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Notes on Being and Predication

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Notes on Being and Predication

In a previous article,¹ we considered the nature of the existential proposition against the background of an interpretation of St. Thomas which claims that existence cannot be a predicate because it cannot be conceived. Existence, on this view, is attained intellectually only in the judgment. Thus, since *being* means "that which is", the concept of being comprises a simple apprehension of essence and the judgment that it exists. The *conceptio* whereby we grasp what has thereby been judgmentally united is taken to be the concept of being which, as St. Thomas says, *primo cadit in intellectu*. Against this we argued that existence can be conceived, that it can be a predicate and that the concept of being does not include a judgment.

When it is recognized that existence is the predicate in such propositions as "Socrates is," difficulties still remain for the student of the texts of St. Thomas. With Professor Gilson we must pose a number of questions.² When we affirm that Socrates exists, we predicate existence of him, but in so doing "we are not predicating the 'quidditas vel natura rei.' Nor, for that matter do we predicate something that belongs to the essence of Socrates (such as "homo"), or that inheres in it (such as "albus")."³ When we predicate existence of Socrates, are we predicating something which is of his essence, or something which is an accident? If neither, what kind of a predicate is existence? Allied problems in the text of St. Thomas are these: only God has *being* predicated of Him *essentialiter*, yet being is said to be predicated *essentialiter* of whatever falls under the categories. But, if *being* is predicated *essentialiter* of what falls under the categories, what are we to make of statements that *being* is an accidental predicate of any creature?⁴ The present article hopes to contribute something towards an understanding of St. Thomas' meaning and thereby the truth of the matter.

I. BEING *PER SE* AND BEING *PER ACCIDENS*

In Book Delta of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle is concerned with distinguishing the various meanings of words signifying things which

1. "Some Notes on Being and Predication," *The Thomist*, XXII, 3, pp. 315-335 (July, 1959).

2. GILSON, E. *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: 1949), p.225.

3. *Ibid.*

4. See the meditative and stimulating study of OWENS, J., "The Accidental and Essential Character of Being in the Doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas," *Mediaeval Studies*, XX (1958), pp.1-40.

fall to the consideration of metaphysics. "And because the things considered in this science are common to all, they are not said univocally but according to priority and posteriority of different things, as was pointed out in the 4th book; hence he (Aristotle) first distinguishes the intentions of the words which fall to the consideration of this science."¹ St. Thomas divides the words analysed in this book into those which signify the subject, or parts of the subject, of the science; those which signify its causes; and those which signify its properties: a fitting division, since every science considers the properties and causes of its subject. It is clear that St. Thomas does not look on Book Delta as a neutral "philosophical lexicon," something which plays no integral role in the development of the science of metaphysics. It is not surprising, on this interpretation, that the various meanings of the term *being* should be discussed in this book, and in commenting on Aristotle, St. Thomas has a number of things to say which pertain to the problems mentioned above.

"Things," Aristotle says,² "are said to 'be' (1) in an accidental sense, (2) by their own nature." Despite this initial two-fold division, we find four modes of *being* distinguished in this chapter. It will be of interest to see if the two-fold division is retained despite this subsequent complexity and in what way *being* is divided not univocally but according to priority and posteriority into these modes.

St. Thomas divides chapter seven of Book Delta in the following manner. "Here the Philosopher distinguishes how many ways being is said, and he does three things. First, he distinguishes being into being *per se* and being *per accidens*."³ Then Aristotle goes on to distinguish the modes of being *per accidens* and the modes of being *per se*. All but the first of the four modes fall under being *per se*. "He distinguishes the modes of being *per se*, and he does three things. First, he distinguishes the being which is outside the mind into the ten categories, and this is perfected being. Secondly, he sets down another mode of being according to which it is only in the mind . . . Thirdly, he divides being by potency and act, and being so divided is more common than perfected being, for being in potency is being only imperfectly and in a certain sense."⁴

1. "Et quia ea quae in hac scientia considerantur sunt omnibus communia, nec dicuntur univoce sed secundum prius et posterius de diversis, ut in quarto libro est habitum; ideo prius distinguit intentiones nominum, quae in huius scientiae consideratione cadunt." *In V Metaphys.*, lect.1, n.749.

2. *Metaphysics* V, 7. Oxford translation.

3. "Hic Philosophus distinguit quot modis dicitur ens. Et circa hoc tria facit. Primo distinguit ens in ens per se et ens per accidens." *In V Metaphys.*, lect.9, n.885.

4. "Distinguit modum entis per se: et circa hoc tria facit. Primo distinguit ens, quod est extra animam, per decem praedicamenta, quod est ens perfectum. Secundo ponit alium modum entis, secundum quod est tantum in mente . . . Tertio dividit ens per potentiam et actum: et ens sic divisum est communius quam ens perfectum. Nam ens in potentia est ens secundum quid tantum et imperfectum . . ." *Ibid.*, n.889.

What is the meaning of this initial division of being into being *per se* and being *per accidens*? What causes difficulty is the fact that the being *per se* which is distinguished from being *per accidens* is itself divided into substance and the nine accidents. Noting this difficulty, St. Thomas writes: "Being therefore is divided into substance and accident according to an absolute consideration of being, as whiteness itself, considered in itself, is said to be an accident and man a substance. But being *per accidens* [i.e. as opposed to being *per se* which is divided by substance and accident] has to be understood in terms of a comparison of accident to substance, a comparison signified by this verb *is*, as when we say, 'Man is white.' Hence this whole 'Man is white' is being *per accidens*. Thus, it is clear that the division of being in itself (*secundum se*) and accidentally (*secundum accidens*) is based on something's being predicated of another either *per se* or *per accidens*. The division of being into substance and accident is based on this that something in its nature is either substance or accident."¹

We may find this comment anything but a clarification. If *ens per accidens* here is had by a comparison of predicate to subject whereas *ens secundum se* is based on an absolute consideration, how can being *per se* be distinguished from being *per accidens* "secundum quod aliquid praedicatur per se vel per accidens?" That is, isn't being *per se* itself had by a comparison of predicate to subject? Isn't it simply a matter of distinguishing *per se* from accidental predication and, if that is the case, how can accident fall under being *per se* if this is based on *per se* predication? Certainly, something can be predicated *per se* of an accident (e.g. white is a color), but we are concerned here with modes of *being* and can being be predicated *per se* of accident? Moreover, if being *per se* is designated by an absolute consideration, how can it be divided into substance and accident "secundum diversum modum praedicandi?" In order to resolve these difficulties and arrive at a proper understanding of the text (all of this with a view to discussing the overriding problems of this essay), we want to discuss *per se* and *per accidens* predication and their relation to predicable and predicamental accidents.

a) "*Per se*" and "*per accidens*" predication

Predication is a logical relation; it does not pertain to things as they exist *in rerum natura* but follows on our mode of knowing.

1. "Ens igitur dividitur in substantiam et accidens, secundum absolutam entis considerationem, sicut ipsa albedo in se considerata dicitur accidens, et homo substantia. Sed ens secundum accidens prout hic sumitur, oportet accipi per comparisonem accidentis ad substantiam. Quae quidem comparatio significatur hoc verbo, Est, cum dicitur, homo est albus. Unde hoc totum, homo est albus, est ens per accidens. Unde patet quod divisio entis secundum se et secundum accidens, attenditur secundum quod aliquid praedicatur de aliquo per se vel per accidens. Divisio vero entis in substantiam et accidens attenditur secundum hoc quod aliquid in natura sua est vel substantia vel accidens." *Ibid.*, n.885.

Having grasped separately what exists as one, our mind composes by attributing one thing to another, the predicate (that which is affirmed) of the subject (that of which it is affirmed). What is meant by predication *per se*? The preposition *per*, St. Thomas notes,¹ suggests a relation of causality. *This* is through, by, thanks to, *that*. (Sometimes too *per* refers to the fact that a thing is by itself, alone; a meaning important for the third mode of perseity distinguished in the *Posteriora*). It is the causal import of the preposition which is at play when we speak of predication *per se*. In the statement, "Man is an animal," the predicate is said to be predicated *per se* of man, because animal pertains to the form and consequently to the definition of man. This first mode of perseity is based on formal causality. The second is based on material causality. If I say, "Every number is odd or even," I am not predicating of number something which enters into its definition. Number is not oddness nor evenness nor a kind of oddness or evenness; rather these are accidents of number. That is, number enters into the definition of what is here predicated of it. Oddness and evenness are accidents of number (although any number must be odd or even, neither is what number is) and are said *per se* of their proper subject.

Restricting ourselves to these two modes of *per se* predication (and, as St. Thomas points out,² the third and fourth modes of perseity are reducible to these), we can say that *per se* predication is had whenever the predicate is the definition or part of the definition of the subject or, on the other hand, when the subject enters into the definition of the predicate. Predicates said of their subjects in neither of these ways "*sunt accidentia, idest per accidens praedicantur, sicut musicum et album praedicantur de animali per accidens.*"³

Whatever is not predicated *per se* is predicated *per accidens*. An example of the latter is "Man is white." The predicate does not enter into the definition of the subject nor is that of which the predicate is said its proper subject since many things other than man are white. If "Man is white" is true this is so only because a man, say Socrates, happens to be white. Numbers, on the other hand, do not just happen to be odd or even.

Despite this clear distinction of *per se* and *per accidens* predication, we must take note of a wider use of the adverb *accidentaliter* applied to predication. The predicate is what is said of another in a proposition. However, it is sometimes said, the predicate is said of the subject in either of two ways. Sometimes we predicate that which is of the very nature of the subject, sometimes we predicate that which is in the subject. This distinction, which recalls the terminology of

1. *In I Post. Analytic.*, lect.10, n.2.

2. *Ibid.*, lect.35, n.4.

3. *Ibid.*, lect.10, n.5.

the *Categories*, is used by Aristotle in the *Perihermeneias*. St. Thomas explains as follows. "For it seems that something is said to be of the subject when it is predicated essentially, e.g. 'Man is animal'; in the subject, however, as an accident is predicated of the subject, e.g. 'Man is white.'"¹ That which is *de subiecto* is said to be predicated *essentialiter*; that which is *in subiecto* is predicated *accidentaliter*. The subject truly is what is predicated of it *essentialiter* or *substantialiter*. The latter term occurs in the commentary on the *Metaphysics*.² There it is argued that the substantial predicate must be one: the subject is what is predicated of it substantially and whatever is is one. The subject is not truly that which is predicated of it accidentally. When we say that a man is white, white is not *what* the subject is, which is why white is said to be predicated accidentally. This is not to say, of course, that nothing can be truly predicated accidentally³ nor that there is only one predicate *tout court* which can be predicated essentially or substantially of a subject. Many generic predicates are said *in quid* of the subject, but there is only one adequate substantial predicate, i.e. the definition.

It is clear that what can be predicated essentially or substantially is predicated *per se* in the first mode. Therefore, the second mode of *per se* predication involves that which is predicated *accidentaliter*. That is why we find the somewhat arresting phrase "*per se* accidents" used. These are not opposed to *per accidens* accidents but to what *contingit inesse*. That is, the distinction is between accidents which are in their subjects necessarily and those which are in their subjects contingently. An example of the necessary accident is that which is predicated *per se* in the second mode. This necessity must have its source in the subject and necessary accidents are distinguished according as some have the principles of the species for their cause whereas others have the principles of the individual of the species as their cause. "Man is risible" is an example of the first type. This accident is called a property; it is a result of the difference, rational, which enters into the species and consequently definition of man. Accidents following on the individual and not on the nature are called *inseparable* accidents.⁴ Opposed to such accidents are contingent or *separable* accidents, e.g. "Man is white."⁵ What is common to every accident is the fact that it is not of the essence of its subject. "Est

1. "Videtur enim aliquid dici ut *de subiecto*, quod *essentialiter* praedicatur; ut *homo est animal*; *in subiecto* autem, sicut *accidens de subiecto* praedicatur; ut, *homo est albus*." In *I Periherm.*, lect.5, n.9.

2. In *IV Metaphys.*, lect.7, n.628.

3. Cf. In *II Post. Analytic.*, lect.4, n.5: "... non omne quod vere praedicatur de aliquo, praedicatur in eo quod quid est, nec significat essentiam eius."

4. *Q.D. de Anima*, a.12, ad 7.

5. In *I Post. Analytic.*, lect.14, n.2.

autem commune omni accidenti," St. Thomas says elsewhere, after having made the same two-fold division just discussed, "quod non sit de essentia rei, et ita non cadit in definitione rei." ¹

b) *Predicable and Predicamental Accident*

It may be well to relate this discussion to the distinction of predicable and predicamental accident, for that distinction seems relevant to *Metaphysics* V, 7. This distinction divides accidents into two kinds. The first is the accident which is other than substance and comprises the nine genera of accidents. When accident is understood in this way there is not midway point between substance and accident, for they divide being by affirmation and negation: substance is what is not in a subject, accident what is in a subject. Secondly, accident may be understood as it is numbered among the five universals or predicables by Porphyry (*Isagoge*, cap.4) In this use, accident does not signify what is common to the nine genera, but "the accidental relation of predicate to subject, or of the common to what is contained under it." ²

That the second use of *accidens* is different from the first is clear from this that if accident were understood in the second way, where it is distinguished from genus and species, nothing in the nine genera of accidents could be called a species or, more strangely, a genus. But color is the genus of white, number the genus of two. Given the difference of these two uses of *accident*, then, we can note that, in the second sense, we can speak of a mean between substance and accident, between the substantial predicate and the accidental predicate, namely what is predicated as a property, i.e. in the second mode of *perseity*. The property has this similarity with the substantial predicate that it is caused by the substantial principles of the species; it agrees with the accidental predicate in this that it is not of the essence of the thing. "Differt autem ab accidentaliter praedicato, quia accidentale praedicatum non causatur ex principiis essentialibus speciei, sed accidit individuo sicut proprium speciei; quandoque tamen separabiliter, quandoque inseparabiliter." ³

If we take the property as our point of reference, we see that it is included among things said *per se* as opposed to those said *per accidens*. It is distinguished from what is said *essentialiter* and included among those predicated *accidentaliter*, being more closely related to the inseparable accident of the individual. Sometimes, as in the last text examined, it is distinguished from both the substantial and accidental predicate.

1. *Q.D. de Anima*, a.12, ad 7.

2. "... sed habitudinem accidentalem praedicati ad subiectum, vel communis ad ea quae sub communi continentur." *Q.D. de Spiritualibus creaturis*, a.11, c.

3. *Ibid.*

The linking of separable and inseparable accidents to the individuals of the species and substantial predicates and property to the species is often done by St. Thomas. Consider the following unquantified propositions :

- 1) Man is rational,
- 2) Man is risible,
- 3) Man is white.

(1) and (2) could be preceded by the universal quantifier, *every*, which means the predicate is said of everything of which the subject is said.¹ We would not want so to quantify (3) : at best this indefinite proposition would be quantified as "Some man is white," appealing to the *individuum vagum*, or we would form the singular proposition, "Socrates is white."² Indeed, it is only because Socrates happens to be white, or happens to be walking, that we can say, man is white, or man walks. With any separable accident it is the case that it is predicated *per prius* of singulars, of the individual, and *per posterius* of the universal nature. With *per se* predicates just the reverse is true : they are predicated *per prius* of the universal and *per posterius* of the individual. Thus, man walks, is true if it is true that Socrates (or some other individual) walks. But "Socrates is rational and risible" is true because it is true that man is rational and man is risible.³

c) Predication " *per essentiam* " et " *per participationem* "

In a text which will occupy us again later, St. Thomas speaks of predication in yet another way. "Dicendum quod dupliciter aliquid de aliquo praedicatur : uno modo essentialiter, alio modo per participationem. Lux enim praedicatur de corpore illuminato *participative* ; sed si esset aliqua lux separata, praedicaretur de ea essentialiter."⁴ In order to understand this text, we will examine some other uses of the same terminology. In some texts the distinction between what is predicated *per essentiam* and *per participationem* is the same as that

1. *In I Periherm.*, lect.10, n.13.

2. In view of the criticisms of the *Categories* as "ontological," it may be well to observe that the distinction of things into universal and singular is a logical one, at least in the sense "logic" has for Aristotle and St. Thomas. (Not that Aristotle used λογική to designate the doctrine of the Organon, nor did he designate the logical works the "Organon," though such a designation is utterly Aristotelian : cf. *Metaph.*, 995 a 12-14.) "Quia igitur hanc divisionem dedit de rebus non absolute secundum quod sunt extra animam, sed secundum quod referuntur ad intellectum, non definivit universale et singulare secundum aliquid quod pertinet ad rem, puta si diceret quod universale extra animam, quod pertinet ad opinionem Platonis, sed per actum animae intellectivae, quod est praedicari de multis vel de uno solo." *In I Periherm.*, lect.10, n.4.

3. Cf. *In V Metaphys.*, lect.7, nn.845-847 ; *ibid.*, lect.11, n.910 ; *In I Periherm.*, lect.10, n.9.

4. *Quodlib.* II, q.2, a.1.

between what is predicated *essentialiter* and *accidentaliter*. "... those things of which the genus is predicated according to participation cannot be defined by that genus unless it is the essence of that which is defined. As 'fired iron', of which fire is predicated by participation, is not defined by fire as by its genus, since iron is not fire in its very essence but participates something of it. The genus is not predicated of the species by participation, but by essence. Man is essentially animal, not only something participating animal, for man truly is what animal is."¹ To be said by way of participation is proper to that which is not of the essence of that of which it is predicated. In the same way, what is predicated by way of participation can be said to be predicated *denominative*, and both are distinguished from "univocal predication,"² which is had when the predicate is of the very essence of the subject. In "Man is white," *white* can be said to be predicated by way of participation or denominatively³ of man.

St. Thomas does not always use predication by way of participation as something opposed to predication *per essentiam*. Thus, he will often say that the species participates the genus. "Omne quod de pluribus praedicatur univoce, secundum participationem cuilibet eorum convenit de quo praedicatur: nam species participare dicitur genus, et individuum speciem. De Deo autem nihil dicitur per participationem: nam omne quod participatur determinatur ad modum participati, et sic partialiter habetur et non secundum omnem perfectionis modum."⁴ If we recall the threefold manner of participating distinguished by St. Thomas in his comments on the *De hebdomadibus* of Boethius, we see that the texts already alluded to are not contradictory. Prior to the division, we are given the common notion of participation. "Est autem participare quasi partem capere; et ideo quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet universaliter, dicitur participare illud."⁵ Then participating is distinguished into the three modes:

1) sicut homo dicitur participare animal, quia non habet rationem animalis secundum totam communitatem; et eadem ratione Socrates participat hominem;

1. "... ea de quibus genus praedicatur secundum participationem, non possunt definiri per illud genus, nisi sit de essentia illius definiti. Sicut ferrum ignitum, de quo ignis per participationem praedicatur, non definitur per ignem, sicut per genus; quia ferrum non est per essentiam suam ignis, sed participat aliquid eius. Genus autem non praedicatur de speciebus per participationem, sed per essentiam. Homo enim est animal essentialiter, non solum aliquid animalis participans. Homo enim est quod verum est animal." *In VII Metaphys.*, lect.3, n.1328.

2. *Ibid.*, lect.2, n.1288.

3. Denominative predication in turn is taken either from something within or without the subject. *In III Phys.*, lect.5, n.15. Cf. Sylvester's commentary on *II C.G.*, cap.13, n.II.

4. *I C.G.*, cap.32.

5. *In de hebdomadibus Boethii*, lect.2 (ed. Calcaterra), n.24.

2) similiter etiam subiectum participat accidens, et materia formam, quia forma substantialis vel accidentalis, quae de sui ratione communis est, determinatur ad hoc vel ad illud subiectum ;

3) et similiter effectus dicitur participare suam causam, et praecipue quando non adaequat virtutem suae causae ; puta, si dicamus quod aer participat lucem solis, quia non recipit eam in ea claritate qua est in sole.¹

In the immediately preceding texts, predication *per participationem* or *denominative* is distinguished from that *per essentiam* ; the former answers to the second mode given in the *De hebdomadibus* and the latter to the first mode of participating, explaining why elsewhere he can speak of the species participating its genus. What now are we to make of the text with which we began this section? What meaning of *essentialiter* is there opposed to *participative*?

The example given suggests the third mode of participating listed in the *De hebdomadibus* : an effect is said to participate in its cause *particulariter* (i. e. *partem capere*) when it is not equal to, adequate to, its cause.² However, the distinction given in the *Quodlibet* need not be restricted to the third mode. Of present interest is its relevance to the first mode. In what way can that which is predicated *in quid*, e.g. genus or species, species of individual, be said to be predicated, not *essentialiter*, but only *per participationem*? An answer seems suggested by the *De hebdomadibus*. *Man* is not a "universal predicate" of Socrates, nor *animal* of *man*. We are thinking here of the universal predicate of the *Posterior Analytics*,³ which adds to the *dici de omni* and *dici per se* the note of perfect adequacy with its subject and permits the universal affirmative proposition in which it occurs to be simply converted. The example of the *Posteriora* is this : having interior angles the sum of which is equal to the sum of two right angles is a universal predicate not of plane figure nor of isosceles triangle but precisely of triangle. The species, isosceles, participates in this property via its participation in the generic nature of triangle. If we should select an example from the genus of substance, an objection arises which is relevant to the doctrine of the *Quodlibet*. Thus, having noted that such-and-such is a universal predicate of animal, but not of man, we might object : but there exists no animal apart from these men and these brutes. So too the significant remark of the *Quodlibet* : " . . . sed si esset lux separata, praedicaretur de ea essentialiter." If the mode of existence of the subject were equivalent to the mode of signifying of the predicate, the predicate would be said of it *essentialiter*. If there were some subsistent individual who were what-it-is-to-be-a-man, man would be predicated of him *essentialiter* ; since there is

1. In *de hebdomadibus* Boethii, lect.2, n.24.

2. Cf. In *II Metaphys.*, lect.2, nn.293-6.

3. Cf. In *I Post. Analytic.*, lect.11.

no such man, there is nothing of which man is predicated *essentialiter* in the sense of the *Quodlibet*. To be sure, man is predicated *per essentiam* of such individuals as Socrates, but as well *per participationem*. None of them is what-it-is-to-be-a-man, is the species, has *man* predicated of him *essentialiter* in just that sense. This would seem to be the problem raised in Book Zeta of the *Metaphysics*: is the essence other than the individuals? Aristotle, we remember, answers to question in two ways, first negatively and then affirmatively. The thing and its essence are one in this sense that the essence does not enjoy any existence in separation from the individuals, as Plato maintained. If there were a man separate from the particular men of our experience, that Man would be man *essentialiter*. As things are, the essence expresses only part of what the individuals are: thus as signified in precision from the individuals, i.e. as signified abstractly, it cannot be predicated of them. We cannot say, "Socrates is humanity," because Socrates is not man *essentialiter* in the sense of the *Quodlibet*.¹ In anticipation, we can note with St. Thomas: "Si autem est aliqua res, in qua non sit aliquod accidens, ibi necesse est, quod nihil differt abstractum a concreto. Quod maxime patet in Deo."² By way of conclusion here we could adapt the text of the *Quodlibet* in this fashion: "*Man* is predicated of the individual man *participative*; but if there were some separated man it would be predicated of him *essentialiter*."

d) Being "per accidens"

With a view now to resolving the difficulties raised concerning *Metaphysics*, V, 7, let us examine the text in a somewhat summary

1. Cf. *De ente*, cap.3, in fine. When we say that the essence expresses only part of what the individuals are, the emphasis is on *expresses*. "Humanity" signifies *per modum partis*, "man" *per modum totius* (cf. *Quodl.*, IX, q.2, a.1, ad 1). This is not to say that *man* expresses more than *humanity*; both the abstract and concrete term signify only the essence. They differ in the way they signify it, and because *man* does not, in its mode of signifying, prescind from accidents, it can be predicated of Socrates. But *man* does not signify the accidents. "Unde licet in significatione hominis non includantur accidentia eius, non tamen homo significat aliquid separatum ab accidentibus; et ideo homo significat ut totum, humanitas significat ut pars." (*In VII Metaphys.*, lect.5, n.1379).

2. *In VII Metaphys.*, lect.5, n.1380. With respect to the text of *Quodl.*, II, q.2, a.1, consider the following remark from *I C.G.*, cap.26: "Quod est commune multis non est aliquid praeter multa nisi sola ratione: sicut *animal* non est aliud praeter Socratem et Platonem et alia animalia nisi intellectu, qui apprehendit formam animalis exspoliata ab omnibus individuantibus et specificantibus; homo enim est quod vere est animal; alias sequeretur quod in Socrate et Platone essent plura animalia, scilicet ipsum animal commune, et homo communis, et ipse Plato. Multo igitur minus et ipsum esse commune est aliquid praeter omnes res existentes nisi in intellectu solum. Si igitur Deus sit esse commune, Deus non erit aliqua res nisi quae sit in intellectu tantum..." But something can be *commune*, not only *ut universale praedicabile* but as well *per modum causae* (cf. *In X Metaphys.*, lect.3, n.1964). It is a major task of philosophy to avoid confusing the two kinds of community.

fashion. By considering what is discussed under being *per accidens* and being *per se*, we should be able to grasp the principle of their difference.

Since being *per accidens* is had by a comparison of the accident to its subject, we find a threefold subdivision : (1) when an accident is predicated of an accident, e.g. The just is musical ; (2) when an accident is predicated of a subject, e.g. Man is musical ; (3) when the subject is predicated of the accident, e.g. The musical is man. "In omnibus enim his, Esse, nihil aliud significat quam accidere."¹ Now, to predicate accidentally, which is tantamount to asserting that two things are accidentally one, is to be understood as meaning that the predicate is not of the essence of the subject. This can be examined easily enough in (2), but (1) and (3) present certain difficulties. If being *per accidens* is had by a comparison of accident to subject, that comparison is obscured in (1) and (3). St. Thomas links the two of these together because both refer to the subject only indirectly.² "When we say, 'The white is wood,' what is meant is that the universal predicate *wood* is predicated of the subject which happens to be white, namely of this particular wood in which whiteness is. It is the same thing to say, 'The white is wood,' as to say, 'This wood which happens to be white is wood.' It does not mean that white is the subject of wood."³ So too when we say, "The just is musical," *musical* is predicated of *just* because it is predicated of the subject of just.⁴ "There is this difference, therefore, in the three foregoing modes that when the accident is predicated of the subject, it is not predicated through some other subject ; however when the subject is predicated of the accident, or an accident of an accident, the predication is made by reason of that which underlies what occupies the position of subject. Of *that* subject [i.e. the merely grammatical subject] an accident is predicated accidentally ; of the species of the subject, however, it is predicated essentially."⁵ Being *per accidens*, then, always arises from the comparison of accident to its subject and the accident is not

1. In V *Metaphys.*, lect.9, n.887.

2. *Ibid.*

3. "... cum dicitur, *album est lignum*, hoc significatur, quod illud universale praedicatum, quod est *lignum*, praedicatur de subiecto, cui accedit esse album, scilicet de hoc particulari ligno, in quo est albedo. Idem enim est sensus cum dico, *album est lignum*, ac si dicerem, *hoc lignum, cui accedit esse album, est lignum* ; non autem est sensus quod album sit subiectum ligni." In I *Post. Analyt.*, lect.33, n.4.

4. In V *Metaphys.*, lect.8, n.887.

5. "Est ergo differentia in tribus modis praedictis : quia cum praedicatur accidens de subiecto, non praedicatur per aliquod aliud subiectum ; cum autem praedicatur subiectum de accidente, vel accidens de accidente, fit praedicatio ratione eius quod subiicitur termino posito in subiecto ; de quo quidem praedicatur aliud accidens accidentaliter, ipsa vero species subiecti essentialiter." In I *Post. Analyt.*, lect.33, n.4. *Essentialiter* means of itself as opposed to thanks to something else.

of the essence of its subject. Being *per accidens* is designated by the copula of such propositions where *is* means happens-to-be; the proposition, in its composition, signifies what is one only accidentally.

e) *Being « per se »*

The term "being" is divided into two modes at the outset of *Metaphysics*, V, 7: the *per accidens* and the *per se*. Having looked at the discussion of the first mode, we turn now to the second. As we have seen, being *per se* is further subdivided into three modes: *ens perfectum*, *ens ut verum* and being said according to act and potency. Perfected being is divided by the ten categories. This division (no more than the initial division of the chapter, as we shall argue below) is not that of a genus into its species; rather it is based on different modes of predicating.¹ Now since of those things which are predicated, some signify *what*, some *how*, some *how much* and so on, to be (*esse*) will have as many meanings as there are distinct modes of predicating. In "Man is animal" *is* signifies substance; in "Man is white," quality, and so forth.² The mention here of "Man is white" enables us to return to the problems raised earlier. This same proposition was used as an example of being *per accidens*; how now can it exhibit a kind of being *per se*? Or, more particularly, how can accident be a mode of being *per se* and thereby be distinguished from being *per accidens*? If we recall that being *per accidens* involves a comparison of accident to subject, we must also recall that the genera of accidents are distinguished on the basis of modes of predicating. What is meant by "secundum absolutam entis considerationem" as opposed to "per comparationem accidentis ad substantiam?"³

To begin, let us recall that the division of *ens perfectum* into categories on the basis of modes of predicating is a brief resume of something first taught in Aristotle's logical work, the *Categories*. And, since that work is concerned with logical intentions analytically prior to those which attach to composing and dividing, i.e. judging, its concern with predication must differ from that of the *Perihermeneias*. That difference is brought out by the terms *praedicabilitas/praedicatio*.⁴ A genus is that which is predicable of many differing in species. The intention of genus attaches to a concept not as actually predicated but as able to be predicated. The categories or predicaments are divisions of predicates, not as actually parts of propositions, but considered in themselves. In the examples already given, "Man is animal," "Man is white," what interests us is the being attributed to

1. Cf. *In III Phys.*, lect.5, n.15.

2. *In V Metaphys.*, lect.9, n.890.

3. *Ibid.*, n.885.

4. Cf. *De ente*, cap.4, in fine.

the subject : *is-animal*, *is-white*, considered just in themselves. In being *per accidens*, on the other hand, we look to the accidental togetherness of man and white, i.e. *white-man*, and that *whole* is what we are saying *is* accidentally.

St. Thomas makes this point somewhat indirectly by disputing Avicenna's reading of the passage before us. The Arabian commentator maintained that the things in the genera of accident principally signify substance and only secondarily accident, as if *album* and *musicum* first and primarily signified substance and signified accident only *per posterius*. St. Thomas argues that this is false.¹ First he gives his own interpretation and then he gives the reason for it, a reason which enables us to see that his is the correct and Avicenna's the incorrect reading. First, then, St. Thomas asserts that white (*album*) as it is placed in a category, signifies only quality (*solum qualitatem significat*). It does, of course, signify its subject *ex consequenti*, indirectly, insofar as it is a concrete term ; by the same token, its subject is included *ex consequenti* in its *ratio* or definition. For an accident to be *is* for it to be in substance, but it is not its subject, is not substance, and thus the concrete name of an accident will not principally signify its subject. It is different for the abstract name of the accident, e.g. whiteness, which signifies *per modum substantiae* and not *per modum accidentis* as does its concrete name. Whiteness in no way consignifies substance, which is why we read elsewhere that when things other than substance are signified abstractly, we can doubt that they are beings at all.²

Secondly, St. Thomas gives a textual argument to show his understanding of Aristotle is correct. If, as Avicenna thought, accidents primarily signified their subject, Aristotle would have placed them under being *per accidens* and not under being *per se*. The whole,

1. "Nec est verum quod Avicenna dicit, quod praedicta, quae sunt in generibus accidentis, principaliter significant substantiam, et per posterius accidens, sicut hoc quod dico album et musicum. Nam album ut in praedicamentis dicitur, solum qualitatem significat. Hoc autem nomen album significat subiectum ex consequenti, in quantum significat albedinem per modum accidentis. Unde oportet quod ex consequenti includat in sui ratione subiectum. Nam accidentis esse est inesse. Albedo enim etsi significat accidens, non tamen per modum accidentis, sed per modum substantiae. Unde nullo modo consignificat subiectum. Si enim principaliter significarent subiectum, tunc praedicata accidentaliter non ponerentur a Philosopho sub ente secundum se, sed sub ente secundum accidens. Nam hoc totum, quod est homo albus, est ens secundum accidens ut dictum est." *In V Metaphys.*, lect. 9, n. 894.

2. *In VII Metaphys.*, lect. 1, n. 1252 : "Quia enim alia entia non sunt entia nisi secundum quod referuntur ad substantiam, ideo potest esse dubitatio de aliis entibus in abstracto significatis, quando non significant cum aliqua habitudine ad substantiam : utrum sint entia vel non entia, scilicet utrum vadere, sanare et sedere et unum quodque istorum in abstracto significatorum sit ens vel non ens. Et similiter est in aliis talibus, quae in abstracto significantur ; sive per modum actionis, ut praedicta, sive non, ut albedo sive nigredo."

subject-accident, white-man, is being *per accidens*, but the accident considered in itself, *per se*, is not being *per accidens* in that sense.

With a view to addressing ourselves to the questions raised at the beginning of this article, we turned to an analysis of *Metaphysics*, V, 7 where Aristotle distinguishes the various modes of the term "being." Our analysis thus far has led to a discussion of predication *per se* and *per accidens*, of predication *essentialiter* as opposed to that *accidentaliter*, of predication *per participationem* as opposed to that which is *essentialiter*. These distinctions helped us to understand the basic divisions of *Metaphysics*, V, 7 and to resolve the difficulty following on the use of accidental being to signify the whole or compound made up of subject and accident, on the one hand, and, on the other, to signify a type of being *per se*. What is more, these distinctions will help in understanding why it is that being is sometimes said to be predicated *substantialiter* of what falls under the categories, whereas at other times it is said that no creature has being said of it *substantialiter*, *per essentiam* or *essentialiter*. Turning now to the question of being as accidental predicate, we shall continue our discussion by looking at the third mode of being listed in *Metaphysics*, V, 7. From there we will move on to other texts.

II. BEING AS ACCIDENTAL PREDICATE

The third mode of "being" distinguished in *Metaphysics*, V, 7, is being as what is true. To the question, "Is man an animal?" we reply, "He is" and in so doing we signify that it is true to say that man is an animal. So too, by replying to the question, "Is man a stone?" by "He is not," we signify that it is false to say man is a stone.¹ In this mode, then, to be (*esse*) and is (*est*) signify the composition of a proposition which the intellect makes in judging. This being which is truth is not in the things which exist and which fall under the categories; truth is in the mind, although things may be called true because they are causes of truth in the proper sense (*ratio propria*) on the term.² That is, the truth of a mental composition or division, of a judgment of the mind, depends on the way things are: what is composed in the proposition must be composed or together in reality if the proposition is to be true; so, in the negative proposition, what is divided must be apart in reality if the proposition is to be true. We want now to make a rather lengthy citation from St. Thomas in which he compares this second mode of being *per se*, being as what is true,

1. *In VI Metaphys.*, lect. 4, n. 1223.

2. "Et ideo, cum verum dicitur de pluribus per prius et posterius, oportet quod de illo per prius dicatur in quo invenitur perfecta ratio veritatis . . . Res autem non dicitur vera nisi secundum quod est intellectui adaequata; unde per posterius invenitur verum in rebus, per prius autem in intellectu." *Q.D. de Ver.*, q. 1, a. 2, c.

with the first, *ens perfectum*. In the passage we find an interesting statement about being as it pertains to accidental and substantial predication.

It should be noted, however, that this second mode compares to the first as effect to cause. For it is because something is *in rerum natura* that truth or falsity is had in the proposition, something the intellect signifies by means of the verb, *is*, insofar as it is a verbal copula. But, because something which in itself is non-being can be considered by the intellect as a certain being, e.g. negation and the like, a thing is sometimes said to be in this second way and not in the first. For blindness does not have any existence in reality ; rather is it a privation of being. Now it is accidental to a thing that something is truly affirmed of it by intellect or word, for things are not related to knowledge but vice versa. The being that a thing has in its own nature is substantial and therefore when we say 'Socrates is,' if the *is* is taken in the first way it is a substantial predicate, for being is superior to any particular being as animal is to man. If however it is taken in the second way it is an accidental predicate.¹

a) "*Ens ut verum*" as accidental predicate

In the proposition, "Socrates is," the predicate can be considered in two ways. First, as a verbal copula, as sign of a composition made by our minds. That is, it is true that Socrates exists : being in the sense of what is true is had in an operation of our mind. This type of being is accidental to the being enjoyed by things *extra animam*, i.e. the things which are independently of our knowing them. That is why, when the *is* in "Socrates is" is taken to be a sign of mental composition, it is said to be an accidental predicate. It is quite accidental to Socrates that he should provide occasions for the utterance of true propositions. It is not being in the sense of true which constitutes him as a being *in rerum natura* ; rather his existence *extra animam* founds the possibility of being in the sense of what is true.² It

1. "Sciendum est autem quod iste secundus modus comparatur ad primum, sicut effectus ad causam. Ex hoc enim quod aliquid in rerum natura est, sequitur veritas et falsitas in propositione, quam intellectus significat per hoc verbum Est prout est verbalis copula. Sed, quia aliquid, quod est in se non ens, intellectus considerat ut quoddam ens, sicut negationem et huiusmodi, ideo quandoque dicitur esse de aliquo hoc secundo modo, et non primo. Dicitur enim quod caecitas est secundo modo, ex eo quod vera est propositio, qua dicitur aliquid est caecum ; non tamen dicitur quod sit primo modo vera. Nam caecitas non habet aliquod esse in rebus, sed magis est privatio alicuius esse. Accidit autem unicuique rei quod aliquid de ipsa vere affirmetur intellectu vel voce. Nam res non refertur ad scientiam, sed e converso. Esse vero quod in sui natura unaquaeque res habet, est substantiale. Et ideo, cum dicitur, Socrates est, si ille Est primo modo accipitur, est de praedicato substantiali. Nam ens est superius ad unumquodque entium, sicut animal ad hominem. Si autem accipitur secundo modo, est de praedicato accidentali." *In V Metaphys.*, lect.9, n.896.

2. Just as its non-being *extra animam* founds the truth of the proposition, "Blindness is the privation of sight." "Yes, it is," we might say, and that is the only kind of being blindness has.

is because any being which falls under the categories can cause truth in our mind that the term is extended to things and we say that whatever is is true since whatever is can be known by our mind. But the truth convertible with being *extra animam* is not truth in the proper sense of the term, but in a secondary sense.¹ Being in the sense of true is only in the mind (*res rationis tantum*).² *Is*, then, as the sign of a mental composition signifies a being which is accidental to being *extra animam*.

St. Thomas, in the text quoted above, has drawn our attention to the fact that being in the sense of true is wider in scope than the first mode of being *per se*. He often makes this point. "Whatever is called being in the first mode is being in the second mode, because everything which has natural being in reality can be signified to be in an affirmative proposition, as when we say color is or man is. However, not everything which is being in the second way can be being in the first way."³ Many things can be said to be in the sense that they figure in true propositions, but they do not for all that amount to something *positive* in reality. Privations and negations, non-being, can enter into true propositions: but they are not thereby numbered among the things which *aliquid in re ponunt*,⁴ and which are being *per se* in the first mode. "Peter is blind" means that he cannot see, which may be perfectly true, but Peter's inability to see is not a positive reality; it is precisely the absence of a certain reality, a privation of something positive. Doubtless there are positive reasons for this inability, but the inability is not there in the way that the damaged organ is — or in the way Paul's ability to see is something real.

If we let this suffice as an indication of what being in the sense of true means, we can turn to a remark lodged in discussions of *ens ut verum* which paves the way to a treatment of our overriding problems. Comparing *ens perfectum* and *ens ut verum*, St. Thomas writes: "Being is predicated differently following on these modes since taken in the first way it is a substantial predicate and pertains to the question, 'what is it?' but according to the second mode it is an accidental predicate, as the Commentator says there [commenting on *Metaph.*, V,7] and pertains to the question, 'Is it?'"⁵ This text echoes that already

1. Just as things which are in the sense of *ens ut verum* may be such that they are not being in the sense of those things which, since they are, are true.

2. Cf. *In V Metaphys.*, lect.9, n.897.

3. "Quaecumque ergo dicuntur entia quantum ad primum modum, sunt entia quantum ad secundum modum: quia omne quod habet naturale esse in rebus potest significari per propositionem affirmativam esse, ut cum dicitur: color est vel homo est. Non autem omnia quae sunt entia quantum ad secundum modum, sunt entia quantum ad primum . . ." *In II Sent.*, d.34, q.1, a.1, sol.

4. *De ente*, cap.1.

5. "Ens autem secundum utrumque istorum modorum diversimode praedicatur: quia secundum primum modum acceptum est praedicatum substantiale, et pertinet ad

quoted from the commentary on the *Metaphysics*. If we advert to the remarks made above about things predicated *substantialiter*, it is easy to see what is meant. Being *per se*, in the sense of *ens perfectum*, is divided according to modes of predication which reflect modes of being. These modes of being pertain to *ens extra animam* and each mode expresses the whatness of what is according to that mode. Thus, "Socrates is an animal" and "color is a quality" are both examples of substantial predicates. And, again, that true statements can be made about such beings is accidental to them.

Despite this initial intelligibility, there are difficulties which remain. In the commentary on the *Metaphysics*, St. Thomas says that the *is* in "Socrates is" is *de praedicato substantiali* if understood in the first mode of being *per se*.¹ This presents difficulties from the point of view of other remarks of St. Thomas. For example, he writes: "And therefore the Commentator says in [his comments on] the 5th book of the *Metaphysics* that this proposition, 'Socrates is' *is* is an accidental predicate according as it signifies the entity of the thing or the truth of the proposition."² Moreover, the *is* in "Socrates is" is said to pertain to the question *an sit*. What is the significance of this appeal to the questions *an sit* and *quid sit* in discussions of the relation between the first two modes of being *per se*? And what is the significance of appealing to the same questions to discuss *ens extra animam*? Before attempting to resolve these problems, it seems wise to say something about these questions themselves.

b) *The questions "an sit" and "quid sit"*

In order to understand why appeal is made to the question *an sit* both to speak of *ens ut verum* and to speak of the actuality of the essence which is other than the essence itself, we must investigate, albeit briefly, the place in which the question *an sit* is discussed formally as such.

quaestionem quid est ; sed quantum ad secundum modum, est praedicatum accidentale, ut Commentator ibidem dicit, et pertinet ad quaestionem an est." *In II Sent.* d.34, q.1, a.1, sol.

1. *In V Metaphys.*, lect.9, n.896. Cf. also *In III Sent.*, d.6, q.2, a.2, sol. : "... esse duobus modis dicitur. Uno modo secundum quod significat veritatem propositionis secundum quod est copula ; et sic, ut Commentator ibidem dicit, ens est praedicatum accidentale. Et hoc esse non est in re, sed in mente quae conjungit subiectum cum praedicato, ut dicit Philosophus in VI Meta... Alio modo dicitur esse quod pertinet ad naturam rei, secundum quod dividitur secundum decem genera. Et hoc quidem esse in re est, et est actus entis resultans ex principiis rei, sicut lucere est actus lucentis. Aliquando tamen esse sumitur pro essentia, secundum quod res est ; quia per actus consueverunt significari eorum principia, ut potentia vel habitus."

2. "Et ideo Commentator dicit in V *Metaphys.* quod ista propositio, *Socrates est*, est de accidentaliter praedicato, secundum quod importat entitatem rei, vel veritatem propositionis." *Quodl. II*, q.2, a.1, c.

In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle, having in the first book discussed the demonstrative syllogism, turns in the second to a discussion of its principles.¹ These principles are either the middle term or the first indemonstrable propositions. The bulk of the book is concerned with the middle term. Aristotle opens the discussion with the suggestion that a middle term is relevant and required whenever there can be doubt or questioning. Thus, insofar as we can enumerate different questions, we are in effect enumerating different things which can be known (*sciuntur*) since science is acquired through demonstration and thus via a middle term. There seem to be four distinct questions to be asked: does the thing exist, what is it, is it such-and-such, why is it such-and-such. These questions will all have an enunciation or proposition as their answer, but propositions, as has been shown in *On Interpretation*,² either add some third thing to the noun or verb or do not. An example of the latter is, "Socrates is;" of the former, "Socrates is white." The questions 'Is it?' and 'What is it?' are answered by "simple" enunciations; 'Is it such-and-such?' and 'Why is it such-and-such?' are answered by enunciations which *in numerum ponunt*.³ On this basis, the couple *an sit/quid sit* is opposed to *quia sit/propter quid*.

On another basis, the questions 'Is it?' and 'Is it such-and-such?' are opposed to 'What is it?' and 'Why is it such-and-such?' Although 'Is it?' inquires about the *esse simpliciter* of the thing and 'Is it such-and-such?' about *esse hoc vel hoc*, in both we are seeking whether some middle can be found or not. This is not what is explicitly asked, of course, but what in effect we are after. Nevertheless, when we know that something is or is such-and-such, there is a mean to be sought. The proof of this is that we don't ask questions about self-evident things. Knowing there is a middle, the questions 'What is it?' and 'Why is it such-and-such?' seek knowledge of what that middle is. Again, one who asks why the sun eclipses is not as such but only concomitantly seeking the middle term of a demonstration.⁴ 'Is it?' and 'Is it such-and-such?' agree in asking *whether* there is a middle; 'What is it?' and 'Why is it such-and-such?' agree in asking *what* the middle is.

As has already been indicated, there is an order of precedence between the questions 'Is it?' and 'What is it?'.⁵ This is made explicit later in the present context. That context must be kept in mind when we read remarks about these two questions. What Aristotle is up to is this. Having pointed out that the middle is the

1. Cf. *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.1, n.1.

2. *De Interpretatione*, chap.10, 19 b 19-22.

3. *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.1, n.3.

4. *Ibid.*, n.6.

5. Cf. *In I Post. Analyt.*, lect.2.

quiddity which, since it is the object of definition, does not seem to be as well the object of demonstration, he argues that the quiddity cannot be demonstrated by convertible terms, nor by division, nor by including in the argument the requirements for definition — all involve a *petitio principii*.¹ After these particular arguments against demonstrating the quiddity, he presents another argument *per rationes communes*.² First, he makes this general point : it seems impossible to demonstrate the quiddity because whoever knows what a thing is knows that thing to be. What is not has no whatness. True, we can know what a word means without knowing that an existent thing is named by it. But a demonstration concludes to one thing because it uses a middle which is *per se* one and the conclusion has to be proportionate to the middle. What a man is and the fact that he is differ. Now a demonstration concludes that something is. Hence, to show that something is could only be tantamount to showing what something is if for it to be were the same as what it is. Suppose, then that a demonstration concluded to whatness. Since whatness and existence differ, we would arrive at knowledge of whatness independent of knowledge that such a whatness exists. This can be turned around : the definition which expresses whatness does not tell us that the thing exists. In this the definition of circle does not seem to differ from that of silver mountain.

But can we agree that, since the definition expresses only what a thing is and not the fact that it is that, on this showing, the phoenix, a silver mountain, and what have you can be defined in the same way man can? If we should agree to this, we would be identifying the real definition and the nominal definition.³ It has recently been argued that St. Thomas does so identify real and nominal definitions.⁴ This claim is made, oddly enough, by appealing to the *De ente* where St. Thomas holds that only that has a "what" which *aliquid in re ponat*.⁵

1. *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.3, 4, 5.

2. *Ibid.*, lect.6, n.1.

3. *Ibid.*, nn.6-9.

4. Cf. OWENS, J., *art. cit.*, pp. 6-7. "For St. Thomas, on the other hand, one can know what a phoenix is, or a mountain of gold is, or what an eclipse is, without knowing whether any of these actually exist in the real world."

5. But doesn't St. Thomas also write in the manner suggested by Father Owens? "Omnis autem essentia vel quidditas intelligi potest sine hoc quod aliquid intelligatur de esse suo facto : possum enim intelligere quid est homo vel phoenix et tamen ignorare an esse habeant in rerum natura" (cap.5). St. Thomas seems to speak of man and phoenix here on an equal footing, as if the phoenix had an essence ; moreover, he seems to be saying that we can know the essence while ignoring or being unaware of its factual existence. Now the phoenix is a fictive being and as such, according to the opening chapter of the *De ente*, it cannot have an essence. What are we to make of this example? Its choice can be interpreted in either of two ways. It could be that St. Thomas was unaware that the phoenix is mythical, and that the text could thereby as well speak of man and horse as of man and phoenix. On the other hand, he knew the phoenix is fictive and we can say of

We need not be moved by the desire to oppose Aristotle and St. Thomas at all costs to find difficulties here, of course. Only that can have a whatness and therefore be defined, strictly speaking, which exists *in rerum natura*. The definition, however, says nothing of the actual existence of the thing defined. Doesn't it follow then that a judgment of existence will be consequent upon definition rather than prior to it? Yet Aristotle and St. Thomas maintain that until we have answered the question *an sit* we do not raise the question *quid sit*. Doesn't this, in the light of our larger interests, raise another problem? Non-being and privation receive the name "being" because of reference to the question *an sit*, yet of them we do not ask *quid sint*.

The reasons for this stand of Aristotle and St. Thomas must be closely examined. We are told that it is possible to come to know simultaneously that a thing is and what it is.¹ We are told that it is impossible for us to know what a thing is without knowing that it is. The usual case will be this: we can judge that a thing is without knowing what it is. Surely our natural mode of knowing is being described here. Things are denominated from the accidents we perceive, or from some common essential note we grasp.² In order to judge that a thing is we must judge in terms of something pertaining to that thing, whether accidental or essential. We can know that men exist because we know that featherless bipeds exist, but this is not to know *what* men are. In other words, we have to know what things are in the sense of knowing some meaning of the term applied to them if we are to judge that they exist; we must have knowledge, not of the *quid est*, but of the *quid est quod dicitur*.³ Knowing that there are things *in rerum natura* which answer to what the term *man* means, we can go on to ask what they are. It is in this sense alone that, both for Aristotle and St. Thomas, knowledge of whatness presupposes knowledge of existence. For neither man is existence included in whatness.⁴ It is ambiguous to say that to know whatness is *thereby* to know existence. If we keep in mind the context of the question *quid sit*, namely that it follows on the question *an sit*, this ambiguity is avoided. It remains forever true that the definition expressing the essence of

him what he once said of Aristotle: *signanter autem utitur hoc exemplo* (Cf. *In I Periherm.*, lect.3, n.13). The knowledge of whatness at issue then must be interpreted widely so as to include *quid est quod dicitur* or the *interpretatio nominis*. Since the phoenix is fictive this is the only whatness to which it can lay claim. Moreover, since the phoenix is, in a sense, a bird which cannot not exist, since it is indestructible, always arising again from its own ashes, this choice of example has an anti-Anselmian ring to it. But if knowledge of *quid est quod dicitur* does not include knowledge of factual existence, neither does knowledge of quiddity in the sense of essence — with the qualifications we have made in the text.

1. Cf. *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.7, n.5.

2. *Ibid.*, nn.6-7.

3. Cf. *In I Post. Analyt.*, lect.2.

4. *Posterior Analytics*, II, chap.7; ST. THOMAS, lect. 6.

something *in rerum natura* does not itself affirm that existence : the definition is not a proposition. Moreover, as Aristotle suggests,¹ only the affirmation of existence in terms of essence is fully such : to judge that a thing exists because its accidents are known, or a common essential note is grasped, is to know its existence accidentally or commonly. In that sense, one can maintain that the judgment, "Socrates exists," when it is made in terms of knowledge that Socrates is a rational animal, is a more perfect judgment of existence, indeed the first perfect grasp that this *man*, Socrates, exists.

Why does St. Thomas appeal to the question *an sit* when he is talking of being as true? Both *an sit* and *quia est* ask if something is true.² The truth in question is not being as true. Not everything which enters into a true statement answers the question *an sit* in such a way that we can go on to ask what is it? The thing which *aliquid in re ponit* founds in a positive way the truth of a proposition, but privations and even non-being can figure in true statements. Thus, being as true is wider than being *in rerum natura*, and with respect to the latter is something accidental. When, in the *Posteriora*, Aristotle seems to equate satisfying the question *an sit* and paving the way to the question *quid sit*, it is the context which explains his procedure. Only that answers the question *an sit* which is something positive in reality ; indeed the question may be answered in terms of a partial grasp of whatness. In the *Posteriora* it is science which is being discussed, the demonstrative syllogism, and the four questions are examined from the point of view of their relevance for science. *Ens ut verum* can be the concern of logic, and, with many qualifications, of psychology, but it is *ens* as it falls under the categories which interests science. Now when *ens ut verum* is referred to the question *an sit* this is because, even as we would test a notion from the point of view of science and come up with the answer that it *nihil ponit in re*, we express this in a true proposition and thereby confer on the notion being in the sense of what is true. "The phoenix does not exist," or "There are no centaurs *in rerum natura*" are true statements and the phoenix and centaurs are in the sense that they figure in such judgments. "Yes, they are," we might say, when told that centaurs are fictions, and what we mean is that the statement is true.

There *can* be, therefore, a double reference in the answer to the question *an sit*. As St. Thomas says, it can refer to the truth of the proposition or the *entitas rei*.³ Even when the latter is precluded, the former is possible. It is easy to understand why *ens ut verum* is accidental to *ens reale*, that to be in the former sense is an accidental

1. 93 a 28-29 : "Thus it follows that the degree of our knowledge of a thing's essential nature is determined by the sense in which we are aware that it exists."

2. Cf. *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.1, n.3.

3. *Quodl. II*, q.2, a.1, c.

predicate of things which fall under the categories. It is the teaching of St. Thomas, however, that even when the question *an sit* refers to the *entitas rei*, an accidental predicate is involved. We want now to examine this doctrine and its compatibility with the text quoted above in which we read that when the predicate in "Socrates is" does not refer to *ens ut verum* but to *ens reale*, it is a substantial predicate.

c) *Existence as Accidental Predicate*

On the basis of the texts examined earlier, talk of an accidental predicate would bring to mind either the predication of an accident of a subject (e.g. Man is white) or the fact that to affirm Socrates is sitting is accidental to the sedentary Socrates. The doctrine we are now to examine does not fall under either of these headings. "Hence since everything which is outside the essence of a thing is said to be an accident, the existence which pertains to the question, 'Is it?' is an accident."¹ Now, earlier, we said that what is common to every accident is the fact that it is not of the essence of the subject of which it is predicated. It is that common notion that must be kept firmly in mind now. Earlier, of course, this common notion was invoked only to cover necessary and contingent accidents, both of which were distinguished from what is predicated *per se* in the first mode. How does the predicate in "Socrates is" save the common notion of accident as compared with the things predicated *accidentaliter* which were examined earlier?

There are a number of remarks of St. Thomas which could lead us to think that existence is an accident in the way the property is. The property was said to be caused by the essential principles of the subject. So too substantial existence is "esse resultans ex his quibus integratur, quod proprium est esse suppositi substantiale."² St. Thomas often speaks in this way. "Secunda operatio respicit ipsum esse rei, quod quidem resultat ex congregatione principiorum rei in compositis, vel ipsam simplicem naturam rei concomitatur, ut in substantiis simplicibus."³ And again: "Esse rei, quamvis sit aliud ab ejus essentia, non tamen est intelligendum quod sit aliquod superadditum ad modum accidentis, sed quasi constituitur per principia essentiae."⁴ Although property is other than the essence of its subject and follows from the principles of that essence, it is not the act that existence is, nor is existence a property of the essence. It is because the nature is that the property is, but the nature is because existence inheres in, or

1. "Unde, cum omne quod est praeter essentiam rei, dicatur accidens; esse quod pertinet ad quaestionem *an sit*, est accidens." *Ibid.*

2. *Quodl. IX*, q.2, a.2.

3. *In Boethii de Trin.* (ed. Wyser), q.5, a.3.

4. *In IV Metaphys.*, lect.2, n.558.

adheres to, it.¹ Moreover, the nature is a quasi-efficient cause of property,² but no nature is the efficient cause of its own existence since the efficient cause imparts an actuality already possessed to its effects. To say that man exists, then, is to say that the nature is, absolutely speaking ; to say man is risible is to say the nature is such-and-such. *A fortiori* existence is not an accident like the contingent accidents discussed above.

Thus, although existence is said to save the common notion of accident, insofar as whatever is *praeter essentiam* is an accident, it does not do so in the way predicamental accident, whether *per se* or contingent, does. Thus, St. Thomas writes : "esse est accidens, non quasi per accidens se habens, sed quasi actualitas cuiuslibet substantiae ; unde ipse Deus, qui est sua actualitas, est suum esse."³ If the common notion of accident is thought to be saved only by necessary and contingent accidents, existence is no accident. "Et sic dico quod esse substantiale rei non est accidens, sed actualitas cuiuslibet formae existentis, sive sine materia sive cum materia. Et quia esse est complementum omnium, inde est quod proprius effectus Dei est esse, et nulla causa dat esse nisi inquantum participat operationem divinam ; et sic proprie loquendo, non est accidens. Et quod Hilarius dicit, dico quod accidens dicitur large omne quod non est pars essentiae ; et sic est esse in rebus creatis, quia in solo Deo esse est eius essentia."⁴ St. Thomas accepts the extension of the word accident to include whatever is not of the essence of the thing. This is a common notion and is thereby opposed to the proper notion, the *ratio propria* of the term. Indeed, it is a notion far more common than that which enables us to group necessary and contingent accidents under the one term, accident. These latter are *praeter essentiam* but as well *esse accidentale*. The actuality of the essence, though also *praeter essentiam*, is *esse substantiale*. That is why *esse*, in the sense of substantial existence, is not an accident in the sense of *per accidens se habens*.⁵ The only meaning accident has as applied to existence is the sweepingly general one of *praeter essentiam*.

With respect to material things, *existence* means the actual composition of the components of the essence.⁶ "Man exists" means that the substantial form and prime matter are *actually* composed. This actuality is not another essential principle ; it is not a *tertium*

1. M. Gilson, (*op. cit.*, p. 225) seems to reject this terminology. St. Thomas uses both *adhaerere* (*Quodl. II*, q.2, a.1, c.) and *inhaerere* (*Q.D. de Pot.*, q.7, a.2, ad 7).

2. Cf. *Ia*, q.77, a.6, ad 2 ; RENARD, H., S.J., *The Philosophy of Man* (Milwaukee, 1948), pp.60-62.

3. *Quodl. II*, q.2, a.1, ad 2.

4. *Quodl. XII*, q.5, a.11.

5. *Quodl. II*, q.2, a.1, ad 2 ; *Q.D. de Pot.*, q.5, a.4, ad 3.

6. *Q.D. de Virt. in com.*, a.11, c. ; *Q.D. de Anima*, a.6.

quid composed of the principles.¹ It is the *actual* composition of the essential principles, the actuality of that which is a man. If it were another essential principle it would enter into the definition of the nature and it would be contradictory to say Socrates or man do not exist. The composition of essence and existence, then, is not a composition of the parts of substance, but a composition of substance with that which adheres to or inheres in it as its actuality. This is as true of created spirits as of material creatures. "Si ergo in angelo est compositio sicut ex essentia et esse, non tamen est compositio sicut ex partibus substantiae, sed sicut ex substantia et eo quod adhaeret substantiae."²

For a man to be is for a soul and a body actually to be composed. Existence is this actual composition *in rerum natura*. This is not a composition of essence and existence in general, but of this essence and this existence. For Socrates to exist is for an essence of a certain kind to be actual. It would seem to be for this reason that St. Thomas speaks of existence as following from the principles of the essence, resulting from them. It is not that essence produces its actuality, but rather that the actuality is of this limited kind because of what is actualized. "Man exists" does not assert the composition of human nature and "the act of all acts even of forms," which is the common notion of existence. Rather, it is the composition of *this* nature and *its* actuality. True, this existence falls under the common notion of existence, but it also restricts it. And, when there are many individuals of the same nature, that which individualizes the nature will individualize existence. Existence is not the principle of individuation, but that which is individualized. Existence does not make human nature individual anymore than it makes it to be *what* it is.³

There has been a tendency recently to see the judgment of existence as something terminal, as if to know that a thing is were somehow the goal of philosophical knowledge. There are several difficulties with such a view, particularly as a statement about metaphysics. First of all, since only singular things exist, there is a tendency to suggest that the term of metaphysics consists in a judgmental descent to the warmth of existent supposita. But no science, and certainly not metaphysics, is as such concerned with the singulars with which we make experiential contact. Secondly and more pertinently, the question *an sit* is a prelude to the further question *quid sit*. Moreover, the proposition which answers the question *an sit* is a tacit

1. *Q.D. de Anima*, a.6.

2. *Quodl. II*, q.2, 1, c.

3. M. Gilson, while alluding to matter as principle of individuation, qualifies this as an Aristotelian doctrine and seems finally to adopt the view that *esse* is the principle of individuation. Indeed, *esse* is invoked to explain why this man is a saint, that man an artist, etc. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp.171-172.

admission that there is a middle to be found which will be causative of the existence recognized in the answer to *an sit*. Once we know that something exists, we ask what it is and our question seeks the cause of the existence. What kind of proposition answers the question *an sit*? Should we say, "Socrates exists"? Yes and no. From the scientific point of view, we would be rather concerned with "Man exists," but of course this will be true insofar as we know that some such man as Socrates is. When *Socrates* is taken as the proper name of one who is a *man*, the judgment that Socrates is founds the truth of the judgment that Man is. This latter, as we have just recalled, poses the further problem of seeking the middle term which expresses the cause of man's existence. In other words, the suggestion is that an argument can be formed in which the quiddity will function as middle term. Would the following be such an argument? "Rational animal exists; Man is a rational animal; therefore Man exists." Surely this is *not* what is meant. The putative argument comes down to saying that Man is man, which certainly does not advance our knowledge. No one asks if man is man or, if he does, he is asking a question that can receive no answer.¹ How in the world, then, is the quiddity to function as a middle term in an argument concluding to the existence of that of which it is the quiddity?

The mystery is dissipated if we reflect on what permits us to make an existential judgment. Such a judgment is the attribution of actuality in *rerum natura* to some thing. The thing judged to exist can be denominated from accidents. If this is the case, we will be unable to assign the cause of its existence, in the manner under consideration, because we don't really know that existence save in a *per accidens* manner.² However, if something is judged to exist through a grasp of some essential note then the proof in question is possible. Note that the proof of an existential judgment, as presently envisaged, is not sought in the efficient or final cause. Surprisingly enough (at least for those who conceive of the existential judgment as the affirmation of the common notion of existence of some inscrutable X), the proof of the existential judgment comes down to a proof of a definition. One might immediately object that definition or quiddity cannot be proved, and make reference to the arguments of Aristotle cited above. Precisely, if what is meant is that there is no proof of the proposition "man is a rational animal." However, the judgment of existence which answers the question *an sit* is not going to be made in terms of a perfect grasp of quiddity. If it is made in terms of the grasp of a quidditative note, the possibility arises of proving that proposition by appeal to another quidditative note. This presupposes

1. Cf. *In VII Metaphys.*, lect.17, nn.1650-1654.

2. Cf. *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.7, n.7; *ibid.*, lect.8, n.6.

that the thing we are dealing with is composed.¹ In other words, if we judge that a thing exists through the grasp of something material in it, its form, which is the *ratio materiae*, can function as middle term in the proof of the existential judgment. "Quod quidem est possibile in substantiis compositis, ut puta si comprehendamus hominem esse per hoc quod est animal nondum cognitis aliis, quae complent essentiam hominis."² The form will be assigned as the cause of the existence of the matter, this specific form of this kind of matter.³ The form is the cause of the existence of the matter;⁴ to assign the form is to give the *ratio essendi* of the thing which was first known through what is material in it and thereby judge to exist. Such an argument uses the definition through formal cause to give the *propter quid* of the matter through knowledge of which the thing was judged to exist. That is why we read of the definition which is as a conclusion of a demonstration and of the definition which is *propter quid* and differs from the demonstration only in form.⁵ The whole quiddity is not demonstrated by such an argument, but the quiddity can be derived from the argument.⁶ Although such a demonstration gives the *ratio* or *propter quid* of the matter, this is not a *propter quid* demonstration in the usual sense, that in which a property is shown to belong to a subject because of what that subject is. The proof of the existential judgment does not show existence to be a property of essence; rather it assigns the form as the cause of the existence of the matter, it gives the reason for the existence previously affirmed.

What of the objection, almost certain to arise, that this is "essentialism?" Although it is difficult to know, in every instance of its use,⁷ precisely what this term is meant to cover, let us say that the objector feels that Aristotle and St. Thomas are reducing existence to essence, that all the foregoing "demonstration" does is manifest whatness. Neither side of the objection holds. What Aristotle and St. Thomas are doing is assigning the cause of existence? They envisage a situation when a composite is judged to exist; this judgment must have a subject, known in some way, of which existence is affirmed. If "Man exists" stand for "Such-and-such an organized body exists"

1. Cf. *In VII Metaphys.*, lect.17, nn.1669-1671; *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.8, n.3; *In I Post. Analyt.*, lect.41, n.8.

2. *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.7, n.6. I have taken the liberty to replace *rationalis* by *animal* in this text thereby making it, I think, easier to grasp. Aristotle uses "animal."

3. Cf. *In VII Metaphys.*, lect.17, n.1663.

4. Cf. *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.7, n.2; *Q.D. de Virt. in com.*, a.11, c.; *Q. D. de Anima*, a.6, etc.

5. Cf. *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.8, n.10; *In I Post. Analyt.*, lect.16, n.5.

6. "... quod quid est potest accipi ex ipsa demonstratione, non potest demonstrari." *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.8, n.11.

7. Cf. "The Ambiguity of Existential Metaphysics," *Laval théologique et philosophique*, Vol. XII, 1956, n.1.

or, equivalently, "Man is a body organized in such-and-such a way," we seek the cause of what is judged to exist, and the cause precisely of its existence. That cause will be the form. The upshot of the proof is knowledge of what these existent things called men are. We thereby know more perfectly what their existence is : it will be the actual union of this specific form and this matter.

An instructive example of the close link between our knowledge of existence and knowledge of what exists is found in discussions of God's existence. We do not judge that God exists through the grasp of anything pertaining to what He is ; if we can conclude to the fact that God exists, we do so from knowledge of his effects. "Unde manifestum est quod sicut nos habemus ad cognoscendum quia est aliquid, ita nos habemus ad cognoscendum quid est."¹ It is this fact which enables us to avoid a difficulty which can arise when we deny, in God, any composition of essence and existence. For then it might seem that since we know God exists and in God essence and existence are one, that we know what God is. The flaw in the reasoning is that, although we know God exists, we don't know God's existence.² As Aristotle has remarked, "Thus it follows that the degree of our knowledge of a thing's essential nature is determined by the sense in which we are aware that it exists."³

III. BEING AS SUBSTANTIAL PREDICATE

By way of introduction to the present section, we want to analyse a quodlibetal article⁴ to which reference has already been made. From this analysis, several further problems will arise, problems whose solution will enable us to see the ramifications of the doctrine that substantial existence is *praeter essentiam* and is therefore an accidental predicate of any creature.

The quodlibet asks whether the angel is substantially composed of essence and existence. St. Thomas, in the body of the article, begins by noting that one thing can be predicated of another either *essentialiter* or *participative*. We have examined the statement of this distinction earlier. St. Thomas continues :

According to this (distinction) then it must be said that being is predicated essentially of God alone, because the divine existence is subsistent

1. *In II Post. Analyt.*, lect.7, n.7.

2. "Ad secundum dicendum quod *esse* dupliciter dicitur, uno modo, significat actum essendi ; alio modo, significat compositionem propositionis, quam anima adinvenit coniungens praedicatum subiecto. Primo igitur modo accipiendo *esse*, non possumus scire esse Dei, sicut nec eius essentia : sed solum secundo modo. Scimus enim quod haec propositio quam formamus de Deo, cum dicimus *Deus est* vera est. Et hoc scimus ex eius effectibus." *Ia*, q.3, a.4, ad 2.

3. *Posterior Analytics*, II, chap.8, 93 a 28-29.

4. *Quodl. II*, q.2, a.1.

and absolute existence ; of no matter what creature it is predicated by way of participation for no creature is its existence but is something having existence. So too God is his goodness ; creatures however are called good by way of participation because they have goodness . . . Whenever something is predicated of another by way of participation, there is something there other than that which is participated.¹

It might appear that predication *essentialiter* and *participative* applied to "being" amounts to a distinction between *esse* and *habens esse*. Yet St. Thomas is speaking of *ens* and doesn't *ens* mean *quod est* or *habens esse*? St. Thomas is saying that God is existence and that creatures, when they exist, have existence. Does he mean that the *ratio entis* as said of God is existence and when said of creatures is *habens esse*? It is certain that *habens esse* exemplifies the complexity which participation is said to involve.

But note that something is participated in either of two ways. In one way, as being of the substance of that which participates in the way genus is participated by the species. Existence is not participated in this way by the creature, for that is of the substance of the thing which enters into its definition. Being, however, is not put in the definition of the creature because it is neither a genus nor difference ; hence it is participated as something not of the essence of the thing. That is why the questions 'Is it?' and 'What is it?' differ. And since whatever is outside the essence of the thing is said to be an accident, the existence which answers to the question 'Is it?' is an accident. Hence the Commentator says . . . that this proposition 'Socrates is' involves an accidental predicate insofar as it signifies the being of the thing or the truth of the proposition.²

That being is participated as something not of the essence of what participates it is indicated by noting that being does not enter into the definition of anything ; it does not do so because it is neither genus or difference. Moreover, it seems to be being as it answers the question

1. "Secundum ergo hoc dicendum est, quod ens praedicatur de solo Deo *essentialiter*, eo quod esse divinum est esse subsistens et absolutum ; de qualibet autem creatura praedicatur *per participationem* : nulla enim creatura est suum esse, sed est habens esse. Sic et Deus dicitur bonus *essentialiter*, quia *est* ipsa bonitas ; creaturae autem dicuntur bonae *per participationem*, quia *habent* bonitatem : (...) Quodcumque autem aliquid praedicatur de altero *per participationem*, oportet ibi aliquid esse praeter id quod participatur." *Ibid.*

2. "Sed sciendum est, quod aliquid participatur dupliciter. Uno modo quasi existens de substantia participantis, sicut genus participatur a specie. Hoc autem modo esse non participatur a creatura. Id enim est de substantia rei quod cadit in eius definitione. Ens autem non ponitur in definitione creaturae, quia nec est genus nec differentia. Unde participatur sicut aliquid non existens de essentia rei ; et ideo alia quaestio est *an est* et *quid est*. Unde cum omne quod est praeter essentiam rei, dicatur accidens ; esse quod pertinet ad quaestionem *an est*, est accidens. Et ideo Commentator dicit . . . quod ista propositio, *Socrates est*, est de accidentali praedicato, secundum quod importat entitatem rei, vel veritatem propositionis." *Ibid.*

'Is it?' which is not a genus. It is easy enough to see that *esse* does not enter into the definition of any creature, but if *ens* here means "existing," we may wonder if that is what *ens* means when it is shown that it cannot be a genus. It is possible, of course, to raise doubts concerning the statement that being does not enter into definitions. Being is that which is first conceived by our mind and that into which every concept is resolved.¹ Doesn't this imply that, in some meaning of the phrase, being enters into the meaning of anything whatsoever? Indeed, doesn't *esse* enter into the *rationes* of the supreme genera (e.g. substance is that to whose quiddity it belongs not to be in another) and into the definition of essence (that through which and in which the thing has existence)?

But it is true that this name being, in so far as it signifies the thing to which existence of this kind belongs signifies the essence of the thing and is divided by the ten genera, not univocally however, since existence does not belong to everything in the same way, but to substance *per se* and to the others in other ways.²

Insofar as *being* signifies that to which existence belongs, it signifies essence and is the first mode of being *per se* discussed in *Metaphysics*, V, 7. This is the being which is divided by the ten categories, but not in the way in which a genus is divided by its species. In other words, being thus understood is not a genus. How does this understanding of being fit into the division with which the *quodlibet* begins? That is, is being as signifying the essence predicated *essentialiter* or *participative* of what falls under the categories?

Not all of these are relevant questions, of course; moreover the statement of some of them is ambiguous. They seem nevertheless to be the kind of question currently being put. We will deal explicitly with the question of the *ratio entis*, and of being as the subject of metaphysics.

a) *The ratio "entis"*

The first mode of being *per se* is that which is divided into the ten categories.³ Being so understood "significat essentiam rei."⁴ Being will mean here "what is" (*quod est*), "what has existence" (*quod habet esse, habens esse*). Since being signifies what is, it can be predi-

1. *Q.D. de Ver.*, q.1, a.1, c.

2. "Sed verum est quod hoc nomen ens, secundum quod importat rem cui competit huiusmodi esse, sic significat essentiam rei, et dividitur per decem genera; non tamen univoce, quia non eadem ratione competit omnibus esse: sed substantiae quidem *per se*, aliis autem aliter." *Ibid.*

3. Cf. *In V Metaphys.*, lect.9, n.889; *De ente*, cap.1 (ed. Roland-Gosselin, p.2, 11. 9-10).

4. *De ente*, cap.1 (ed. cit.), p.3, 1. 12.

cated essentially of whatever falls under the categories though not in the same way of everything. Being in this sense, then, does not seem to signify something other than what things are, but precisely what they are. Isn't this why St. Thomas can say "quaelibet natura essentialiter est ens?"¹

If the being which is predicated *essentialiter* of what falls under the categories means *quod est*, *habens esse* or *quod habet esse*, is not *esse* part of the very ratio of the name and doesn't it follow then that *esse* is of the essence of that of which *ens* is predicated *essentialiter*? Since this is a consequence we would not want to accept, we must examine now it is that *esse* is part of the *ratio entis*. The shortest statement of this is: "hoc vero nomen Ens imponitur ab actu essendi."² This remark occurs in a passage where St. Thomas is discussing what are called the transcendentals. Whatever is is a thing, is one, is good, is true. What does this mean? The *supposita*, the things denoted by these terms, are the same but are denominated differently, through different notions or *rationes*. It is the same thing which is a being, a thing, one, etc., although these terms and the notions signified by them differ. The *suppositum* is denominated a thing (*res*) from its essence or quiddity; the quiddity is *id a quo nomen imponitur ad significandum*. In the case of the term *being*, the supposit is denominated from its act of existence. Now, although in the creature its essence is other than its existence, if the term imposed from what it is (*res*) and the term imposed from its existence (*ens*) did not signify the same thing (though through different *rationes*) they could not be called convertible.³ That from which the name being is imposed to signify, i.e. existence, is not part of the essence of that which the name is imposed to signify, i.e. the subject of existence. "Alio modo esse dicitur actus entis in quantum est ens, idest quo denominatur aliquid ens actu in rerum natura. Et sic esse non attribuitur nisi rebus ipsis quae in decem generibus continentur; unde ens a tali esse dictum per decem genera dividitur."⁴ *Esse* is attributed to what is in reality, to things which *aliquid in re ponunt*. That to which *esse* is attributed is denominated *ens*; what is named from existence is the subject of existence. In the case of being, it happens that that from which the name is imposed to signify is not of the essence of that which is denominated. That is called a being to which *esse in rerum natura* is attributed, but actually to be in reality is not *what* that which is named "being" is.

What now of the text reproduced at the beginning of this section? *Ens*, we read, is predicated essentially only of God; it is predicated by way of participation of every creature. Does *ens* here mean existence?

1. *Q.D. de Ver.*, q.1, a.1.

2. *In IV Metaphys.*, lect.2, n.553.

3. *Ibid.*, nn.550-552.

4. *Quodl. IX*, q.2, a.2.

St. Thomas seems to indicate this by pointing out that, unlike God, who is subsistent existence, every creature is a *habens esse*. Moreover, the creature is said to participate *esse* and consequently to have *ens* predicated of it as something not of its essence. Can *ens* in this passage mean *quod est*? Or does it only mean *quod est* when being is said essentially or creatures? Or is it rather the case that the *ratio entis* can be viewed in different ways while always being *quod est*, *habens esse* or *id quod habet esse*. A study of texts indicates that the final possibility is the teaching of St. Thomas.

This can be seen by examining the doctrine that *Qui est* is the most proper name of God. Now *qui est* substitutes another gender for the *quod* in *quod est* and both are equivalent to *ens*.¹ In other words, *being* is the most proper name of God. One reason for this is the very signification of the name. "Non enim significat formam aliquam, sed ipsum esse."² Since God's essence is existence, *being* or *He who is* properly names him: "unumquodque enim denominatur a sua forma."³ Any other name adds to the signification of *being*, in one way or another, but *being* is the most indeterminate of all words, since the term does not signify any determinate mode of existence, but is indeterminate with respect to any mode whatsoever. "Ens autem non dicit quidditatem, sed solum actum essendi..."⁴ How can *ens*, taken to mean *quod est* or *Qui est*, be said to signify only the act of existing? Doesn't the *ratio* include as well the *quod* or *qui*, the subject of the act? Of course, but St. Thomas' point is that the subject is left wholly undetermined as to what it is; it is denominated solely from the formality of its act, which is existence, and the mode of reception or possession of that act is left wholly indeterminate. Thus, although the *quod* is primarily substance, substance is not signified determinately by *ens*; that is why the term is common to substance and accident. Thus, although the *ratio entis* is composite, one of the components is formal with respect to the other, namely the component which is the *id a quo nomen imponitur ad significandum*, what the grammarian calls the *qualitas* as opposed to the *substantia nominis*.⁵ The *id a quo* is what is most formal in the signification of the name; the *id a quo* of *ens* is *esse* and it is from that point of view that *Qui est* or *ens* is the most proper name of God.⁶ From the point of view of the *id ad quod nomen imponitur ad significandum*, "Deus" is a more proper name of God than "He who is." It is not, therefore,

1. Cf. *In I Sent.*, d.8, q.1, a.1, c.: "... hoc nomen 'qui est' vel 'ens' imponitur ab actu essendi."

2. *Ia*, q.13, a.11.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *In I Sent.*, d.8, q.4, a.2, ad 2.

5. Cf. *In III Sent.*, d.6, q.1, a.3; *In I Sent.*, d.22, q.1, a.1, ad 3.

6. *Ia*, q.13, a.11, ad 1.

because *ens* does not have a composite ratio that it is the proper name of God ; its ratio is composed (*quod est* or *qui est*), but that which the name being is imposed to signify is left wholly undetermined as to what it is by the *ratio entis*, it is signified only as *quod est* without any indication of what the *quod* is.

That this is the case with *ens* as it is said to be the proper name of God is clear from the cautionary notes St. Thomas introduces. Thus, upon reading that *Qui est* is the most proper name of God, we may think that it escapes the dictum that *omne nomen cum defectu est*¹ as applied to God. But *Qui est* is a defective name: "... cum esse creaturae imperfecte repraesentet divinum esse, et hoc nomen qui est imperfecte significat ipsum, quia significat per modum cuiusdam concretionis et compositionis ; sed adhuc imperfectius significatur per alia nomina ..." ² It is the most proper name of God only in the sense that it is the least improper.³ Could we avoid the composition of the *ratio entis* and say that *Ipsum esse* is the most proper name of God ? St. Thomas suggests this in replying to an objection which cites the Boethius of the *De hebdomadibus* to the effect that *ens* is that which participates *esse*. But God is *ens*, ergo, etc. St. Thomas replies : "... dicendum quod dictum Boetii intelligitur de illis quibus esse competit per participationem, non per essentiam ; quod enim per essentiam est, si vim locutionis attendamus, magis debet dici quod est ipsum esse quam sit id quod est." ⁴ *Ens* and *esse*, however, like *bonus* and *bonitas* both fall under the community of the remark : "omne nomen cum defectu est quantum ad modum significandi." As St. Thomas points out,⁵ a concrete name applied to God (e.g. *ens*) has the advantage of signifying what subsists and the disadvantage of complexity ; an abstract name (e.g. *esse*) has the advantage of simplicity but the disadvantage of signifying as a *quo*.

This excursus into the matter of the divine names was committed with a view to explicating the *ratio entis*. It has emerged that *quod est*, *habens esse* or *quod habet esse* is always the notion signified by the concrete term *ens*. That from which the term is imposed to signify is *esse*. The subject of *esse* is included in the signification of *ens*, but is left wholly undetermined from the point of view of its *modus essendi*. That is why we can say that *ens* signifies only *esse*. If we look to the *id a quo* of this name, we find that it is something other than the thing which is denominated from it, at least in the case of creatures. That is why being is not their proper name ; as such it does not manifest *what* they are. In the case of God, the composition of the

1. *I C.G.*, cap. 30.

2. *In I Sent.*, d.8, q.1, a.1, ad 3.

3. Cf. CAJETAN, *In Iam*, q.13, a.11, n.V.

4. *Q.D. de Pot.*, q.7, a.2, ad 8.

5. *Ia*, q.13, a.1, ad 2.

ratio entis is recognized as following only on our mode of knowing. He is his existence and, since *ens sumitur ab esse*, it is the proper name of God "quia sic denominatur quasi a propria sua forma."¹ The proper name of the creature will be that which is imposed from his form or quiddity. Nonetheless, because quiddity is included in the signification of *ens*, though indistinctly as to what it is, creatures are signified by being. That is why St. Thomas remarks, in the quodlibetal article, that *ens*, insofar as it implies the subject of existence, signifies the essence of the thing and is divided by the ten genera. Insofar as we consider the *id a quo*, however, being will not signify the essence of creatures but something other than their essence.

Is this interpretation compatible with the discussion of the verb in the *Perihermeneias*? In commenting on Aristotle St. Thomas observes that "nec ipsum *ens* significat rem esse vel non esse. Et hoc est quod dicit, *nihil est*, idest non significat aliquid esse. Etenim hoc maxime videbatur de hoc quod dico *ens* : quia *ens* nihil aliud est quam *quod est*. Et sic videtur et *rem* significare, per hoc quod dico QUOD et *esse* per hoc quod dico EST. Et si quidem haec dictio *ens* significaret *esse* principaliter, sicut significat *rem* quae habet esse, procul dubio significaret aliquid esse."² How can this statement be reconciled with those in which *esse* is said to be most formal in the signification of *ens*? The context of this remark makes it clear that the *esse vel non esse* that is not signified by *ens* is that which is signified by the proposition. *Ens* is a term of simple apprehension and, although its *ratio* is complex, it is not complex in the way a proposition is. When something is apprehended as *ens*, it is grasped under the formality of existence. And, though what exists is left wholly undetermined in this apprehension, it is what exists which is being apprehended. The composition of the subject and existence is not as such signified by the term *ens*, as if the term meant, "Something exists." "Sed ipsam compositionem, quae importatur in hoc quod dico EST, non principaliter significat, sed consignificat eam inquantum significat *rem* habentem esse. Unde talis consignificatio compositionis non sufficit ad veritatem vel falsitatem : quia compositio in qua consistit veritas et falsitas, non potest intelligi, nisi secundum quod innectit extrema compositionis."³ The concept of being is not a judgment ; it does not signify existence in the way in which the proposition does and, consequently, is neither true nor false. Being is the apprehension of supposita from the point of view of that which is absolutely minimal, namely that they have existence. The thing grasped as subject of existence, as that to which *esse actu in rerum natura* is attributed : this is what is grasped when *ens* is grasped. In this sense, the thing is

1. *Q.D. de Pot.*, q.2, a.1, c. ; cf. *Ia*, q.13, a.11, c.

2. *In I Periherm.*, lect. 5, n.20.

3. *Ibid.*

what is principally signified by *ens*. Yet, in the *ratio entis*, that which is formal, that from which the name is imposed to signify, is existence.

b) *Ens inquantum ens*

St. Thomas' remarks on the *ratio entis* must be taken as criteria in assessing current views on the nature of Thomistic metaphysics. This metaphysics, we are told, must be seen as "existential," a quality allegedly manifest in St. Thomas' statements concerning the subject of metaphysics. That subject is designated by the phrase *ens inquantum ens*. Such a phrase would seem to mean being taken precisely as such, so that what would concern us is what pertains to being *per se* and not to being of this or that particular kind. St. Thomas likens this to the relation of genus and species. If we are concerned with the genus as such, we want to determine what belongs to it *per se* and not what belongs to its species as such. Indeed, what is *per se* to the species is *per accidens* to the genus.¹ The existential interpretation of *ens inquantum ens* is: the thing or essence considered precisely as existing. Or it is said, in the *ratio entis*, we can emphasize either the *quod* or the *est*; the former is the essentialist approach, the latter the existential and thomistic approach. This is a somewhat ambiguous option. If taken to mean that *esse* is what is formal in the signification of *ens*, in the sense of the *id a quo nomen imponitur*, nothing could be truer. If it means that essence is grasped from the vantage point of existence so that *ens* denominates the thing precisely as that to which *esse in rerum natura* is attributed, again nothing could be truer. However, if it means that the concept of being is at once a grasp of essence and the judgment that it exists, it is difficult to see that this is what St. Thomas teaches. Unfortunately, this last interpretation is the one favored by thomistic existentialists. We have examined the view elsewhere² and need not repeat the criticisms already made. Suffice it to say now that if *ens* is taken to mean "essence grasped as existing" in such a way as to include a judgment of existence, we are faced with a view at variance with that of St. Thomas — a fact of considerable importance when thomistic metaphysics is being discussed.

A passage that has provided difficulty for those desirous of finding an "existentialism" in the texts of St. Thomas is found in the commentary on Book Gamma of the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle is arguing that the science concerned with being as being must concern itself with unity as well. What is called a man, a being and one is the same; the terms *man*, *being* and *one* all designate the same thing.³ We have

1. In *IV Metaphys.*, lect.1, n. 531.

2. Cf. *supra*, p. 236, note 1.

3. "... idem enim est dictum homo, et unus homo. Et similiter est idem dictum, ens homo, vel quod est homo: et non demonstratur aliquid alterum cum secundum dictionem replicamus dicendo, est ens homo, et homo, et unus homo." In *IV Metaphys.*, lect.2, n.550.

already seen that if this were not the case, *ens* and *unum* could not be convertible terms. They both signify the same thing, but from different points of view, through different *rationes*.¹ St. Thomas states Aristotle's second argument in this way.

Quaecumque duo praedicantur de substantia alicuius rei per se et non per accidens, illa sunt idem secundum rem : sed ita se habent unum et ens, quod praedicantur per se et non secundum accidens de substantia cuiuslibet rei. Substantia enim cuiuslibet rei est unum per se et non secundum accidens. Ens ergo et unum significant idem secundum rem.²

A thing has being predicated of it, not because of something added to it (for then the question would arise as to how being is said of that which is added and so to infinity or we stop at that to which being belongs *per se*) but by reason of itself, *per se*. Doesn't this contradict the doctrine that something is denominated *ens* from *esse* which is not *what* it is and in that sense is an accident? In the commentary, St. Thomas cites Avicenna as one who sensed this difficulty. The Arabian held that a thing is a being and one due to something added to it. "Et de ente quidem hoc dicebat, quia in qualibet re quae habet esse ab alio, aliud est esse rei, et substantia sive essentia eius : hoc autem nomen ens significat ipsum esse. Significat igitur (ut videtur) aliquid additum essentiae."³ It might appear that St. Thomas can only agree with Avicenna. Yet he disagrees and his reason for doing so is extremely important.

Sed in primo quidem non videtur dixisse recte. Esse enim rei quamvis sit aliud ab eius essentia, non tamen est intelligendum quod sit aliquod superadditum ad modum accidentis, sed quasi constituitur per principia essentiae. Et ideo hoc nomen Ens quod imponitur ab ipso esse, significat idem cum nomine quod imponitur ab ipsa essentia.⁴

Ens is imposed to signify from *esse* ; the thing is denominated a being from its existence. However, although *esse* is other than essence it is not another nature but the very actuality of the essence, an actuality which is as it were constituted by the principles of the essence. *Album* means that which has whiteness ; the thing is denominated from an act which is other than what it is, is denominated from an accidental nature. But when a thing is called *ens*, it is denominated from the actuality of what it is. The thing is what is denominated and since the *id a quo* is not an accidental nature the thing is not denominated *ens* through some added nature. That is why *ens* like *unum* is predicated *in quid* of that of which it is said.

1. In IV *Metaphys.*, n.553.

2. *Ibid.*, n.554.

3. *Ibid.*, n.556.

4. *Ibid.*, n.558.

This same point is made in the commentary on Book 10.¹ *Being* does not signify some nature added to the thing thanks to which the thing is called a being. Neither *one* nor *being* signify some subsistent thing apart from the things of which they are predicated. We do not look for One and Being apart from the things which are one and being. We ask what is it that is one, what is it that is being. There is no unity or being apart from the things which are called one; at least we cannot argue from the unity of the notion said of many to some one thing apart from the many.² However, *being* and *one* signify the nature of that of which they are said although they do not signify some nature over and above the things of which they are predicated. It is in this that these common notions differ from accidents.³ Once again St. Thomas singles out Avicenna for criticism. "Hoc autem non considerans Avicenna posuit quod unum et ens sunt praedicata accidentalia, et quod significant naturam additam supra ea de quibus dicuntur."⁴ In both cases the Arabian was deceived by the equivocation of the terms involved.

Similiter etiam deceptus est ex aequivocatione entis. Nam ens quod significat compositionem propositionis est praedicatum accidentale, quia compositio fit per intellectum secundum determinatum tempus. Esse autem in hoc tempore vel in illo, est accidentale praedicatum. Sed ens quod dividitur per decem praedicamenta, significat ipsas naturas decem generum secundum quod sunt actu vel potentia.⁵

The being signified by the composition of the proposition is being as true. However, as St. Thomas indicates in the quodlibetal article, we can consider the *is* in *Socrates is* either as sign of the composition made by the mind (*ens ut verum*) or as signifying the entity of the thing. In either sense, he has said there, it is an accidental predicate. To affirm that something exists is to affirm that it exists here and now since the verb signifies with time.⁶ *Ens* however, as it is

1. "... cum dicitur unus homo, non aliquam naturam aliam ab homine praedicat, sicut nec ipsum quod est ens praedicat aliam naturam a decem praedicamentis; quia si praedicaret aliam naturam, oporteret abire in infinitum, quia etiam illa natura diceretur unum et ens." *In X Metaphys.*, lect.4, n.1276.

2. *Ibid.*, n.1964. God, whose proper name is Being, exists apart but is common to many not by way of predication but by way of causality. Moreover, the existence of such a being is not known from the common notion of being, as if something subsistent had to respond to that common notion as common. Cf. *supra*, p.245, note 2.

3. "Post modum vero ostendit quod significant naturam eorum de quibus dicuntur, et non aliquid additum sicut accidentia. In hoc enim differunt communia ab accidentibus, quamvis utrisque sit commune non esse hoc aliquid: quia communia significant ipsam naturam suppositorum, non autem accidentia, sed aliquam naturam additam." *Ibid.*, n.1980.

4. *Ibid.*, n.1981.

5. *Ibid.*, n.1982.

6. Cf. *In I Periherm.*, lect.5, nn.4-5.

divided into the categories does not assert that anything exists. The natures so divided are denominated from *esse*, they are that to which *esse* is attributed, but it is the nature which is denominated and not its factual existence at any given time. That is why St. Thomas says that *being* signifies these natures according as they are in act or in potency, using the disjunctive both sides of which, though with priority and posteriority, are explained with reference to *esse*. This passage would seem to underline the manner in which *esse* is part of the *ratio entis*. If we say that metaphysics is concerned with things *as existing*, wouldn't we mean in the present? And is any science concerned with something so contingent as that? To think of metaphysics as reaching its term in such judgments as "Socrates is" is to separate oneself rather definitively from the doctrine of St. Thomas.

How can we reconcile St. Thomas' rejection of the view that *ens* is an accidental predicate with his remarks elsewhere that *ens* is an accidental predicate? *Ens* is not an accidental predicate insofar as what is denominated by the term is the subject of existence. *Ens* is an accidental predicate insofar as that from which the name is imposed to signify is *praeter essentiam* in the case of creatures. Since the creature is not that from which he is denominated *ens*, he is said to participate in it. And, as in the case of *lux* in the quodlibetal article, if there is something separate in the sense of subsistent which is *esse*, then this will be called being *essentialiter* and not by way of participation. Compare the following statements.

- (1) Socrates est albus,
- (2) Socrates est homo,
- (3) Socrates est ens.

In (1) *albus* means "id quod habet albedinem." Whiteness is not what Socrates is and therefore Socrates participates it as not being of his essence. In (2) *homo* means "id quod habet humanitatem." Socrates is not humanity and is said to participate in it, but humanity signifies the very essence of Socrates. In (3) *ens* means "quod habet esse", "habens esse"; Socrates is not *esse* but participates in it. Insofar as he is what has existence, however, the term signifies his essence. Just as *humanity* cannot be predicated of him so neither can *esse*. The concrete terms *homo* and *ens* are both predicated *in quid* of Socrates although the one is imposed from essence and the other from existence.

The doctrine that there is a real composition of essence and existence in every creature does not entail that the *ratio entis* is a proposition. The thing is denominated a being from *esse* which is other than what the thing is, but what the term is imposed to signify is the subject of existence whether actually or potentially composed with existence. We cannot, then, say that the subject of metaphysics

is the thing considered as existing if by that we mean that *ens* is as such the judgment that essence exists. Furthermore, the doctrine that existence is an accidental predicate (and so too *ens*, if we consider the *id a quo nomen imponitur*) is not one that St. Thomas invented but which appears in his writing on the authority of others, e.g. Hilary and Avicenna. As he is careful to point out, this must not be understood as if being is predicated of the thing because of some accidental nature added to it. No, being is predicated of the thing *per se* in the sense of not *per aliud*. The thing's substantial existence is not an added nature. And yet, since it is other than the thing's essence it can be called an accident in just that sense, i.e. of what is *praeter essentiam*. What the term *being* signifies, however, is the very essence of which it is predicated: this is *id ad quod nomen imponitur ad significandum*.

Despite the difficulties of his teaching on the predication of being and the apparently contradictory assertions, the text of St. Thomas reveals a complex, subtle and finally consistent doctrine. And, although *esse* is what is most formal in the *ratio entis*, there is no basis for the claim that the subject of metaphysics, as described by St. Thomas, includes *esse* in the way in which this is attained in the judgment.

IV. CONCLUSION

We want to return now to *Metaphysics*, V, 7 and indicate, by way of conclusion, the order among the various modes of "being" enumerated there. We saw that St. Thomas looks on Book Delta as ordered to the development of the science of metaphysics and not as a random lexicographical effort that happened to become wedged into this difficult work of Aristotle's. That science considers the *communia* which are predicated not univocally but according to priority and posteriority, that is with controlled equivocation or, in St. Thomas' use of the term, analogically, of their inferiors. In his commentary on Book Delta, St. Thomas will often spell out the order among the various meanings of a common term. He does not do this in commenting on chapter seven, but the order can be manifested without great difficulty.

There is, we have seen, a primary division into being *per se* and being *per accideos*. Being *per accideos* is a whole resulting from the accidental composition of substance and accident (the possible complexities of which we examined). There is, then, an obvious reference of being *per accideos* to the first mode of being *per se*.¹

Being *per se* is had according to an absolute consideration. We have seen that the predicate of such a proposition as "Socrates is

1. Cf. *In VI Metaphys.*, lect. 4, n. 1243, for the reduction of *ens per accideos* and *ens verum* to the being *per se* which is divided into the categories.

white", the is-white, considered in itself, is *esse accidentale*. In other words, the accident considered in itself is that to which it is proper to be in another. The order among the various kinds of being *per se* in the first mode is something often discussed in the *Metaphysics*. That of which *being* is primarily predicated, that which realizes the *ratio entis* first of all and most properly is substance.

The reference of the second and third modes of being *per se* to the first is clear from the commentary of St. Thomas. Being as true is founded on that which is *in rerum natura*, i.e. the being which is divided into the categories. Moreover, that which is divided into the categories can be or not be, i.e. have *esse* attributed to it actually or potentially. Since there is priority of actuality, the first mode of being *per se* is called *ens perfectum*.

Thus there is a reduction of all modes of being to that which is divided by the categories and in that mode substance has priority over the other categories. Thus this chapter sets the stage for the further developments of the *Metaphysics*. In Book VI, Aristotle removes being *per accidens* and being as true from the concern of this science. *Metaphysics* will be concerned with the being which, as St. Thomas remarks, "dividitur per decem praedicamenta," and "significat ipsas decem generum secundum quod sunt actu vel potentia."¹

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1. In *X Metaphys.*, lect.3, n.1982.