actu, et secun-
> dum aliquid in potentia; secundum hoc tantum erit subiectum, secundum quod
> est in potentia. Substantiae autem spirituales, licet sint formae subsistentes,
> sunt tamen in potentia, in quantum habent esse finitum et limitatum.[202]

A subject, Thomas argues, can only be a subject inasmuch as it is in potency. (It
is something that is reduced to act). Even a pure spirit (other than God) can be a
subject, because it is limited and in that sense *in potentia*. In fact, in can only be a
subject inasmuch as it is *in potentia*. Clearly, a pure form is *in actu*. How be both in
act and in potency at the same time? The answer lies in the fact that form is not the
ultimate act of a substance—not even a spiritual one—but in fact receives its actu-
ality from a superior source: the *esse ut actus*. The form, we might say is a type of

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[200] Naturally, the categories other than substance possess progressively less *esse*.

[201] Regarding the distinction between form and subject, see Contat, "*Esse, essentia,
ordo*", 54.

[202] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis*, vol. 24/2, Opera
omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Commissio Leonina, Rome 2000 (henceforth cited as *De spirit.
creat.*), a. 1, ad 1.

esse: it is what Thomas calls *esse substantiale*, or what we have called a substance's *esse in actu*. This *esse in actu*, however, is not identical to the *esse ut actus* but rather is the result of a *contractio*.

3.3.4 Conclusions from the *Compositio*

Summing up the results of our *compositio* thus far, we see that *ens* proceeds from God, not, of course, in a necessary way, but as "production;" that God is the efficient, exemplary, and final cause of all of his creatures, and that these creatures proceed by way of a *Diremtion* (or "division") of *esse* that entails a *contractio*. This *esse*, when it is considered *sine additione*, is what Thomas calls *esse commune*. In fact, *esse* always subsists *cum additione*, both *sine contractione* (the *transcendentia*) and *cum contractione* (the *modus specialis entis* or *ens* as divided into categories). The *contractio entis* (and likewise the *Diremtion*) is both "transcendental" ("prior" to the constitution of *ens* and its division into categories) and "predicamental" ("after" the constitution of *ens* and "within" the categories). The *actus essendi* or *esse ut actus*, therefore acts as a mediator between *Ipsum Esse* and the substance in act, with its various actuations. The essence, in turn acts as a mediator between the *actus essendi* and the various *esse in actu* of the substance. On the "transcendental" level, we might say, it gathers behind it all of the "power" (δύναμις, *virtus*) that God grants to the substance, measuring and determining it. On the "predicamental" level, it communicates the *esse* that it receives from the *actus essendi*; and since it is always the form that contains the actuality of the essence (whether it is a pure form or a compound of matter and form), we may say with Thomas that *forma dat esse*.[203]

We should stress that strictly speaking it is not the *actus essendi* that "is," nor is the *actus essendi* strictly *in actu*. Rather, it is the principle *by which ens* is (*quo est*); it is the *ens* that "is," and the substance and its various actuations that are *in*

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[203] See *S.Th.* I, q. 76, a. 4, co. "Forma autem substantialis dat esse simpliciter." Naturally, the substantial form is opposed to the accidental form, which gives *esse secundum quid*.

	Transcendental Level	Predicamental Level
How *ens* is considered	*Ens constituendum*	*Ens constitutum*
Esse	*Esse ut actus*	*Esse in actu*
Essentia	*Essentia ut potentia essendi*	*Essentia in actu* (*actus formalis*)

Table 3.2: *Esse ut actus* and *esse in actu*

actu. In fact, until the *actus essendi* is allowed to expand fully, it is *deprived* of being in act (*esse in actu*); it "wants" to expand, so to speak. The inner workings of *ens*, therefore, seem to form a microcosm of divine causality: God is efficient, exemplary, and final cause of *ens*; it seems that *actus essendi* functions as the efficient, exemplary, and final cause of the *suppositum*. Finally, viewing the predication of *ens* as a double *contractio* helps us to see that the "quantity" of *esse* that a substance has, as it were, two "dimensions": "vertical" or transcendental, and "horizontal" or predicamental. The very *actus essendi* is a *contractio* of *esse commune*; therefore, *actus essendi* can be found in various degrees of intensity or "virtuality." Predicamental *esse* (*esse in actu*), on the other hand is, as it were, "additive": accidents and operation are *superadditum*, as if they constituted an "extensive" quantity. How *actus essendi* functions as a mediator, and how these various levels interact will be a topic for the next chapter. Table 3.2 summarizes our findings so far.

3.4 *Actus Essendi* as *Virtus Essendi*

Saint Thomas' conception of *actus essendi* (at least the interpretation given by Fabro and those with a similar vision, and assumed by this paper) is unique in affirming three characteristics of *esse*: first, a *suppositum* possesses its *actus essendi* as its "own;" *esse ut actus* is truly an intrinsic principle, not merely a shadow of the divine *Esse*. Second, *esse ut actus* is the source of all the actuality in that *suppositum*. Finally, each species possess it according to a different degree of intensity, thanks

to the receptive capacity and measure that the essence provides: we can, therefore, speak of *esse* as if it were a *quantitas virtutis* or *virtualis*.[204] The other systems that we saw—the metaphysics of essence (Henry of Ghent, Scotus, Suárez), classical Thomism (Cajetan and his followers), and even transcendental Thomism—all agree in attributing to *esse* a nearly univocal status. For the metaphysics of essence, this stance is quite clear, for *esse* (*existentia*) is the mere passage of an essence already constituted to an independent status (*modus* or *respectus*) outside its causes. For classical Thomism, although many followers of this school (notably Domingo Báñez and Jacques Maritain) recognized the primacy of *esse* over *essentia*, their concept concept of *esse* remains fundamentally that of *existentia*: *positio extra causas*.[205] Even with transcendental Thomism, *esse* is thought of principally in terms of its function as the *copula* that is in reference to an unlimited "horizon." Although they effectively consider *esse* to be a "virtuality" or "power," it seems to be *extrinsic* to the *suppositum*. It is not possessed or "received" by essence as its own, and hence does not truly admit of degrees in intensity.[206] A brief discussion, therefore, of how Thomas views *actus essendi* as a *virtus essendi*—a sort of *quantitas virtualis*—is in order.

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[204] We must be careful, however, to affirm that once a *suppositum* is constituted, for as long as it endures, neither its essence nor its *actus essendi* change. At most, a non-spiritual creature can undergo corruption, but its own *actus essendi* can neither increase nor diminish. This is true for the simple reason that it is God himself, *Ipsum Esse*, who provides the *actus essendi*: it depends on no other principle. See *Contra Gent.* I, cap. 20, n. 27 (Marietti n. 179): "Esse est aliquid fixum et quietum in ente;" also, Contat, "*Esse, essentia, ordo*", 37.

[205] Whereas Cajetan held that *existentia* is an *actus secundus*, Báñez upheld its status as *actus primus*, a position upheld by Maritain. See Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità*, 612–613, and Contat, "Le figure …", 109-111. Cajtan, in fact, felt obliged to propose *subsistentia* as a third principle in *ens*, after *existentia* and *essentia*, to "glue together" the various acts found in a *suppositum*. See Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità*, 617.

[206] The fact that Lotz makes such a unique interpretation of the *quarta via* is indicative of this conception of *esse*. In brief, Lotz says in that every judgment, man makes what he calls a "small analogy," by which he discovers that *ens* is immersed in a limitless "horizon," which we can call *esse*. In order to avoid making this horizon temporal and immanent (as in Heidegger), man has recourse to the "great analogy," in which he sees that *ens* exists thanks to *Ipsum Esse*—in other words, that this "horizon" is a real, consistent Being. The reasoning is very similar to Blondel's regarding the *antiboulie*. See Contat, "Il confronto con Heidegger …", 228–229.

3.4.1 Intensive and Extensive Quantity

Aristotle is the first philosopher to discuss quantity (τὸ ποσόν) at length: it is normally the first category to be listed, after substance,[207] and strictly speaking, of course, it is an accident found only in material *entia*: either three-dimensional, continuous extension, or else an enumeration of discrete units.[208] Quantity is, therefore, "additive" and "extensive" by nature: two lines can be joined together so as to make a longer line, and two sets of books can be added to obtain a larger set of books. By analogy, however, other realities can be "quantified," most often the qualities, but also any other perfection or measurable reality. Thomas explains:

> Est autem duplex quantitas: scilicet dimensiva, quae secundum extensionem consideratur; et virtualis, quae attenditur secundum intensionem: virtus enim rei est ipsius perfectio, secundum illud philosophi in VIII *Physic.*: unumquodque perfectum est quando attingit propriae virtuti. Et sic quantitas virtualis uniuscuiusque formae attenditur secundum modum suae perfectionis. Utraque autem quantitas per multa diversificatur: nam sub quantitate dimensiva continetur longitudo, latitudo, et profundum, et numerus in potentia. Quantitas autem virtualis in tot distinguitur, quot sunt naturae vel formae; quarum perfectionis modus totam mensuram quantitatis facit.[209]

There are two types of quantity: dimensive or extensive, and intensive or virtual.[210] As an example to illustrate the difference, we will use one suggested by Thomas' *maxime calidum*, but taken from modern physics: the difference between heat and temperature. Heat can be described as the *total* amount of energy (in the modern

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[207] See, for example, the two complete lists of categories: Aristotle, *Categoriae*, ed. by L. Minio-Paluello, Oxford University, 1949 (henceforth cited as *Categories*), I, 1b25-2a4: Τῶν κατὰ μηδεμίαν συμπλοκὴν λεγομένων ἕκαστον ἤτοι οὐσίαν σημαινει ἢ ποσὸν ἢ ποιὸν ἢ πρὸς τι ἢ ποῦ ἢ ποτὲ ἢ κεῖσθαι ἢ ἔχειν ἢ ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν., "Each of the words in no way combined truly signifies substance or 'how much' or 'which' or 'toward which' or 'where' or 'when' or 'lying down' or 'having' or 'making' or 'undergoing;' and Aristotle, *Topica*, in *Topica et Sophistici elenchi*, ed. by W.D. Ross, Oxford University, 1958 (henceforth cited as *Topics*), A, 9, 103b23–24: ἐστί δὲ ταῦτα τὸν ἀριθμόν δέκα, τί εστι, ποσὸν, ποιὸν, πρὸς τι, ποῦ, ποτὲ, κεῖσθαι, ἔχειν, ποιεῖν, πάσχειν, "These, however, are ten in number: 'what is it,' 'how much,' 'which,' 'toward which,' 'where,' 'when,' 'lying down,' 'having,' 'making,' 'undergoing'" (my translation in both cases).

[208] For Aristotle's treatment of quantity, see especially *Categories*, Z, 4b20-2a35.

[209] *De verit.* 29, 3. Interestingly, this reflection comes in the context of whether Jesus Christ possesses created grace or not. Therefore, it is abundantly clear that *quantitas virtutis* or *virtualis* applies analogically to even to purely spiritual realities.

[210] Regarding the two types of quantity, see Villagrasa, "La resolutio …", 53.

sense) in a body, whereas temperature is the *average* or *per-unit* amount of energy.[211] A swimming pool, for example, possesses much more heat than a lighted candle, but its temperature is much less.[212] Even scientists distinguish—in much the same way as Saint Thomas does in the passage above—between *extensive* qualities (such as heat) and *intensive* ones (such as temperature): add more water to the swimming pool, and more heat is added, even if the water added is colder. Increasing the water's temperature is another matter; it would require a source of energy (a *virtus* or δύναμις). The example is strictly material, but it does illustrate why Thomas affirms that *quantitas virtualis* is considered *secundum intensionem*: unless a thing already possesses the *virtus* in question, it must receive that *virtus* from an outside agent that can reduce it from potency to act. Intensity is the measure of *virtus*, which in reality is the same as perfection.

3.4.2 *Esse* as a *Quantitas Virtualis*

The question now is whether Thomas applies the notion of intensive quantity to *esse*: it seems to me that the affirmative can be abundantly demonstrated.[213] Aquinas, as we saw, is indebted to Dionysius for many of his ideas about *esse* (allowing for the fact that Dionysius affirmed the primacy of the Good). The concept borrowed from Dionysius is that of δύναμις, which in this case takes on the connotation of "power" rather than "potency." For example, there is the passage, "πάσης δυνάμεως αἴτιος καὶ πάντα κατὰ δύναμιν ἄκλιτον καὶ ἀπεριόριστον παράγων καὶ ὡς αὐτοῦ τοῦ

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[211] According to most modern models, the quality that we experience as heat results from the internal movements of the molecules and atoms that constitute a substance. This movement is not strictly mechanical, but involves complex interactions among the particles and their chemical bonds.

[212] A simple confirmation of this fact is that one candle would be unable to raise the temperature of the water appreciably, even if all of the heat it produces could be transferred to the water without loss.

[213] For an extensive discussion of this very topic, see especially O'Rourke, "Virtus Essendi".

εἶναι δύναμιν," [214] from which Thomas seems to have derived the term *virtus essendi* (αὐτοῦ τοῦ εἶναι δύναμις).[215] We saw above that τὸ εἶναι is the first and greatest of God's gifts. However, it receives its "power to be" from what is beyond being: "τὸ εἶναι δύναμιν εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἔχει παρὰ τῆς ὑπερουσίου δυνάμεως;" [216] and "ὁ ὢν ὅλου τοῦ εἶναι κατὰ δύναμιν ὑπερούσιός ἐστιν ὑποστάτις αἰτία καὶ δημιουργὸς ὄντος" [217] Commenting on this passage, Thomas affirms,

> ostendit quod omnia conveniunt Deo, quodammodo. Ad cuius evidentiam considerandum est quod omnis forma, recepta in aliquo, limitatur et finitur secundum capacitatem recipientis; unde, hoc corpus album non habet totam albedinem secundum totum posse albedinis. Sed si esset albedo separata, nihil deesset ei quod ad virtutem albedinis pertineret. Omnia autem alia, sicut superius dictum est, habent esse receptum et participatum et ideo non habent esse *secundum totam virtutem essendi*, sed solus Deus, qui est ipsum esse subsistens, *secundum totam virtutem essendi*, *esse habet*.[218]

Thomas argues—as we have seen in other passages as well—that when a perfection is received in a subject, it is limited and determined by the recipient; only a "separate" perfection could have all of the *virtus* or intensity it is capable of. *Esse*, in fact, is a perfection (albeit a special one) and works in the same way: all creatures (*omnia alia*, those that are not God) participate in *esse* and receive it. Hence, they do not possess *esse secundum totam virtutem essendi*. Rather, they receive it from the one who does, namely God. Evidently, Thomas is referring to *esse ut actus*, because he speaks of it as being received *secundum capacitatem recipientis*—that is, into a potency, as whiteness is received into the subject. Perhaps even more clear is Thomas' affirmation, from the *Summa Contra Gentes*, justifying God's infinite

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[214] Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divin. nom.* 8, 2: "[He is] the cause of all power (πάσης δυνάμεως) and, producing all things according to uninclined and uncircumscribed power (δύναμιν) and as the power of being itself (αὐτοῦ τοῦ εἶναι δύναμιν)" (my translation).

[215] See É. Gilson, "Virtus essendi", in *Mediaeval Studies* 26 (1964), 1. This article discusses at length the origin of the expression in Saint Thomas.

[216] Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divin. nom.* 8, 3 "*Esse* has power unto *esse* [i.e., power to be] from the super-being power [the power that is beyond *esse*]" (my translation).

[217] *Ibid.*, 5, 4: "The one who is, is the substantial cause of all *esse* is the creator (δημιουργὸς) of *ens*" (my translation).

[218] *In De div. nom.* V, lc. 1, 629 (emphasis added). Evidently, Thomas is using a translation in which δύναμις is translated *virtus*.

perfection: "Igitur si aliquid est cui competit *tota virtus essendi*, ei nulla nobilitatum deesse potest quae alicui rei conveniat." [219] If there is something to which corresponds the whole "power to be" (*virtus essendi*)—that is, *esse per essentiam* or *Esse Subsistens*—it cannot be lacking in nobility.

Aquinas applies this very reasoning to his description of *habitus* in the *prima secundae*. He says, in *quaestio* 52, which regards the possibility of an increase in an *habitus*:

> Sic igitur patet quod, cum habitus et dispositiones dicantur secundum ordinem ad aliquid, ut dicitur in VII *Physic.*, dupliciter potest intensio et remissio in habitibus et dispositionibus considerari. Uno modo, secundum se, prout dicitur maior vel minor sanitas; vel maior vel minor scientia, quae ad plura vel pauciora se extendit. Alio modo, secundum participationem subiecti, prout scilicet aequalis scientia vel sanitas magis recipitur in uno quam in alio, secundum diversam aptitudinem vel ex natura vel ex consuetudine. [220]

The passage from Aristotle's *Physics* that Thomas refers to is "Ἔτι δὲ καί φαμεν ἁπάσας εἶναι τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐν τῷ πρός τι πὼς ἔχειν," [221] Aquinas is attributing to Aristotle's ἀρετή the same meaning as Dionysius' δύναμις. [222] The intensity (*intensio*) of an *habitus*, Thomas argues, can be considered either as something that is similar to an extensive quantity, or else *secundum participationem subiecti*. Evidently, Thomas is using the term *intensio* broadly to mean roughly "quantity," but the distinction he makes is the same as that above: using the example of knowledge, I can broaden the *extension* of my knowledge, or increase its *depth*. Differences in intensity, therefore, occur whenever there is a subject that can receive and partici-

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[219] *Contra Gent.* I, cap. 28, n. 2 (Marietti n. 260), (emphasis added).

[220] *S.Th.* I-II, q. 53, a. 1, co.

[221] *Physics*, H, 3, 246b 3-4: "Yet, however, we also say that all are *virtutes* in having 'toward-which' [i.e., relation] in some way." (my translation).

[222] See, for example, the commentary on this same passage in *Super Phys.* VII, lc. 6, 920: "Ad hoc autem probandum assumit quandam propositionem, scilicet quod virtus sit perfectio quaedam. Quod quidem sic probat: quia unumquodque tunc est perfectum, quando pertingere potest ad propriam virtutem; sicut naturale corpus tunc perfectum est, quando potest aliud sibi simile facere, quod est virtus naturae. Quod etiam probat per hoc, quia tunc est aliquid maxime secundum naturam, quando naturae virtutem habet; virtus enim naturae est signum completionis naturae: cum autem aliquid habet complete suam naturam, tunc dicitur esse perfectum." This is not the *virtus* of *habitus*, but the more general sense that means "power." In Aristotle, unlike Dionysius, δύναμις ordinarily means *potentia*.

pate in a perfection. Remove the subject, as we saw, and the perfection would be *maxime*: this is precisely, however, the argument that Thomas uses in the *quarta via* to prove the existence of *Ipsum Esse*.

A confirmation is found in *quaestio 42* of the prima pars, where Thomas, responding to the objection that the Son cannot be truly considered "equal" to the Father because God has no quantity, says,

> Ad primum ergo dicendum quod duplex est quantitas. Una scilicet quae dicitur quantitas molis, vel quantitas dimensiva, quae in solis rebus corporalibus est, unde in divinis personis locum non habet. Sed alia est quantitas virtutis, quae attenditur secundum perfectionem alicuius naturae vel formae, quae quidem quantitas designatur secundum quod dicitur aliquid magis vel minus calidum, inquantum est perfectius vel minus perfectum in caliditate. Huiusmodi autem quantitas virtualis attenditur primo quidem in radice, idest in ipsa perfectione formae vel naturae, et sic dicitur magnitudo spiritualis, sicut dicitur magnus calor propter suam intensionem et perfectionem. […] Secundo autem attenditur quantitas virtualis in effectibus formae. Primus autem effectus formae est esse, nam omnis res habet esse secundum suam formam. Secundus autem effectus est operatio, nam omne agens agit per suam formam. Attenditur igitur quantitas virtualis et secundum esse, et secundum operationem, secundum esse quidem, inquantum ea quae sunt perfectioris naturae, sunt maioris durationis; secundum operationem vero, inquantum ea quae sunt perfectioris naturae, sunt magis potentia ad agendum.[223]

The first part is by now familiar: quantity can be dimensive (extensive) or virtual (intensive). Evidently God does not possess extensive quantity in any respect (least of all the quantity proper to material things). Virtual quantity, Thomas argues, can refer to *actus secundus*, as in our example of the heat, or else it can refer to the effects of the form. It is difficult to determine in this passage whether by *esse* Thomas means *esse ut actus* or the *esse in actu* of the substance;[224] however, since the *esse substantiale* is in proportion to the virtuality of the *esse ut actus*, what Thomas says is instructive in any case: "omnis res habet esse secundum suam formam": it is the form, which is the active principle of the essence in material creatures and identical with the essence in pure spirits, that determines the intensity or *virtus* of that

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[223] *S.Th.* I, q. 42, a. 1, ad 1.
[224] Both interpretations would fit the text, and so perhaps he is being deliberately ambiguous so as to include them both.

esse. Just as there are *quantitates virtuales* proper to operation, *esse* can also be considered such quantity. Thomas claims something similar in *De potentia* q. 5, a. 4: "Nam quantum unicuique inest de forma, tantum inest ei de virtute essendi; unde et in I *caeli et mundi* philosophus vult quod quaedam habeant virtutem et potentiam ut semper sint." [225] Aristotle in his work is arguing in essence that eternal beings are not subject to generation and corruption, and vice versa, precisely because they have δύναμις to sustain their being for all eternity. From this, Thomas concludes that inasmuch as a creature has form, that much it possesses the power to be (*virtus essendi*).[226]

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[225] *De pot.* q. 5, a. 4, ad 1. Thomas cites from Aristotle, *De caelo libri quattuor*, ed. by D.J. Allan, Oxford University, 1961 (henceforth cited as *De caelo*), I, 12, 281b 25-32: Ἅπαν ἄρα τὸ ἀεὶ ὂν ἁπλῶς ἄφθαρτον. Ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἀγένητον· εἰ γὰρ γενητόν, ἔσται δυνατὸν χρόνον τινὰ μὴ εἶναι — φθαρτὸν μὲν γάρ ἐστι τὸ πρότερον μὲν ὄν, νῦν δὲ μὴ ὂν ἢ ἐνδεχόμενόν ποτε ὕστερον μὴ εἶναι· γενητὸν δὲ ὃ ἐνδέχεται πρότερον μὴ εἶναι — ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ᾧ χρόνῳ δυνατὸν τὸ ἀεὶ ὂν ὥστε μὴ εἶναι, οὔτ᾽ ἄπειρον οὔτε πεπερασμένον· καὶ γὰρ τὸν πεπερασμένον χρόνον δύναται εἶναι, εἴπερ καὶ τὸν ἄπειρον. "Therefore every eternal reality is plainly incorruptible. Similarly the ungenerated. For if [it were] generated, it is possible that it could not be during a certain time—for the perishable is what is before, but now is not, or what takes on non-*esse* at some later time; the generated however is what takes on *esse* later—but there is no possibility in time for an eternal being not to be as such, whether infinite or finite. For it has the power to be (δύναται εἶναι) for a finite time, if indeed it is infinite" (my translation). The key term δύναται εἶναι, which Thomas renders as *virtus* or *potentia essendi* (in the active sense, evidently).

[226] Interestingly, E. Gilson in his work entitled "*Virtus essendi*" essentially rejects the idea that *esse* could be an intensive act. He says, "L'on ferait fausse route en cherchant dans saint Thomas une doctrine de l'être qui reconnaîtrait a l'*esse* une intensité intrinsèque variable a laquelle correspondraient, dans la nature, les degrés différents de perfection qui distinguent les êtres. Le mouvement comporte des degrés de quantité qui permettent de le dire plus ou moins grand, l'être n'en a pas […] Au delà de la nature il n'y a plus de matière, ni d'étendue, ni de quantité, ni de plus ou moins. L'*esse* échappe a toutes ces déterminations, mais comme malgré tout il y a des différences d'être nous nous représentons des degrés de pureté et d'actualité formelle sous l'aspect de degrés d'intensité quantitative qui ne conviennent aucunement a l'être."

F. O'Rourke suggests that perhaps Gilson's reluctance to attribute quantity to *esse* arises because he does not distinguish well between intensive and dimensive (extensive) quantity (O'Rourke, "Virtus Essendi", 45). I would add that Gilson may also have missed that what permits intensive quantity is precisely communication of a perfection to a subject, not movement as such. Hence *esse per participationem* qualifies as an intensive quantity without any difficulty. In fact, Thomas addresses this very issue in *S.Th.* I, q. 77, a. 6, ad 3. See section 4.1.2, below.

3.4.3 Systematic Presentation of *Esse* as *Virtus Essendi*

Let us expose this doctrine more systematically: *quantitas*, which refers primarily to the three-dimensional extension of material things and to the enumeration of discontinuous entities, is increased and decreased by "addition" and "subtraction." This concept of quantity can be extended by analogy to other perfections. Some of these quantities be "added" and "subtracted" in a way similar to material quantity; such quantities can be terned "extensive" or "dimensive." Other quantities, however, are non-additive. They exhibit the phenomenon of *magis et minus*—that is, the perfection in question can suffer increase or decrease in intensity, or at least can be found in different degrees. However, simply "adding" together subjects containing these perfections does not result in their increase. Such quantities are termed "virtual" or "intensive." In fact, if a perfection is found *magis et minus* it can only be so because it is found in a *subiectum* that participates to a greater or lesser extent in that perfection. Since only an agent *in actu* can reduce a potency to act, that subject must receive the perfection from outside itself. If, however, the perfection were to be found independently of a subject, it would subsist *maxime*, since act—which can only be limited by potency—is by nature "fecund" and "expansive." It follows that the presence of a *quantitas virtualis* necessarily entails a participation.

The communication of this perfection could be mediate, in which a subject, upon receiving the perfection, can communicate it in turn to another subject: as, for example, in the case of heat. On the other hand, some perfections can be communicated only by an agent that possesses it *per essentiam*. In either case, the perfections must reduce to an agent that has the perfection *per essentiam* or as a *proprium*.[227] The *actus essendi*, since it is *first* act and the source of all other perfections in a *suppositum* and is not produced by the essence, must be communicated in an absolutely imme-

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[227] For example, although there is in fact no absolutely *maxime calidum*, heat must eventually come from some agent that produces heat on its own (such as a fire, a radiator, or an oven); that is, that possesses heat as a *proprium*. Iron can only receive heat *per participationem*. Unlike *esse*, the heat of the iron can be re-transmitted; nevertheless, to keep the iron hot, it is eventually necessary to re-introduce it into the fire.

diate way, as we demonstrated in our *resolutio* above. Nevertheless, *actus essendi* is indeed received into a potency; namely, the essence. Therefore, even though it is an *actus primus*, not an *actus secundus*, it is entirely appropriate to refer to it as a *quantitas virtualis* that is capable of attaining different degrees of intensity. It follows that *actus essendi* is rightly called *virtus essendi*: it is not merely an *existentia* that places an essence outside of its causes. Rather, it is a rich reality that is the source and principle of all perfections in a *suppositum*, much more "powerful" than either the essence that measures it or the perfections in act that depend on it.

3.5 Conclusions Regarding *Virtus Essendi*

From the basic notions of *bonum* and *ens*, we have discovered that *bonum* is founded on *esse*, and that the *esse* of *ens* is rooted in a radical active principle called *actus essendi* or *esse ut actus* that is co-created together with a radical potential principle called *essentia ut potentia essendi*. The *esse ut actus* is not only the source of a *suppositum*'s existence (although it is that too), but the source of every one of its proper perfections: *actus essendi* is truly a *virtus essendi*, the "storehouse" of all the perfections in a *suppositum*. The *actus essendi* contains these perfections in a precisely *virtual* way: the perfections are not yet strictly *in act* until the *actus essendi* expands into the *suppositum*'s various layers of *esse in actu*. We saw that *entia* are good to the degree that they are *in actu* (specifically *in actu secundo*), but that their *actus secundus* is rooted in the radical act, which is *actus essendi*. Not only does act render an *ens* desirable as such, but creatures all seek their own perfection or "happiness." The task before us in the next chapter is to show that this tendency toward perfection—which as we saw ultimately leads creatures to their ultimate final cause, God as the *Summum Bonum*—results no the intrinsic level from the very structure of *ens*: in short, we need to demonstrate that *esse* as an intensive act measured by essence necessarily entails an *ordo ad finem*, and that this *ordo* is not only an ex-

trinsic exigency, resulting from creatures' tendency to return to their Creator, but an intrinsic exigency born of the very structure and dynamism of *ens*.

4. THE INTRINSIC DYNAMISM OF *ENS*

As we saw in our *compositio* of the principles of *ens*, God exercises a threefold causality: inasmuch as his creatures *proceed* from him, he is their efficient and exemplary cause; inasmuch as they *return* to him, he is their final cause. We can say that, like any *agens*—although naturally more perfectly than any created *agens*—God creates (gives or communicates *esse*), while discerning what he creates (using his own Essence as a divine idea or exemplar to co-create the essence), and keeping in mind both his own end (his glory) and the end of the thing created (union with him).[228] We have discovered in our investigation that a creature's *actus essendi* mediates between God's extrinsic causality and the internal communication of *esse*: it serves, as we saw, as a *suppositum*'s *virtus essendi*, the source of all its actuality. Morever, a creature's essence mediates between the *actus essendi* (*esse ut actus*) and its various predicamental actuations (*esse in actu*). Inasmuch as it communicates itself, *esse ut actus* is the efficient cause of *esse in actu*; inasmuch as *esse in actu* is modeled after its source and measured by the essence, *esse ut actus* is an exemplary cause. Therefore, a *suppositum* seems to be a microcosm or "imitation" of at least two of the extrinsic causes of *ens*. The task of this chapter is to show that the intrinsic causes of *ens* also include a *final* causality, in which *actus essendi* serves as both source and end: the *actus essendi* seeks to expand into *esse in actu*, and conversely the *esse in actu* seeks *actus essendi* as its end, seeking to "return" to its principle. In this way, the *exitus* of creatures from their Creator and their *reditus* to him is represented in and communicated to the very intrinsic dynamism of *ens*; God communicates not only his *esse* and essence, but also his *operari*. In order to see this more clearly, we will look in detail at the intrinsic dynamism of *ens*, in which the

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[228] God, of course, cannot in any sense be perfected: his glory is manifested to his creatures.

various levels of *esse in actu* proceed or "expand" from *actus essendi*, as measured

by *essence*, and in that way bring *ens* to its final fulfillment or "happiness."

4.1   The Origin and Inherence of Accidents

4.1.1   *Aporia* of the Richness and Poverty of *Ens*

In order to investigate the intrinsic dynamism of *ens*, we can begin with an *aporia* regarding *esse* and and the *operari* that flows from it, which W.N. Clarke sums up well:

> Aquinas [speaks] of an intrinsic dynamism in every being to be self-communicative, to share its own goodness with others, to pour over into the production of another actuality in some way like itself. This is what Maritain has aptly called "the basic generosity of existence."
>
> It follows that, for Aquinas, finite, created being pours over naturally into action for *two* reasons: (1) because it is *poor*, i.e., lacking the fullness of existence, and so strives to enrich itself as much as its nature allows from the richness of those around it; but (2) even more profoundly because it is *rich*, which it tends naturally to communicate and share with others.[229]

In other words, the *actus essendi* is rich, inasmuch as it tends to "overflow" into

the different levels of *esse in actu* by an "excess" of *virtus*.[230] On the other hand,

it is poor inasmuch as it "depends" of the *esse superadditum* of the accidents and

operari in order to reach its fulfillment. In reality, it is the same *aporia* posed (at

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[229] W.N. CLARKE, "Person, Being, and St. Thomas", in *Communio* 19 (1992), 605. See also DE FINANCE, *Être et agir …*, 163–164: "Fils de Poros et de Pénia, le désir naît de cette opposition même de l'acte et de la limite. Et c'est pourquoi toute forme créée s'accompagne d'une inclination qui, est l'appétit naturel."

[230] For another point of view regarding act and its interaction with limit, see D. KAMBEMBO, "Essai d'une ontologie de l'agir", in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 65 (1967), 356–387, 497–538, especially 377–387: "Où enraciner le dynamisme de l'être, et en particulier de l'être limité ? Est-ce dans la forme (principe actif), est-ce dans la matière (principe potentiel) ? Ou faudrait-il, au contraire, l'enraciner dans le composé de matière et de forme, d'essence et d'existence, de principe actif et de principe potentiel, c'est-à-dire dans l'acte d'être (energeia) ? La thèse du P. de Finance nous semble bloquer le dynamisme de l'être dans la seule forme (actus essendi), principe actif de l'être. Chez lui, la limitation de l'« esse » par l'essence serait à la source du dynamisme de l'être." We can now answer this objection by noting that the *actus essendi* cannot be identified with the form (which is, rather, *esse substantiale* or *esse in actu*), and that the radical potential principle is not matter but *essentia ut potentia essendi*.

least implicitly) by Heidegger when he says that *Sein* "discloses itself" in *Seiendes* while "withdrawing":[231] inasmuch as *Seiendes* reveals *Sein* it is rich; inasmuch as it conceals *Sein* it is poor. Aristotle described a similar reality when elucidating the intrinsic principles of physical *ens*: matter, form and privation (στέρησις):[232] privation, which is what Thomas would call a *per accidens* principle (not really distinct from matter),[233] means in essence having the capacity to receive a form, but not having it *in actu*. Hence, the substantial form is rich inasmuch as it is in act; but it is poor inasmuch as it is "deprived" of the perfections that the accidental forms can bestow on it. When we frame the *aporia* in this way, we see that it shows forth another curious characteristic of substance: it is both *in actu* and *in potentia* with respect to the *accidentia propria* that inhere in it. The accidents receive their act from the substance and inhere in it, but they are also in a different way the "act" and "perfection" of the substance.

This *aporia* can be resolved by making use of the distinctions we have made, between intensive and extensive quantity and above all between *esse ut actus* and *esse in actu*. We will make use, in this section, of *quaestio* 77 of the *prima pars*, article 6, as a basis for resolving this *aporia*. Although it deals directly with the *accidentia propria*, we will be able to make use of the conclusions drawn from it to shed light on our problem, which has to do more closely with *operari*.

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[231] For a discussion of Heidegger's doctrine on the concealment and unconcealment of being, see CONTAT, "Il confronto con Heidegger …", 200–203.

[232] See DE FINANCE, *Être et agir …*, 160–163.

[233] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De principiis naturae*, vol. 43, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Editori di San Tommaso, Rome 1976 (henceforth cited as *De Prin. Nat.*), 9.

4.1.2 Thomas Aquinas Regarding the Origin of the Powers

Quaestio 77 regards the potencies (or "powers")[234] of the soul and what belongs to them in general, and article 6 specifically has to do with whether these powers flow from the essence. Thomas' answer is affirmative, despite three objections: the (supposed) impossibility of manifold powers to flow from a simple essence; the impossibility that essence could be the cause of the powers, and the impossibility of emanation (which would require movement) from the immobile soul. Regarding the first objection, Thomas says,

> Ad primum ergo dicendum quod ab uno simplici possunt naturaliter multa procedere ordine quodam. Et iterum propter diversitatem recipientium. Sic igitur ab una essentia animae procedunt multae et diversae potentiae, tum propter ordinem potentiarum, tum etiam secundum diversitatem organorum corporalium.[235]

In this way, he makes use of the notion of what we have called *Diremtion*: a simple cause may produce multiple effects, provided there is an order (which implies a *modus* or "measure") and a *subiectum* available to receive the effect. Otherwise, there would be no way to distinguish the participated from the cause that communicates it.

Regarding the second objection, Thomas simply denies the major premise:

> Ad secundum dicendum quod subiectum est causa proprii accidentis et finalis, et quodammodo activa; et etiam ut materialis, inquantum est susceptivum accidentis. Et ex hoc potest accipi quod essentia animae est causa omnium potentiarum sicut finis et sicut principium activum; quarundam autem sicut susceptivum.[236]

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[234] The powers of a substance are, according to Thomas, qualities of the second species. For the fourfold division of quality in Aristotle, see *Categories*, 8b25-10a14; for the same division in Aquinas, see *S.Th.* I-II, q. 49, a. 2, co. Thomas may have corrected Aristotle slightly on this point. Aristotle seems to regard the second-species as "abilitities" such as being good at boxing. (See *Categories*, 9a14-17.) Aquinas, however, would say that faculties such as the intellect and the will would also be included. For example, speaking of powers of the soul (*potentiae animae*), he says, "potentia est in secunda specie qualitatis" (*S.Th.* I-II, q. 56. a. 1, arg. 3).
[235] *Ibid.*, I, q. 77, a. 6, ad 1.
[236] *Ibid.*, I, q. 77, a. 6, ad 2.

In fact, he argues, the *subiectum* (in this case, the essence) is indeed the cause of the proper accidents, in three ways: as final, "active" (that is, quasi-efficient), and quasi-material cause. The last two are rather straightforward: it is the essence (*in act*) that communicates its *esse* (also *in act*) to the *propria*, which makes it the "active" cause; it is also a sort of material cause inasmuch as the accidents relate to the substance as potency to act. To show that the essence is the final cause, we must make recourse to the maxims *omne agens agit propter finem* and *actiones sunt suppositorum* (which are justified by our *resolutio* of *bonum* in chapter 2): the substance emanates the *propria* in order to reach its own fulfillment. It is the task of the sections that follow to elucidate more clearly the metaphysical foundation for this principle.

The third objection is simpler to answer:

> Ad tertium dicendum quod emanatio propriorum accidentium a subiecto non est per aliquam transmutationem; sed per aliquam naturalem resultationem, sicut ex uno naturaliter aliud resultat, ut ex luce color.[237]

It is sufficient to recall that, *per se*, the cause is not altered by its effect; it is only in material compounds, which are simultaneously affected by the *patiens*, that there can be a *transmutatio*.[238] The causality that the substance (or *essentia in actu*) exercises on the accidents is not, therefore, like that of two interacting matter-form compounds, but is a true communication of *esse*.

Turning to the central problem, since Thomas is attempting to resolve the origin of the powers of the human soul, the substances that he is dealing with are, naturally, human beings. In this context, he notes that substantial form and accidental form coincide in that both are "act":

> Respondeo dicendum quod forma substantialis et accidentalis partim conveniunt, et partim differunt. Conveniunt quidem in hoc, quod utraque est actus, et secundum utramque est aliquid quodammodo in actu.[239]

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[237] *S.Th.* I, q. 77, a. 6, ad 3.

[238] See, for example, *ibid.*, I-II, q. 22, a. 1, ad 1: "pati, secundum quod est cum abiectione et transmutatione, proprium est materiae, unde non invenitur nisi in compositis ex materia et forma."

[239] *Ibid.*, I, q. 77, a. 6, co.

In other words, both reduce a potency to act. Of course, they also differ, and for Thomas, the difference has to do with which principle—active or potential—causes the other:

> Primo quidem, quia forma substantialis facit esse simpliciter, et eius subiectum est ens in potentia tantum. Forma autem accidentalis non facit esse simpliciter; sed esse tale, aut tantum, aut aliquo modo se habens, subiectum enim eius est ens in actu. Unde patet quod actualitas per prius invenitur in forma substantiali quam in eius subiecto, et quia primum est causa in quolibet genere, forma substantialis causat esse in actu in suo subiecto.[240]

We saw above in what sense the substantial form makes a substance be *simpliciter*: without the substantial form, the substance simply ceases to exist, *tout court*. On the other hand—as we also saw—an accidental form is *superadditum* and hence only makes a substance be *secundum quid* (or equivalently *esse tale aut tantum*). It is obvious, argues Thomas, that *actualitas* is to be found in the substantial form before it is found in its *subiectum* (which in this case is the prime matter).

Based on what we have discussed above, and using the very words of Thomas, we can give a name to that actuality of the substantial form: it is the substance's *esse in actu*, which it communicates to the matter. That the matter should thus participate in the *esse in actu* given to it by the substantial form follows from the maxim *primum est causa in quolibet genere*—a principle we first saw in section 3.2.3.1 in the arguments for the real composition—which recalls similar language found in the *quarta via* and in other places: "Quod autem dicitur maxime tale in aliquo genere, est *causa omnium quae sunt illius generis*, sicut ignis, qui est maxime calidus, est causa omnium calidorum."[241] In other words, whatever has a perfection *per participationem* must receive it (at least ultimately) from something that possesses it *per se* (which is the *primum* in the *genus*). In this case, the perfection communicated is not the *esse ut actus*—because as we saw the substance itself must participate in an actuality superior to it—but its *esse in actu*, what Thomas calls in other places the *esse substantiale*.

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[240] *S.Th.* I, q. 77, a. 6, co.
[241] *Ibid.*, I, q. 2, a. 3 (emphasis added).

For accidental form, on the other hand, the situation is reversed: actuality is to be found first in the *subiectum*, even though it functions as the "matter," or potential principle, of the accidental form. Hence, the actuality of the accidental form (its own *esse in actu*, or what Thomas calls *esse accidentale*) is caused by that of the *subiectum*:

> Sed e converso, actualitas per prius invenitur in subiecto formae acciden-talis, quam in forma accidentali, unde actualitas formae accidentalis causatur ab actualitate subiecti. Ita quod subiectum, inquantum est in potentia, est susceptivum formae accidentalis, inquantum autem est in actu, est eius pro-ductivum. Et hoc dico de proprio et per se accidente, nam respectu accidentis extranei, subiectum est susceptivum tantum; productivum vero talis accidentis est agens extrinsecum.[242]

Thomas does not say so explicitly, but this *subiectum* can be none other than the *es-sentia in actu*,[243] which serves as the substrate for the accidents. This *subiectum*, paradoxically, is both *in actu* and *in potentia*—evidently in different respects—because it is the substrate that receives the accidental forms, and it also produces them. This duality applies, of course, only to *accidentia propria and per se*—those that find their origin in the substance, not from outside.[244]

The second difference between the two types of form regards final cause:

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[242] *S.Th.* I, q. 77, a. 6, co.

[243] Above, however, he does say "subiectum enim eius [formae accidentalis] est ens in actu."

[244] Returning to our example of the *calidum*, fire possesses heat *proprie et per se*, but iron only *per accidens*, because it does not *produce* the heat. In a similar way, only God can create because only he possesses *esse proprie and per se*.

The analogy of the *maxime calidum* in Thomas' *quarta via* is frequently critiqued as if it depended on the limited scientific knowledge of the day, which considered fire as an element and as the principle of all heat (hence the hottest substance possible). For example, De Fi-nance says, "Il ne faut donc pas donner à un simple exemple une portée qu'il n'a jamais eue dans la pensée de saint Thomas. La comparaison du feu nous paraît simplement destinée à suggérer la correspondance entre le degré de perfection d'un être et son rayon d'influence. Elle amorce le mouvement intellectuel qui doit conduire à la causalité universelle de Dieu." (DE FINANCE, *Être et agir …*, 125). It is true that modern science has challenged the Aris-totelian concept of fire—we know now that it is not a substance (in fact, it is an aggregate of rapidly changing substances), much less an element, and that there is no "upper limit" to temperature. In my opinion, Thomas' argument does not depend on the Aristotelian theory of elements, because by Thomas' own reasoning, an absolutely *maxime calidum* would have to be *calidum subsistens*, which is impossible. In reality, the key similarity between *esse* and *calidum* is that each is a *proprium* and the *maximum* of its genus. Therefore, it seems to me, the analogy of the *maxime calidum* is metaphysically exact.

	Substantial Form	**Accidental Form**
Subiectum	Prime matter	*Essentia in actu (ut limitata)*
Esse	*Simpliciter*	*Tale aut tantum*
Actuality	Prior	Posterior
Causes *esse in actu* in	Prime matter	—
Is produced by	—	*Essentia in actu*
Is for the sake of	—	*Essentia in actu*

Table 4.1: Subtantial form and accidental form in I, q. 77, a. 6

> Secundo autem differunt substantialis forma et accidentalis, quia, cum minus principale sit propter principalius, materia est propter formam substantialem; sed e converso, forma accidentalis est propter completionem subiecti.[245]

In other words, whereas the prime matter is for the sake of the substantial form, conversely, the accidental form is for the sake of the substance. There is, therefore, a correspondence of efficient and final causes, as summarized in table 4.1.

The powers, argues Aquinas, can inhere either directly in the soul itself, or else in the compound of body and soul:

> Manifestum est autem ex dictis quod potentiarum animae subiectum est vel ipsa anima sola, quae potest esse subiectum accidentis secundum quod habet aliquid potentialitatis, ut supra dictum est; vel compositum.[246]

Thomas is thinking here especially of the intellect and will, which have only the soul as their *subiectum*, and the faculties for sensitive knowledge and appetite, which inhere in the body-soul compound.[247] However, since the soul is the source of the actuality in the matter—and hence the compound—the soul must be the ultimate principle even of the sensible powers:[248]

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[245] *S.Th.* I, q. 77, a. 6, co.

[246] *Ibid.*

[247] This distinction is explained in *ibid.*, I, q. 77, a. 1 and 5. Article 1 proves that essence and power are really distinct in creatures, and article 5 proves that the sensitive faculties cannot inhere directly in the soul, since they depend on matter.

[248] See *ibid.*, I, q. 77, a. 5, ad 1: "omnes potentiae dicuntur esse animae, non sicut subiecti, sed sicut principii, quia per animam coniunctum habet quod tales operationes operari possit."

> Compositum autem est in actu per animam. Unde manifestum est quod omnes potentiae animae, sive subiectum earum sit anima sola, sive compositum, fluunt ab essentia animae sicut a principio, quia iam dictum est quod accidens causatur a subiecto secundum quod est actu, et recipitur in eo inquantum est in potentia.[249]

From this, Thomas concludes that every power of the soul flows from a single principle; namely, the very essence of the soul (the *essentia in actu*, in the terminology we have adopted). Being an accident, he says, a power is caused by the *subiectum*, (and in that sense the *subiectum* is *in actu*), and received by the *subiectum* (and in that sense this *subiectum* is *in potentia*).

4.1.3 Resolution of the *Aporia*

In the context of article 6, Thomas is content to prove that the powers all proceed from the soul, and to leave the *aporia* of the essence's simultaneous status as act and potency unanswered. However, using what we have discovered about the *actus essendi*, we are now in a position to resolve it. In reality, this *quaestio* is an application of the maxim *forma dat esse*, which means that the form, being the active principle of the *essentia in actu*, communicates its *esse in actu* both to the matter (if there is any) and to the accidents (at least those that are *per se et propria*). Hence we may rightly regard the form as the source of all the proper *esse in actu* in a substance. If, however, the form were the substance's *ultimate* source of actuality, the essence's relationship with the accidents would be contradictory, because the *esse in actu* of the substance would be the only basis for the composition, but "Non autem est possibile ut idem sit simul in actu et potentia secundum idem, sed solum secundum diversa." [250]

Our distinction between *esse ut actus* and *esse in actu* is what provides the *diversa* that we need to resolve the paradox. In reality, the form (and by extension the essence) functions as a *mediator* between the *esse ut actus* and the *esse in actu* of the

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[249] *S.Th.* I, q. 77, a. 6, co.
[250] *Ibid.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co.

substance. If we look at what we can call the "transcendental" composition between *esse ut actus* and *essentia ut potentia essendi*, "before" the substance is constituted, we see that *essentia* is clearly receptive and hence *in potentia*. If we look at the same essence, as it is "after" it is constituted, we see that it is already *in actu*, thanks to the *esse in actu* that it has received from the *esse ut actus*. This *esse in actu* (what Thomas calls *esse substantiale*) is not the same as *esse ut actus*, but the fruit of a *contractio*. The essence is, therefore, in sense "bivalent": on the "transcendental" level, it is receptive of the *esse ut actus*; on the "predicamental" level it possesses *esse in actu*, which is a participation in the *esse ut actus*, but not identical with it. The fully constituted, "predicamental" essence is, in turn capable of re-transmitting that *esse in actu* to other entities (namely, the *accidentia propria*). This, then, is the answer to our *aporia*: essence—on the predicamental level, is *in actu* inasmuch as it has received its *esse in actu*; it is *in potentia* inasmuch as it is capable of transmitting that *esse*. It is indeed simultaneously *in actu* and *in potentia*, but *secundum diversa*.

4.1.4   Application to Our Problem

Applying what we learned about the powers of the human soul to all substances, we see that the *accidentia propria et per se*, proceed from the substance (or essence) in act by means of emanation, "powered," as it were, by the *actus essendi*, which functions as a *virtus essendi*. In the case of the *propria*, the emergence is necessary; they cannot help but come forth. This insistent tendency to "expand" indicates how the *actus essendi* is not content, so to speak, to remain as a *virtus essendi*. As we said, strictly speaking, it is not *in actu*, but the *source* of actuality, or that *by which* the substance is *in actu* (*quo agit*). Therefore, it "desires" to reach its "fulfillment" in the various levels of *esse in actu*. The principle of causality (namely, that potency is reduced to act only by something in act) implies that every agent produces an effect that is similar to itself: "Unumquodque agens hoc modo agit secundum quod

similitudo facti est in ipso: omne enim agens agit sibi simile." [251] It follows that a substance (aside from God) cannot simply perform operations directly without making use of a faculty or active potency (power): the substance merely "is," and it does not have the power to communicate its *esse* to other substances. Therefore, in order to perform a specific action, it must have an active potency or power adequate to that action that mediates between the substance and the operation.[252] Just as the essence receives *esse substantiale* and re-transmits it, the power receives *esse accidentale* so as to re-transmit it as *operari*.

We are now in a position to elucidate the various levels of act and potency that can be found in any *suppositum*.[253] The "levels" can be described in a "descending" direction, following the communication of act, or else they can be described in "ascending" order, specifying the *subiectum* that each *esse in actu* reduces to act. With respect to act, therefore, God—*Ipsum Esse*—creates a substance, endowing it with an original and radical *actus essendi* (that we have called *esse ut actus*), which functions as the *virtus essendi* that is not yet *in actu* but from which flows all the actuality in the substance. This *actus essendi*—according to the measure given to it by the essence as *potentia essendi*—communicates itself as *esse substantiale*, the *esse in actu* of the substance. The substance, inasmuch as it is *in actu* (*essentia in actu*) then communicates its own *esse in actu* to its *accidentia propria*, endowing them with *esse accidentale*.[254] Some of these *accidentia*—the powers, or active potencies—are themselves only partially *in actu* and hence are capable of communicating their *esse in actu* once more in the form of specific *operari*.

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[251] *Contra Gent.* II, cap. 23, n. 4 (Marietti n. 992). See also *ibid.*, II, cap. 24, n. 3 (Marietti n. 1004): "Omne agens agit sibi simile. Unde oportet quod secundum hoc agat unumquodque agens secundum quod habet similitudinem sui effectus."

[252] Regarding active potencies, see DE FINANCE, *Être et agir …*, 244–246; also IZQUIERDO, "La vita che si apre all'agire", 212–219.

[253] For the levels of *esse in actu* and their corresponding potencies, see CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo*", 57–59.

[254] Accidents that are are not *propria et per se* receive their *esse accidentale* from whatever agent reduces them from potency to act, as fire heats iron.

With respect to *subiectum*, the *operari* are in one sense produced by the power in question—it is the active potency that specifies the action produced, mediating between substance and *operari*—but in another, more profound sense, are produced by the *suppositum*, according to the maxim *actiones sunt suppositorum*:

> Actiones autem sunt suppositorum et totorum, non autem, proprie lo-quendo, partium et formarum, seu potentiarum, non enim proprie dicitur quod manus percutiat, sed homo per manum; neque proprie dicitur quod calor cale-faciat, sed ignis per calorem.[255]

The maxim is justified precisely because of what we have learned: the *operari* flow from the *essentia in actu*, and (since the form, the active principle of the essence, cannot be the original active principle) ultimately the *esse ut actus*. As Thomas puts it, in order to refute Monoenergism:

> Quia vero operationes suppositorum sunt, visum est aliquibus quod si-cut in Christo non est nisi unum suppositum, ita non esset nisi una operatio. Sed non recte consideraverunt: nam in quolibet individuo reperiuntur mul-tae operationes, si sunt plura operationum principia, sicut in homine alia est operatio intelligendi, alia sentiendi, propter differentiam sensus et intellectus: sicut in igne alia est operatio calefactionis, alia ascensionis, propter differ-entiam caloris et levitatis. Natura autem comparatur ad operationem ut eius principium.[256]

A *suppositum* produces many actions, but there is only one *suppositum* that acts, and all of the *operari* flow from the nature. Therefore, the *subiectum* of the operations is the *suppositum in actu*. In turn, the *accidentia propria et per se* (and any other acci-dent that inheres in the substance) have the substance (the *essentia in actu*) as their *subiectum*; not, however, inasmuch as it is *act*, but inasmuch as it is *limited* (as we saw regarding the spiritual substances). The (*esse substantiale*) also has the essence as its *subiectum*, but this time inasmuch as it is a potency apt to receive a specific kind of *esse in actu*. The various levels are summarized in table 4.2.[257] In this way,

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255 *S.Th.* II-II, q. 58, a. 2, co. This maxim is repeated in many places in the *Corpus Thomisticum*; for example, *ibid.*, I, q. 39, a. 5, "ea quae pertinent ad actum, magis propinque se habent ad personas, quia actus sunt suppositorum;" and in the context of Christology, *De verit.* 20, a. 1, arg. 2, "operatio non attribuitur naturae, sed hypostasi; sunt enim operationes suppositorum et particularium."

256 *Compendium*, I, cap. 212.

257 This table is adapted from a similar one found in CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo*", 58.

Level	Potential Principle	Active Principle
Transcendental	*Essentia ut potentia essendi*	*Esse ut actus*
Predicamental (*esse in actu*)	Essence as specifying potency	*Esse substantiale*
	Essence as formal, limited *ens in actu*	*Esse accidentale*
	Suppositum in actu primo	*Operari in actu secundo*

Table 4.2: Levels of *esse in actu* in a *suppositum*

we see that each successive level entails a diminution or *contractio* of the intensity of the *esse in actu* that is communicated and received. On the other hand, as the *actus essendi* communicates *esse in actu* to successive levels, the *suppositum* passes from having only the *active potential* for being (*virtus essendi*) to having *actual* being (*esse in actu*), and in this sense the substance experiences an expansion of *esse*—an expansion that we could characterize as "extensive," because each new *esse in actu* is *superadditum*, in the sense we described above in section 3.4.1. Therefore, this distinction between the "intensive" and "extensive" dimensions of *esse* effectively resolves the *aporia* formulated by W.N. Clarke above (section 4.1.1).

The conjuction of "richness" and "poverty," moreover, occurs at every level, because every level participates in the superior one by means of a mediation. No level acts on its own, until it has received *esse* from the one above it: the *actus essendi* mediates between the creature (the *suppositum*) and its creator (*Ipsum Esse*); the essence mediates between the *actus essendi* and the *accidentia propria*; the powers or active potencies mediate between the essence in act and the *operari*. Here we discover a profound analogy between *actus essendi* and operative powers. Both contain their act virtually: *actus essendi* and *potentia activa* are therefore rightly called *virtus essendi* and *virtus operandi*, the former *in actu primo*, the latter *in actu secundo*.

Thomas' indebtedness to Neoplatonist philosophers shows forth in his theory of the intrinsic structure of *ens*: as summarized in table 4.3, Plotinus' theory of cosmogenesis is structurally very similar to the theory of *actus essendi*, each its respective

Neoplatonism (Cosmogenesis)	Thomas (Ontogenesis)
One: ineffable, unknowable	*Esse ut actus*: *virtus essendi*
Noῦς: measure and mediator (demiurge)	*Essentia*: measure and mediatrix
Ψυχή: Contemplator and agent	*Esse in actu* and *operari*

Table 4.3: The Neoplatonic processions and the procession of *esse* within *ens*.

domain. To Plotinus' unknowable and ineffable One corresponds the *actus essendi*, which before its expansion in to *esse in actu* is only *virtus essendi*, the *source* of act; to the intelligible Noῦς, which in a certain sense measures the One and "partitions" it into the many, corresponds the *essentia ut potentia essendi*, which limits and measures the *actus essendi* and permits the first *Diremtion*; and to the Soul (Ψυχή) corresponds the various levels of *esse in actu* found in the *accidentia propria* and *operari*. As in Plotinus, each level mediates the communication of actuality from the one above it; hence what Plotinus (erroneously) applied to extrinsic causes, Thomas brilliantly applied to the *intrinsic* causes of *ens*.

4.2 *Actus Essendi*: Efficient, Formal, and Final Cause

If the *esse in actu* of *ens* proceeds from the *actus essendi* in a fashion analogous to the way Plontius thought *ens* proceeded from the One, then it seems reasonable that the *esse in actu* should seek to *return* to its origin. We saw the need for a *reditus* when we briefly discussed *Ipsum Esse* as the ultimate extrinsic cause of *ens*: God, *Ipsum Esse*, communicates his *esse* to his creatures. In God, of course, there is no distinction between *actus primus* and *actus secundus*: he is not only fullness of *virtus essendi* but fullness of *esse in actu*. In addition, God is the exemplar of every perfection that is desirable; whatever one discovers as *bonum* has its model in God, to an infinite degree of intensity, and already *in actu*. It follows that God is the *Summum Bonum* to which all things tend: all things find their ultimate perfection, their ultimate expansion into *esse in actu* in Him, and it is precisely this union with

the Creator that constitutes the *reditus* of the creature to God. God is the *Summum Bonum*, not only inasmuch as he is the ultimate "object" of desire, but also inasmuch as creatures are perfect to the degree that the imitate him.[258]

A similar argument can be made for the *intrinsic* principles of *ens*, provide we make the similar adjustments. The *esse ut actus* communicates itself to *esse in actu*; both *actus essendi* and the *essentia ut potentia essendi* that measures it, are exemplars of *esse in actu*: the former, inasmuch as it is act; the latter, inasmuch as it specifies that act (in analogy to the way God is the twofold exemplary cause of *ens*, inasmuch as he is *esse per essentiam* and also *divine idea*). A created *suppositum*, however, is different from God, because it has suffered *Diremtion*:[259] since it is not *esse per essentiam*, it possesses its *actus essendi* as a distinct principle. Likewise, it receives its *actus essendi* as a *virtus essendi* that is not yet *in actu* until it "expands" into *esse substantiale* and *accidentale*. As we saw, the *virtus essendi* is so "potent" that it cannot help but expand in this way, at least so far as to produce the *accidentia propria*. It is evident, however, that even *entia* of the same species realize the "potential" of their *virtus essendi* to differing degrees: for example, some oak trees survive to adulthood and manage to produce acorns, but others remain stunted or even die blighted. The more "distant" expansions of *esse* (above all *operari*, but also certain *habitus* and *dispositiones*) are in a certain sense "facultative": they may

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[258] This is a principle already well understood by Aristotle. See, for example, *Ethics*, E, 13, 1153b31–32: ἴσως δὲ καὶ διώκουσιν οὐχ [τὴν ἡδονήν] ἣν οἴονται οὐδ᾽ ἣν ἂν φαῖεν, ἀλλὰ τὴν αὐτήν [ἡδονήν]: πάντα γὰρ φύσει ἔχει τι θεῖον, "Likewise, however, they also pursue not [the pleasure] that they think or whatever they say, but the same [pleasure]: for all by nature have something divine." (my translation). In other words, behind every pleasure experience is a foretaste of the pleasure experienced by God (which we know is above all that of contemplation, νόησις νοήσεως).

Saint Thomas comments on this passage as follows: "natura tamen omnes inclinat in eandem delectationem sicut in optimam, puta in contemplationem intelligibilis veritatis, secundum quod omnes homines natura scire desiderant. Et hoc contingit, quia omnia habent naturaliter in se ipsis quiddam divinum, scilicet inclinationem naturae, quae dependet ex principio primo; vel etiam ipsam formam, quae est huius inclinationis principium" (THOMAS AQUINAS, *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, vol. 47, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII, Sancta Sabina, Rome 1969 [henceforth cited as *Sent. Ethic.*], lib. 7, l. 1, n. 14).

[259] Again, we must stress that *Diremtion* is a *positive* thing, because it is what permits the existence of creatures really distinct from their Creator.

arise, and they are the natural result of the *impetus* given by the *actus essendi*, as measured by the essence, but they may be impeded. By being prevented from coming to fruition, they do not thereby stop being an exigency of the *virtus essendi*: the essence measures which types of *esse in actu* "ought" to be put into act, and if in fact they *fail* to do so, the *suppositum* experiences what could be termed "frustration" or "stuntedness." The *actus essendi*—itself not yet *in actu*—as it were "clamors" for expansion into *esse in actu*, and the *suppositum* "suffers" if it does not reach its end. Again, W.N. Clarke sums up this idea very well:

> Thus it is proper to every being, insofar as it is in act, to overflow into action, to act according to its nature. […] The act of existence of any being (its "to be" or *esse*) is its "first act," its abiding inner act, which tends naturally, by the very innate dynamism of the act of existence itself, to overflow into a "second act," which is called action or activity. Every second act of a being points back toward its first act as to its ground and source, and every first act, in turn, points forward to its natural self-expression in a second act.[260]

In other words, it is the very structure of *ens* that produces the *ordo ad finem*: the *suppositum* is endowed with a limited but abundant *actus essendi*, measured and determined by the *essentia ut potentia essendi*. It is inevitable that it should "overflow" into *esse in actu* and "desire" its "fulfillment" in *operari*.[261] In this way, we can jus-

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[260] W.N. Clarke, "Action as the Self-Revelation of Being: A Central Theme in the Thought of St. Thomas", in Id., *Explorations in Metaphysics, Being—God—Person*, University of Notre Dame, South Bend (Indiana) 1994, 64.

[261] I will venture to make an analogy for how a *suppositum* is to be conceived according to Saint Thomas. If for the metaphysics of essence and classical Thomism the image is a roomful of statues, it seems to me that a hydroelectric dam better illustrates the internal dynamism of a substance. A hydroelectric dam is a concrete barrier that blocks the path of a river in an appropriate place, so that the water is allowed to accumulate in a valley behind it. The water amassed exerts enormous pressure, which can then be harnessed to produce electricity. The accumulated water is like the *actus essendi*, or as we have called it, *virtus essendi*; the dam is like the essence, which measures and limits the water, but also makes it possible for it to accumulate; the water actually touching the dam, which allows it to perform its work is like *esse in actu* or *esse substantiale*; the water flowing out at high pressure is like the *esse in actu* of the *propria*; and finally, the electricity is like the operation produced by the powers or active potencies. Note how the amassed water (*actus essendi*) is far superior in power to the water actually found at the dam (*essence*). For this reason, it exerts a tremendous "pressure" to spring forth from the dam. Nevertheless, the amassed water is only a *virtus essendi*; it is not yet *in actu* and does not reach its "fulfillment" until it emerges, first as a stream of pressurized water (*accidentia propria*), and then as electricity (*operari*). Nevertheless, the amassed water (*virtus essendi*) is still *limited* or, if you will,

tify the Thomistic maxim, "Omnis substantia est propter suam operationem."[262] As Clarke points out, however, not only does *esse ut actus* have *esse in actu* as its end, in a different way, *esse in actu* and in particular *operari* has *esse ut actus* as its end. More precisely, the *suppositum* has the *actus essendi* as its end, in the sense that its "goal" is the complete realization of all the "potential" contained in its *virtus essendi*.[263]

"contracted;" it does not exhaust all the potential that the river could generate (with a bigger dam, for example).

[262] *Contra Gent.* I, cap. 45, n. 6 (Marietti n. 387).

[263] Regarding *actus essendi* as an intrinsic final cause of *esse in actu*, see CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo*", 61–62.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 *Ens* and its Intrinsic Dynamism

Let us now summarize in more systematic way what we have discovered about *ens* and its intrinsic dynamism. In a twofold *resolutio*, we investigated the intrinsic causes of both *bonum* and then *ens* itself. There is no need to demonstrate the *fact* of *ens* or *bonum*: both of these are original notions experienced directly and infallibly by any subject endowed with an intellect and will by the very exercise (*in actu exercito*) of those faculties. Man grasps them nearly always through the exercise of his sensitive faculties as well, but regardless, *ens* is known primarily because it *acts* upon the intellect, and *bonum* is known because *ens* is presented to the will as *desirable*. We found that although the notion of the good (*ratio boni*) is appetibility, it is founded on a more profound reality, which is its intrinsic perfection (*natura boni*). Although *bonum* is grasped primarily through perfection *in actu secundo*, it is rooted nevertheless in the *esse in actu* of those perfections and ultimately—through the mediation of the *essentia in actu*—in the very *actus essendi* of the *suppositum* that is good. We also noted that a thing can be good inasmuch as it is *perfective* (inasmuch as it makes the subject desiring it more perfect) and also inasmuch as it is *perfect* (inasmuch as it already imitates, as it were, the perfection in the good that it desires). This is, so to speak, the *fact* of *bonum*, but our investigation seeks the metaphysical *foundation* of this fact. Certainly *omne agens agit propter finem*—even a staunch materialist must on some level acknowledge the *fact*—but the question is *why* does *ens* act at all? Why must it be an *agens* and seek its own perfection?

In order to discover this foundation, we must do a *resolutio secundum rationem* of the intrinsic causes of *ens*. With Aristotle, we discover that *ens* applies to a whole series of realities, which do not simply form an unrelated "heap," but are ordered in

a hierarchy: first substance, because it is χωριστόν and τόδε τι, and then the various types of accidents. By a linguistic analysis, we can determine that *ens* reduces to substance and accident, on the one hand, and act and potency on the other; and that ontologically speaking, accident depends on and reduces to substance, and potency reduces to act. Moreover, substance is most properly τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι—what we have called *essentia in actu*, the concept that distances Aristotle from any type of essentialism—and the most perfect act seems to be existence (τὸ ὑπάρχειν). *Ens*, therefore, reduces to substance in act.

With Thomas Aquinas, we can take this *resolutio* further: the intrinsic principles of substance *in acto primo*—matter and form—and of a suppositum *in actu secundo*—substance and accident—are insufficient for explaining either the degrees of intensity in being among different species (especially among species that display completely different levels of *operari*: inanimate objects, plants, animals, men, and angels) or the possibility of purely spiritual creatures. Thanks to the Platonic (and especially Neoplatonic) reflection on the Good and its essential "generosity," we realize that act (the foundation of the good) is essentially "expansive": it "fills" the "space" allowed for it by the potency it is composed with or else—if the potency is entirely absent—it is infinite and unlimited. Indeed, only a potency can limit act. Since we find *supposita* with differing intensities of being (as reflected by qualitatively superior and inferior levels of activity—ranging from merely "being," to "living," to "sensitive," to "rational") and since there are even distinct substances without any matter (namely, angels), it must follow that the original ἐνέργεια that actuates *ens* (which we call *esse ut actus* or *actus essendi*) is composed with a potency (which we call *essentia ut potentia essendi*). *Esse ut actus* must be *prior* to all the proper actuality in the *suppositum*, and the *essentia ut potentia* must be the radical *subiectum* that receives and measures the radical act, more radically "potential" than any other potency.

Esse ut actus and *essentia ut potentia essendi*, then, are the ultimate active and potential principles of *ens*, and all *ens*—even on the intrinsic level—reduces to a single active principle: *actus essendi*, which is also revealed to be the *virtus essendi*, the source and, so to speak, store of "power" for all the proper actuality in a *suppositum*. It is a *virtus essendi* also in the sense that it is not "realized" or "fulfilled" unless it "expands" into all the levels of act (which we call *esse in actu*) that we used *in via causalitatis* to arrive at the radical active priciple: *operari*, *esse accidentale* (*proprium*), and *esse substantiale*. The *actus* or *virtus essendi* is much more "powerful" than any of the single levels of *esse in actu*, however, and we are to imagine it as exerting "pressure" on the essence so as to "expand" as far as it can. It is also a "*virtus*" *essendi* because it is not properly speaking *in actu* but *quo agit*; it is, so to speak, *in actu* only in the *esse in actu* that flows from it. Although we did not discuss it in detail, the final step of the *resolutio* would have been *resolutio secundum rem*, to discover the *extrinsic* causes of *ens*: namely, using the *quarta* and *quinta viae* to discover God as the efficient, exemplary (both as cause of *esse participatum* and as the divine idea of the creature), and final cause of all *ens*. *Ens*, therefore, proceeds from God and reaches its fulfillment by returning to him and imitating him.

The next step is to perform a *compositio*, beginning with the Creator. In order to create a *suppositum*, he must effect what we have called a *Diremtion* or "split" between *esse* and essence, because unless there is a *subiectum* to receive it, there can be no other *esse* than *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. The *Diremtion* also entails a *contractio*: because the *actus essendi* is received, it is much less in intensity than *Ipsum Esse*, and the intensity diminishes in each successive participation (each of which, therefore, also entails a *contractio*). *Actus essendi* and *essentia ut potentia essendi* are best described, therefore, as co-created, and God creates them in order to manifest his glory (because he himself can suffer no movement from potency to act whatsoever) and so that his creatures will return to him and imitate him. *Actus essendi* and *essentia ut potentia* are the radical principles, considered "before" the constitution of *ens*. On

the other hand, in an *ens* considered as already constituted, we find that the *actus essendi* necessarily communicates itself so as to actuate the essence, thus producing the *essentia in actu*, which is *in actu* by means of its proper *esse in actu*; namely *esse substantiale*. In turn, the *esse substantiale* communicates itself to the various *accidentia propria*, whose *esse in actu* (*esse accidentale*) has as its *subiectum* the *essentia in actu*, considered as formal, but limited (and hence partly potential) act. This "expansion" of the *actus essendi* results precisely because the *actus essendi* is a rich and potent *virtus essendi* that cannot be "contained" by the essence (even if the essence does measure and limit it). Indeed, for *esse substantiale* and *accidentale* (at least of the *accidentia propria*), the procession is *necessary*: there is no *suppositum* that lacks them. Some of the *accidentia propria*—namely, the qualities of the second species, which we call "powers" or "active potencies"—act as mediators that "channel" the substance's *esse substantiale* into specific *operari*, because the substance merely "is," and in order for it to "do" something, some potency with a similarity to the operation proposed must mediate. *Operari*, then, is the ultimate "expansion" of the *actus* or *virtus essendi*, and unlike the *accidentia propria*, it is sometimes possible to impede its realization. Doing so, however, results in "frustration" or "stunting" of the *suppositum*: the *virtus essendi*, in such a case, is impeded from expanding as much as it "wants" to. (Strictly speaking, of course, it is the *suppositum* that tends to or desires its own fulfillment, not one of its principles, because *actiones sunt suppositorum*.)

The *suppositum* reveals itself to be a true microcosm of divine causality. The *actus* or *virtus essendi* is, evidently, the efficient cause of the various levels of *esse in actu*; however, it is also the exemplary cause, because it is the "model" from which the lesser kinds *esse* are communicated, and it contains them virtually. The *essentia ut potentia essendi* is an exemplary cause in a different way, because it measures and determines the "intensive quantity" of *virtus essendi* and specifies the types of *esse in actu* that are proper to the *suppositum* and the extent to which they should expand.

Esse in actu, on its various levels, is a kind of "extensive quantity" when all the levels are considered together, because *esse accidentale* and *operari* are *superadditi*: the *suppositum* acquires more *actus secundus* by obtaining additional and more perfect action. Crucially, we find that *esse in actu* is the *final cause* of the *actus* or *virtus essendi*, precisely because of the intrinsic "generosity" of act, and its consequent tendency to "expand." In this way, *omnis substantia est propter suam operationem.* In a different way, the *actus essendi* is the final cause of the *suppositum*, which seeks to be fulfilled by realizing all of the "potential" that is found in its *virtus essendi*. This imitation of divine causality is, of course, affected by *Diremtion*: in God, efficient, exemplary, and formal cause all coincide in the same *Ipsum Esse. Esse (per essentiam*, essence, *operari*, and *Summum Bonum* all coincide in him. In creatures, on the other hand, the causes are "split" among different principles, as described above. Moreover, whereas God communicates his *esse* directly without mediation (with respect to the creature), *actus essendi* itself plays a mediating role between *Ipsum Esse* and the *suppositum*, and each successive level of *esse in actu* is communicated by means of a mediation. In this way, we correctly apply the Neoplatonist cosmogenesis, which posits successive necessary and mediated communications of act, not to the *extrinsic* causes of *ens*, but to its *intrinsic* causes. We must stress, however, that *Diremtion* and *contractio* are positive realities, because they *permit* created *ens* to exist, providing the *suppositum* with its receptive capacity for *esse*.

This reflection resolves the *aporiae* regarding the "richness" and "poverty" of *esse*, as well as the apparent contradiction in having the substance be both the *subiectum* and the cause of the accidents, both *in actu* and *in potentia* with respect to them. The *poverty* of *ens* results from the decrease in its "intensive quantity," the *contractio* that it experiences as it "cascades," first from *Ipsum Esse* into *actus essendi*, and then from *actus essendi* into the levels of *esse in actu*. The "richness" of *esse* resides virtually in the *actus essendi*, and reveals itself as it "expands" into *esse in actu*, which in fact is a type of "extensive quantity." Likewise, the essence can be both in

act and in potency precisely because it *receives* its act from the *actus essendi*, but it only receives it *partially* (*esse substantiale* suffers a *contractio* like any other *esse in actu*); therefore, it is a "limited" act that has "room" to accomodate the inherence of the accidents. Inasmuch as it is act, it communicates its act and "produces" the *accidentia propria*. Inasmuch as it is limited, and even "deprived" of the accidents, it provides a *subiectum* in which they can inhere. The dynamic of both *virtus essendi* and the *essentia in actu* bear a resemblance to active potencies or "powers": all three are mediators that "receive" act from a superior entity and "re-transmit" it to an inferior one.

In this way, we have resolved our initial question: why does *ens* seek its own fulfillment? In summary, it does so because God, *Ipsum Esse*, endows it with a certain "intensive quantity" of *actus essendi*, which we can characterize as a *virtus essendi*, a quantity measured and limited by *essentia ut potentia essendi*, but not completely contained by it. This *actus essendi* is so "powerful" that it necessarily expands into *esse substantiale* and *esse accidentale*. This same power produces an inexorable tendency in the *suppositum* to expand its *esse in actu* as far as it can possibly go, through its *operari*.

5.2   Implications for Ethics and Theology

5.2.1   The Ontological Criterion of Goodness

The intrinsic tendency of *esse* to "expand" suggests what could be termed a criterion for "metaphysically good" action: a *suppositum* "should" act in whatever way expands its *esse in actu* to the maximum extent allowed by its essence. We could call reaching such a state "metaphysical happiness or εὐδαιμονία." For non-spiritual creatures, the criterion naturally has no moral value whatsoever. However, even in such creatures, we witness a certain "metaphysical frustration" on the part of those that are impeded from reaching the perfection proper to them. For example, there

is a certain deprivation involved when oak trees fall victim to blight or drought, or when an animal dies. It is not, of course, a true tragedy, because the *suppositum* involved in either case is not spiritual, and hence cannot truly be aware of what it suffers. However, when a similar tragedy occurs in person (man or angel)—above all when it has to do with those *operationes* that perfect the person *simpliciter*; that is, free and voluntary acts that are *contra naturam*—it is a true privation, even in the metaphysical sense, and if it is serious, it constitutes a metaphysical catastrophe.[264]

This metaphysical grounding is enormously helpful for ethics, especially to understand the dynamics of human acts. All actions emerge from a *suppositum*'s *actus essendi*, unless an outside agent influences it (as in the case of iron heated by fire). For spiritual substances—persons—this includes, naturally, the cognitive powers (intellect and faculties for sensible knowledge) and the tendencies or appetites that stem from them (the will and the sensitive appetites). Even these powers' *operari*—immanent acts of the will, its external actuation, and even the passions that spring forth from the sensitive tendencies—flow ultimately from the same *actus essendi*. However, this *actus essendi* is measured and determined by the essence that is co-created with it. It specifies the kinds of *esse in actu* that can spring forth, some of which, as we saw, appear necessarily, and others of which can fail to appear. In spiritual creatures, some of these actuations appear entirely at the discretion of the

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[264] De Finance, however, considers εὐδαιμονία to be insufficient as a criterion for morality, because it imposes itself, not as a physical necessity, but as a necessity of *convenientia*. I am *obliged* (morally) to act according to what makes me happy, but not *constrained* to do so. See DE FINANCE, *Essai sur l'agir humain*, 259: "l'impossibilité où je suis de ma volonté-nature, ne constitue ancore, *si l'on s'en tient là*, qu'une nécessité physique et subjective. En voulant mon bonheur, en ne pouvant pas m'empêcher de le vouloir, je conmprends aussi que rien, objectivement, n'impose cette nécessité à ma raison." See also his critique of eudemonism in J. DE FINANCE, *Éthique générale*, Presses de l'Université Grégorienne, 1967, 114–119.

It seems to me that what we have learned about the dynamism of *ens* can help give εὐδαιμονία its proper place. Metaphysically speaking what *founds* the reality of moral obligation is the expansiveness of the *actus essendi* and the "measure" provided by the essence. The desired end result—fulfillment or ἐντελέχεια, which consists in the expansion of *esse* into the *esse in actu* due to it—is what constitutes happiness.

suppositum (in this case a person): the free and voluntary acts that are mediated by the will, as well as those *habitus* and *dispositiones* resulting from those acts.

Again, it is the essence that determines and specifies whether the presence of these "voluntary" expansions of *esse* are necessary for the person's happiness or not. Clearly, for spiritual creatures, some of these expansions will be strictly necessary for fulfillment (*ad bene esse*) and others "facultative" but most fitting (*ad melius esse*). The essence fixes a certain "minimum" level of *esse in actu* necessary for fulfillment—which forms the basis for the natural law—but the concrete distinction between *bene esse* and *melius esse*, naturally, depends the essence and as well on many other factors, especially the various *habitus* and *dispositiones* that constitute the person's particular situation.[265] For example, remaining chaste is necessary for the happiness of all men (*ad bene esse*), but choosing a celibate lifestyle such as a priestly vocation is fitting *ad melius esse* for those persons whom God has called. As can be seen, a metaphysics of *agere*, properly conceived in light of an intensive and emergent *actus* (*virtus*) *essendi*, helps to make a coherent whole out of the many apparently disparate aspects of ethics—for example, happiness, virtue, freedom, the will, right reason, human acts, and obligation—all of which have their metaphysical root in the emergent *esse ut actus*.

5.2.2 Trinitarian Theology

Although this paper is, of course, philosophical in nature, we will make some mention in passing of the implications that a good metaphysics of *actus essendi*, thus extended to *operari*, has for dogmatic theology. First of all, it cannot have escaped the reader that the three great metaphysical domains—*esse*, *essentia*, and *operari*—and especially the three corresponding types of extrinsic causality—efficient,

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[265] For a discussion of the role of essence, or nature, in determining the morality of acts, see chapter III of R. Lucas Lucas, *Absoluto relativo: Presupuestos antropológicos del mensaje revelado*, BAC, Madrid 2011, 31–44, and also Millán-Puelles, *La libre afirmación …*, 459–475.

exemplary, and final—can readily be attributed to the three Persons of the Trinity.[266] Efficient causality is attributable to the Father, who is Principle without Principle, the Unbegotten Begetter of the Son. To the Son, who is the Eternal Word, the Image of the Father, and the Mediator between Father and Spirit, is easily attributable exemplary causality. (To him is attributed the place of the divine ideas, like the Neoplatonic Νοῦς, but appropriately purified.) Finally, to the Spirit, who proceeds from the love of Father and Son, is attributed divine action. The intrinsic dynamism of *ens*, therefore, is a true *vestigium* of the Holy Trinity.

As a speculation, it seems to me that it would be fruitful to investigate whether the metaphysics of *actus essendi*, as applied to *operari*, would shed light into the problem of the *Filioque*. On a theological level, the *Filioque* controversy arises from a difference between the Greek and Latin conceptions of procession (ἐκπόρευσις and *processio*): the former always includes the *ultimate* origin of the procession (hence the Spirit ἐκπόρευται from the Father alone); the latter is a more generic notion that does not include the ultimate origin (hence the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from a single principle).[267] It is worth exploring the striking similarity here between these notions of procession and what we have discussed regarding the distinction between *esse ut actus* and *esse in actu*.

5.2.3 Christology

The metaphysics of *actus essendi* makes it much easier, it seems to me, to develop a Christology that truly takes into account the great Christological dogmas. Jesus is one ὑπόστασις in two unmixed, immutable, undivided, and unseparated natures.[268] Using the thesis we have exposed in this paper, it is easy to show the absur-

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[266] For a discussion of this topic see CONTAT, "*Esse, essentia, ordo*", 23–31.

[267] This distinction is very well explained in PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY, "The Greek and Latin Traditions Regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit", in *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 20 (1995), 3 and 6.

[268] For an excellent overview of the contribution of the Council of Chalcedon and Christological speculation to metaphysics, see chapters IV and V of LUCAS LUCAS, *Absoluto relativo*, 49–62.

dity of the various Christological heresies: against Apollinarianism, Monotheletism, and Monoenergism, it is evident that from Jesus' human nature must flow a complete human soul (*esse substantiale*), a complete human intellect and will (*esse accidentale*), and properly human acts (*operari*). We can see that Monophysism (at least that of Eutyches) cannot be true, because it would violate what we learned about *Diremtion* and *contractio*: Jesus cannot be a true man without a human nature that is really distinct from the Divine Nature (*Ipsum Esse*) and from its own *esse*. What about Jesus' *actus essendi*? A human nature endowed with its own, "contracted" *actus essendi* would be a fully formed *suppositum* (ὑπόστασις): this is the error of Nestorius. Christ does not have his own human ὑπόστασις; therefore, neither does he have his own human, contracted *actus essendi*. Rather, he is hypostatically united to the Word, which is the entire *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, or if you will, *Virtus Essendi Subsistens*. This condition explains the ἐνυποστασία of Neochalcedonianism, as well as the *communicatio idiomatum*: did Jesus the man create the universe? Yes, he certainly did, through his *Virtus Essendi*, which is the *Virtus Essendi* of the Divine Word.

5.2.4   Grace and the Supernatural

We made a brief mention of the implications that the metaphysics of *actus essendi* has for the doctrine of grace and its relationship with nature. With the notions we have developed, we see clearly that no type of grace can be an *accidens proprium*, but rather must be applied to the soul by an outside agent (namely, God). Sanctifying grace does, of course, confer a type of *esse accidentale*, but it is communicated from God, and (not unlike the *esse substantiale*) it permeates all of the actuality of the soul. In particular, it endows the intellect and the will with new virtuality, which makes possible acts of faith, hope, and charity, and endows them with infused moral virtues. (Some of the virtues—faith and hope—can remain even in the absence of grace, unless counteracted by contrary acts of the will.) From this point of view,

we can see clearly that grace takes nothing away from nature, but rather enhances it. Grace *increases* man's freedom, and does not diminish it. We see also that the "contracted" *actus essendi* of a person, even though it is much more "powerful," so to speak, than the essence, is nevertheless limited, and so it does not have sufficient *virtus* to impel the person to reach the end it longs for: the Beatific Vision. The *desire* to see God arises from having a *virtus essendi* sufficiently powerful to allow the person to be united intentionally to every form (to be *quodammodo omnia*). Since man is capable knowing and desiring all forms, *a fortiori* he must (at least implicitly) desire the Creator of those forms, their *Summum Bonum*—hence the *desiderium naturale vivendi Deum*. The *virtus essendi*, however, cannot raise the soul to God all by itself: it needs the help of grace. Similarly, actual graces work by enhancing the powers of the soul (intellect and will), communicating to them an increased *esse in actu*; there is no question, therefore, of the grace being inefficacious if the person refuses to put it into action. In this way, grace in no way impedes freedom, and freedom in no way impedes divine efficacy. A metaphysics of *actus essendi*, therefore, goes a long way to answering the classic problem raised by H. de Lubac in his *Mystère du surnaturel*, regarding the legitimacy of the hypothesis of "pure nature." [269]

5.2.5 Sacramental Theology

Finally, it seems to me that the doctrine of the *actus essendi* sheds much light on the question of how the sacraments transmit grace. The sacraments work *ex opere*

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[269] See especially chapter V, "Le « *donum perfectum* »," in H. DE LUBAC, *Le Mystère du surnaturel*, vol. 12, Oeuvres complètes, du Cerf, Paris 2000, 105–134.

For example, the doctrine of *actus essendi* that we have exposed effectively resolves the *aporia* that de Lubac raises regarding the "gift of being" (106–108). In summary, he says that *esse* cannot be regarded as "gift" in exactly the same way as a man gives a gift to another, because unlike the "gift" of *esse*, ordinary gifts presuppose that the receiver already exists. (In reality, "gift" is simply an image for any sort of communication of a perfection.) We concede the point, of course, but what we learned about *Diremtion* sheds light on the problem: as long as we admit that God co-creates the *essentia ut potentia essendi* together with the *actus essendi*, then we can validly say that the essence *receives* the *actus essendi*; we saw in section 3.2.3.1 that Thomas himself asserts this in the *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 7, a. 1. In that very precise sense, we can say that a substance receives the gift of *esse*.

operato, certainly, but this fact does not mean that the minister, recipient, and the "matter" for the sacrament have no causative role to play. Clearly, when one of these elements is missing or somehow impeded (by a lack of intention, for example), the sacrament is invalid: *sublata causa, tollitur effectus*. It seems to be a case of the classic problem of the *concursus divinus*: how can God and man both be the cause of the sacrament at the same time? The issue becomes much less problematic if we assert that God communicates to the minister the *power* (active potency) to confer the sacrament, again through a communicated *esse in actu*. Therefore, the powers of the minister can be characterized as a kind of instrumental causality, in which the *virtus* to produce the effect originates from God, but in such a way that the real causality and freedom of the minister are in no way impeded.[270]

5.3   In Dialogue with Philosophies of Action

The theses proposed in this paper also provide many possibilities for dialogue with many of the philosophies of action that arose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[271] Modern philosophy, which has its roots in the metaphysics of essence, is commonly accused of "objectifying" reality, reducing it to the aspects that are measurable and observable (especially, through mathematical consideration): this tendency is certainly discernible in the era beginning with Descartes and ending with Kant. In reaction against this tendency, Blondel, for example, proposed a new *ini-*

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[270] This is, in fact, exactly how Thomas characterizes the causality of the sacraments: "Secundo autem modo homo potest operari ad interiorem effectum sacramenti, inquantum operatur per modum ministri. Nam eadem ratio est ministri et instrumenti, utriusque enim actio exterius adhibetur, sed sortitur effectum interiorem ex virtute principalis agentis, quod est Deus" (*S.Th.* III, q. 64, a. 1, co.). In a similar way, when the sacrament imposes a character, the character behaves as a power that flows from the principle agent (God): "Character etiam, qui est interior quorundam sacramentorum effectus, est virtus instrumentalis, quae manat a principali agente, quod est Deus" (*ibid.*).

[271] For an excellent discussion of the ways in which Thomism, in the light of the metaphysics of *actus essendi*, can dialogue with contemporary philosophies, see W.N. CLARKE, "Thomism and Contemporary Philosophical Pluralism", in *Modern Schoolman* 67 (1990), 123–139.

tium philosophandi based on the will, as we saw. In a similar way, Heidegger decried the objectivization of *Seiendes* as present-at-hand,[272] and Sartre maintained man's absolute freedom.[273] All of these currents have in common the desire to emphasize the dynamic and "vital" character of man. "Substance," "nature," and "essence" seem to be concepts too cold and calculating to apply to man. In a sense, the critique of these philosophies is justified, when it is applied to a philosophical tradition that has its roots in the metaphysics of essence (as is the case with modern philosophy). For example, Heidegger and Sartre are not entirely wrong when they make authenticity the criterion of morality. As Sartre puts it,

> [L]'authenticité et l'individualité se gagnent : je ne serai ma propre authenticité que si, sous l'influence de l'appel de la conscience (*Ruf des Gewissens*), je m'élance vers la mort, avec décision-résolue (*Entschlossenheit*), comme vers ma possibilité la plus propre. A ce moment, je me dévoile à moi-même dans l'authenticité et les autres aussi je les élève avec moi vers l'authentique.[274]

Of course, we must hasten to point out, against Sartre and Heidegger's anthropology,[275] that man is much more than a "thrown projection" (*geworfen Entwurf*) or "absolute freedom." The radical source of his power to make free choices is his *actus essendi*, which he possesses thanks to the essence that measures it. However, in acting well—that is, in accord with the measure provided by the essence—man indeed becomes fulfilled, or, if you will, authentic: more a man, or more perfectly a man. The metaphysics of *actus essendi* seems to be the answer to the concerns of these philosophers, while providing a much more solid metaphysical basis: each *suppositum* has a "source" of ἐνέργεια all its own, and hence has real autonomy. It has an essence, which provides it with a certain amount of determination (we are

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[272] See especially Heidegger's critique of Descartes in Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 89–101 (122–134 in the English translation).

[273] For an overview of Sartre's concept of freedom, see Lucas Lucas, *Orizzonte vertical*, 35–37.

[274] J.-P. Sartre, *L'être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, Gallimard, Paris 1943, 285.

[275] "Anthropology," however, is not a term that either one would have applied to a metaphysics of man.

not "pure freedom"), but it is also free and dynamic, to the degree that the essence, measure of *actus essendi*, permits it.

5.4   Final Conclusions

I think we can conclude, therefore, that the theory of *actus essendi*, as applied to *operari*, is revealed to have an enormous fecundity and explicative power. We could say that it simultaneously explains the complete dependence of the creature on its creator, while at the same time preserving its real, but participated, autonomy of being and action. The theory avoids entirely the problem of the "conflict" between divine and creaturely causality, distinguishing and respecting each ambit without placing them in opposition. It would be worth exploring the enormous fecundity it seems to have for ethics and as a preparation for dogmatic theology. Hence, the metaphysics of *actus essendi* points the way to restoring philosophy in its role as *ancilla theologiae*. It is also extremely helpful in dialogue with those philosophies emphasizing *operari* that arose after the fall of modern philosophy: the action theory of Blondel, transcendental Thomism, and the various currents of Existentialism. A metaphysics of *operari*, understood in the light of *actus essendi* considered as *virtus essendi*, it seems to me, is the answer to the excellent problems raised by these philosophies.

The questions that we asked at the beginning of the paper were the following: why does *ens* always seek its own perfection? Why does *omne agens* always *agit propter finem*? Is there an answer to this problem on the *intrinsic* level, or must we make recourse to the extrinsic causes? We we are now in a position to answer them succintly: *ens* seeks its own perfection, and *omne agens agit propter finem*, because its act of being (*esse ut actus*) is a source of virtuality (*virtus essendi*) that is much greater than the essence that measures it. Act is "generous" and expansive, and hence the *actus* or *virtus essendi* necessarily flows out into the *esse accidentale*

of the *accidentia propria*. Even this expansion, however, does not exhaust the power of the *actus essendi*, and hence the *suppositum* seeks to expand its *esse in actu* as far as possible into the *operari* and *habitus* that the essence determines are suitable to it. The very intrinsic structure of *ens*, therefore, produces a "desire" in every *ens* for its own perfection, which could also be called an *ordo ad finem*. The intrinsic causes of this "desire," however, are an image of and a participation in the extrinsic causes of *ens*: God as efficient, exemplary, and final cause. Can we go from an *is* to an *ought*? We most certainly can, if the "is" represents an act of being that is a *virtus essendi*, the source of every proper actuality.

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