

CHAPTER VI

Critical Examination of the Principal Factors

1. The Signification of Being

The major difference between the positions of Ferrara and Cajetan is, of course, in regard to the formal signification of being. According to Ferrara, being signifies formally essence, whereas in Cajetan's view being signifies esse formally. Viewed in this light, it is scarcely possible to find a more radical divergence between the two positions. We have already had occasion to review Ferrara's arguments in favor of his position that being signifies formally essence. What gave rise to this, it will be recalled, was one of St. Thomas' arguments showing why it is impossible for God to be in a genus. (1) The argument in question is the last in a series of four, and quite logically enough it was intended by St. Thomas to dispel any remaining doubt that might be had should the previous arguments or reasonings failed to convince. Everything is placed in a genus, argues St. Thomas, by reason of its quiddity; for a genus is that which is predicated in quid est. But the quiddity of God is ipsum suum esse, according to which nothing is ever placed in a genus; otherwise we would have to say that being is a genus, which signifies the very esse. The argument of St. Thomas as it stands seems very clear: being signifies formally esse. Ferrara, however, contends that that is not what St. Thomas means, but rather St. Thomas is using the word being as signifying in its formal content essence and only secondarily and connotatively the esse. (2)

(1) C. G., I, o. 25.

(2) Ferrara, Ibid., n. IX.

This same topic is discussed by St. Thomas in quite a number of places. Thus, in the Summa Theologiae St. Thomas again argues that since the esse of God is his essence, if God were in a genus, then being would be his genus; for a genus signifies the essence of a thing, since it is predicated in eo quod quid est. (1) The argument is certainly clear here, and it is difficult to see how St. Thomas could be understood otherwise than what he says. Let us see now how Cajetan explains this argument. The reasoning of St. Thomas here, he says, is as follows: If God were in a genus, then a genus would be predicated in quid of esse, and consequently being would be a genus. The reason for this is simple enough: the essence of God is ipsum esse; now a genus is predicated in quid of that of which it is a genus. Therefore, if God were in a genus, then a genus would be predicated in quid of esse, and thus being would be a genus, for being either solely or principally signifies formally esse. (2)

Here we have two radically opposed interpretations centering on the very same argument and reasoning of St. Thomas. The problem is, therefore, which of the two interpretations are more in conformity with the mind of St. Thomas? It would be interesting to conduct a detailed investigation of all the various occasions where St. Thomas discusses just this one factor alone. Such a pro-

(1) Ia, q. 3, a. 5o.

(2) Cajetan, Ibid., n. II: "Si Deus esset in genere, genus aliquod praedicaretur in quid de esse; ergo ens esset genus. Sed hoc est impossibile. Ergo. --- Prima consequentia probatur. Essentia Dei est ipsum esse; et genus praedicatur in quid de eo cuius est genus; ergo, si Deus esset in genere, etc. --- Secunda consequentia relinquitur pro constanti: quia ens aut solum aut maxime significat formaliter esse".

cedure would reveal, on the one hand, how remarkably synthesized St. Thomas' thought was whenever and wherever he discussed a particular topic; and it would afford, on the other hand, a wonderful insight into the very problem we are discussing. For instance, in the De Ente et Essentia, St. Thomas remarks that, since esse is the very essence of God, there were some philosophers who said that God does not have a quiddity or essence. (1) And, as St. Thomas continues, if we say that God is existence only, we need not fall into the error of those who said that God is that universal existence in which everything exists formally. For this existence which is God is of such kind that no addition can be made to it. Therefore, through its very purity it is existence distinct from every other existence. (2) Likewise, in the De Potentia, where St. Thomas again discusses this question, he states in quite the same fashion the argument he proposed in both the Summa Contra Gentiles and the Summa Theologiae. Nothing is placed in a genus according to its esse, but by reason of its quiddity. The reason for this, as St. Thomas explains, is because the esse of each and every thing is something proper to it, and it is distinct from the esse of every other object; whereas the notion of substance, for instance, is something common to all things. And because of this, he continues, Aristotle said that being is not a genus. (3)

(1) "Aliquid enim est sicut Deus, cujus essentia est ipsum suum esse; et ideo inveniuntur aliqui philosophi dicentes quod Deus non habet essentiam quia essentia ejus non est aliud quam esse ejus". --- De Ente et Essentia, c. VI.

(2) "Nec oportet si dicimus quod Deus est esse tantum ut in errorem eorum incidamus qui Deum dixerunt esse illud esse universale, quo quaelibet res formaliter est. Hoc enim esse, quod Deus est hujus conditionis est, ut nulla sibi additio fieri possit. Unde per ipsam suam puritatem est esse distinctum ab omni esse". --- Ibid., c. VI.

(3) De Pot., q. 7, a. 3o.

There is still another illustration of this same idea that appears in St. Thomas' commentary on the Sentences. This particular passage is by far the most important of all; not that the previous arguments of St. Thomas were any less clear, but rather because the outstanding feature in this particular context is the stress St. Thomas lays upon the fact, as if somehow he had envisioned the whole problem, that he does not understand or mean being in the sense of essence or quiddity.

Ista definitio, secundum Avicennam, tract. II Metaph., cap. 1, et tract. III, cap. 8, non potest esse substantias; substantia est quae non est in subiecto. Ens enim non est genus. Haec autem negatio "non in subiecto" nihil ponit; unde hoc quod dico, ens non est in subiecto, non dicit aliquod genus: quia in quolibet genere oportet significare quidditatem aliquam, ut dictum est, de cuius intellectu non est esse. Ens autem non dicit quidditatem, sed solum actum essendi, cum sit principium ipsum. (1)

This statement of St. Thomas scarcely needs any comment, for it indicates quite unmistakably what his mind on the subject was. We have chosen this particular point for two reasons. First of all, it illustrates rather prominently, as we have said, how consistent St. Thomas was whenever he discussed any particular topic. Secondly, since this was the point of departure for Ferrara's whole position, namely, that in such an argument St. Thomas had used being in the sense of ens nominaliter or as signifying essence formally; if we could point out that, in an identical situation, St. Thomas had said just the opposite, then we would not only prove that ens nominaliter was not St. Thomas' conception of being, but that even the very occasion which gave rise to such a position had, as a matter of fact, no basis or foundation. This appears

(1) In I Sent., d. 8, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2.

to be confirmed by the facts.

This is not, of course, the only text upon which the ens nominaliter position is based. There are others, we frankly admit, that do offer some difficulty at first. But the principal texts of St. Thomas cited by Ferrara as confirming his position, when viewed in their proper light, are no more relevant to the position of ens nominaliter than that of the ens participialiter. Ferrara, it will be recalled, based his whole argument on the following passage of St. Thomas: "Ens per decem praedicamenta divisum significat ipsas naturas decem generum, secundum quod sunt actu vel potentia". (1) At first sight, this does appear to conform exactly to the notion of ens nominaliter as outlined by Ferrara. But, as the context reveals upon closer examination, St. Thomas is discussing an entirely different problem. The real question here is the refutation of the error of Avicenna, who held that being was an accidental predicate and that it signified a nature or an objective reality distinct from those things of which it was predicated. Avicenna was deceived here, writes St. Thomas, because he overlooked the equivocal usage of the word being. For being which signifies the composition which the intellect makes in forming a proposition is an accidental predicate, since such a composition is made according to a determined time. But being which is divided into the predicaments is not an accidental predicate; nor does it signify a nature or reality added, as it were, to the essences of things, but it signifies exactly what things are in themselves, whether they be actual or whether they be only potentially. (2) In other words, the point

(1) Ferrara, op. cit., p. 78.

(2) St. Thomas, In X Metaph., lect. 3, n. 1982.

St. Thomas is emphasizing here is not that being signifies formally essence, as Ferrara seems to interpret it, but rather that being does not signify an objective reality over and above the reality of things, something distinct from them. As St. Thomas indicates on numerous occasions, all things are comprised under the concept of being; for being includes all genera, differences, and species. Being is that which is or is capable of being. Nothing, he says, is opposed to the idea of being except non-being. (1) It is quite obvious, therefore, that being, when predicated of things, does not signify something distinct from the things themselves. Consequently, being signifies the same thing as the natures and essences of things themselves.

This interpretation is further verified by what St. Thomas says in Book Four of the Metaphysics, where he discusses this same erroneous conception of Avicenna. And since this is likewise one of the principal texts upon which the ens nominaliter position is based, it will not be out of place to discuss it briefly. In a way, this passage is even more explicit than the foregoing one, for St. Thomas gives added detail here just why Avicenna was led astray on this particular point. Because being signifies esse, writes St. Thomas, Avicenna thought that being signified something added, in the manner of an accident, to the essence.

Solendum est autem quod circa hoc Avicenna aliud sensit. Dixit enim quod unum et ens non significant substantiam rei, sed significant aliquid additum. Et de ente quidem hoc dicebat, quia in qualibet re quae

(1) "Nihil autem opponitur rationi entis nisi non ens". --- Ia, q. 16, a. 3c.

habet esse ab alio, aliud est esse rei, et substantia sive essentia ejus: hoc autem nomen ens, significat ipsum esse. Significat igitur (ut videtur) aliquid additum essentiae. (1)

This was the crux of the problem for Avicenna. Since in everything which has an esse from another, the essence of a thing is one factor and the esse another; consequently, since being signifies esse, it must necessarily signify something added to the essence. Against this opinion of Avicenna, St. Thomas asserts that being does not signify a distinct nature added to the essences of things, something more than what they are themselves, but signifies the same thing as the name itself which the thing bears.

Sed in primo quidem non videtur dixisse recte. Esse enim rei quamvis sit aliud ab eius essentia, non tamen est intelligendum quod sit aliquid 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. (2)

As St. Thomas indicates here, being signifies esse; but that does not mean that it signifies something added to the thing in the manner of an accident; for the esse of a thing even though it is distinct from the essence, is constituted by the very principles of the essence. For that reason, when being is predicated of such and such a thing, it signifies the same thing as the thing itself.

Ferrara claims to see in such texts a confirmation that being signifies essence. But it seems that such an interpretation has overlooked the whole point of St. Thomas' argument. The preceding passage of St. Thomas is so

(1) In IV Metaph., lect. 2, n. 556.

(2) Ibid., n. 558.

clear and explicit, that it cannot leave room for doubt: hoc autem nomen ens, significat ipsum esse.

A much more difficult text, however, occurs in St. Thomas' commentary on I Perihermeneias. To grasp the full import of what St. Thomas says here, let us look briefly at the context. The discussion is on the nature of the verb, and Aristotle is attempting to show that although the verb signifies something, it does not signify that something is or is not. In order to emphasize this factor more forcefully he uses as an example that which most strikingly seems to signify that something is, i.e. the verb to be and the participle being. Taken by themselves, Aristotle says, "they are not significant of any fact, unless something is added; for they do not themselves indicate anything, but simply a copulation, of which we cannot form a conception apart from the things coupled". (1) St. Thomas' commentary on this is as follows:

Et hoc consequenter probat per id, de quo magis videtur, cum subdit: Nec si hoc ipsum EST purum dixeris, ipsum quidem nihil est. Ubi notandum est quod in graeco habetur: Neque si ENS ipsum nudum dixeris, ipsum quidem nihil est. Ad probandum enim quod verba non significant rem esse vel non esse, assumpsit id quod est fons et origo ipsius esse, scilicet ipsum ens, de quo dicit quod nihil est. (2)

As St. Thomas notes here, in place of the est in the Latin text, the Greek employs ens. He does not, however, mention that this ens is a participle; but that is to be understood from the context, as we have just seen. This term ens, then, taken by itself, or considered as standing alone in any proposition,

(1) Aristotle, On Interpretation, c. 1, 16 b 19.

(2) St. Thomas, In I Perihermeneias, lect. 5, n. 19.

does not signify that something is. Here is St. Thomas' explanation why this is so.

Etenim hoc maxime videbatur de hoc quo dico ens: quia ens nihil est aliud 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. Sed ipsam compositionem, quae importatur in hoc quod dico EST, non principaliter significat, sed consignificat eam in quantum significat rem habentem esse. (1)

Regarded simply in itself, this passage might seem to be an indication that St. Thomas considered being as signifying principally and formally essence and not esse, and consequently being in the sense of ens nominaliter. However, if we view it in the light of the context which we have already seen and keep in mind what it is that St. Thomas is intent upon showing, namely, that being, of itself, does not imply that something is said to be or to exist, it is not difficult to reconcile this passage with the rest of St. Thomas' clear doctrine on the signification of being. For, it is quite obvious that St. Thomas is not discussing the formal signification of being in this particular instance, but what he is attempting to show is, as we have said, that being does not imply a judgment on the existence of things. As a matter of fact, this text of St. Thomas confirms a point that was mentioned previously, namely, that in Cajetan's mind there is no question of a primary and secondary signification of being, such as being signifying primarily and formally the essence and secondarily the esse. (2) Being signifies the

(1) In I Perihermeneias, lect. 5, n. 20.

(2) Cf. above, pages 80, 81.

whole quod est or id quod habet esse. This is what St. Thomas appears to insist upon here. It is absolutely impossible for being to signify esse principally; for being is a concrete term, and as such it denotes a subject which has esse. Being signifies principally, then, that which has esse: res quas habet esse. It is only as a consequence of this, its primary and formal signification, that it can signify or, as St. Thomas puts the matter, consignify a composition. This is confirmed, moreover, by what St. Thomas immediately adds, and here he is speaking precisely of the formal signification of being.

Ideo autem dicit quod hoc verbum EST consignificat compositionem, et hoc quia non tam principaliter significat, sed ex consequenti; significat enim primo illud quod cadit in intellectu per modum actualitatis absolute: nam EST, simpliciter dictum, significat in actu esse; et ideo significat per modum verbi. Quia vero actualitas, quam principaliter significat hoc verbum EST, est communiter actualitas omnia forme, vel actus substantialis vel accidentalis, inde est quod cum volumus significare quomunque formam vel actum actualiter inesse alicui subiecto, significamus illud per hoc verbum EST..... Et ideo ex consequenti hoc verbum EST significat compositionem. (1)

This passage is certainly clear enough; nor need we quibble about the use of the word est here. St. Thomas has already pointed out that the Greek text uses the word ens instead of est. In either case, the sense is the same: ens or est signifies primarily actuality, and it is only as a consequence of this, its formal signification, that it signifies a composition or the inherence of such a form or actuality in a subject, and thus truth in

(1) Ibid., n. 22. Cf. also, the pertinent remarks of John of St. Thomas on this matter in Logica, I.P. Summul., l. 6, p. 15. This passage is also referred to by Cajetan in his commentary on II Perihermeneias, lect. 5, n. 13.

an enunciation..

These are the principal texts that might appear to offer some difficulty to the interpretation we have adopted as that which is more in conformity with the mind of St. Thomas. If viewed, however, in the perspective which we have indicated, these texts not only seem to be perfectly in harmony with the explicit doctrine of St. Thomas as expressed in numerous other places, but they equally manifest a factor that was alluded to earlier, namely, the remarkable synthesis of St. Thomas' thought. We have devoted considerable attention to this feature of the signification of being for very good reasons. First of all, this is the pivotal point of the whole discussion; and the immense importance that attaches itself to this factor demands that one understand it fully. Secondly, it is impossible to grasp the reasoning connected with the remaining points of discussion, if one is not fully aware, first of all, what being means or signifies. And finally, once it is clearly seen that this was St. Thomas' conception of being, the examination of the subsequent issues becomes relatively more simplified; it is simply a matter of applying these principles to each individual topic.

2. The Nature of Being

It is quite difficult to state in a few words, and it is even more difficult to understand, what is meant by being without, in some way or another, considering the plan and method of the Metaphysics. Much of the confusion centering around the nature of being is due, in a large measure, to overlooking the nature of the metaphysics itself. It will be impossible, of course, to go into this matter in detail; but it is mentioned here because, unless we are cognizant of just what the metaphysics is intent upon proving, there is danger of misconstruing St. Thomas' whole conception of being.

The ultimate aim and purpose of the metaphysics is to establish the first principles and causes of things, (1) i.e. the causes of things not only in so far as they are these things or such kind of things, but the causes of things precisely in so far as they are beings.

Et ulterius aliqui erexerunt se ad considerandum ens inquantum ens, et consideraverunt causam rerum, non solum secundum quod sunt haec vel talia, sed secundum quod sunt entia. Hoc igitur quod est causa rerum inquantum sunt entia, oportet esse causam rerum, non solum secundum quod sunt talia per formas accidentales, nec secundum quod sunt haec per formas substantiales, sed etiam secundum esse illud quod pertinet ad esse illorum quocumque modo. (2)

(1) "Sed praedicta scientia maxime considerat causam finalem rerum omnium". --- In I Metaph., lect. 2, n. 50; In I Sent., Prologus, q. 1, a. 3, sol. 1; C. G. I, cc. 1, 4, 12. --- "Cum haec scientia sit de primis causis et principiis, oportet quod sit de Deo; quia Deus hoc modo intelligitur ab omnibus, ut de numero causarum existens, et ut quoddam principium rerum". --- In I Metaph., lect. 3, n. 64. --- "Erit ergo finis hujus scientiae in quem proficere debemus, ut causas cognoscentes, non admiremur de earum effectibus". --- Ibid., lect. 3, n. 67.

(2) Ia, q. 44, a. 20.

As St. Thomas indicates clearly in this passage, to consider being as being means to consider things not only as regards their essence, i.e. that they are things of such and such a nature; but also all that pertains to their esse in any way. For creatures are from God not only as regards their essence, but also according to their esse; and it is in this especially that their substantial good properly consists. (1) In fact, St. Thomas continues, esse is the proper effect of God; (2) for that which is the first and the greatest in being, is the cause of the being of all other things. (3) That is why it pertains to one and the same science to consider all things, regardless of their diversity and multiplicity; for it considers them all under the common

(1) "Creatura non solum est a Deo secundum essentiam suam, sed secundum esse suum, in quo praecipue consistit ratio bonitatis substantialis; et secundum perfectiones superadditas, in quibus consistit bonitas absoluta; et haec non sunt essentia rei. Et praeterea ipse respectus quo essentia rei refertur ad Deum ut ad principium, est aliud quam essentia". --- De Ver., q. 21, a. 5, ad 5.

(2) "Impossibile est autem quod causa secunda ex propria virtute sit principium esse in quantum huiusmodi, hoc enim est proprium causae primae; nam ordo effectuum est secundum ordinem causarum. Primus autem effectus est ipsum esse, quod omnibus aliis effectibus praesupponitur et ipsum non praesupponit aliquem alium effectum; et ideo oportet quod dare esse in quantum huiusmodi est effectus primae causae solius secundum propriam virtutem; et quaecumque alia causa dat esse, hoc habet in quantum est in ea virtus et operatio primae causae, et non per propriam virtutem". --- De Pot., q. 3, a. 40. ---- "Satis apparet in primo aspectu, secundum praemissa quod creare non potest esse propria actio nisi solius Dei. Oportet enim universales effectus in universales et priores causas reducere. Inter omnes autem effectus universalissimus est ipsum esse. Unde oportet quod sit proprius effectus primae et universalissimae causae, quae est Deus". --- Ia, q. 45, a. 50.

(3) "Utraque autem veritas, scilicet intellectus et rei, reducitur sicut in primum principium, in ipsum Deum; quia suum esse est causa omnis esse, et suum intelligere est causa omnis cognitionis. Et ideo ipse est prima veritas, sicut et primum ens: unumquodque enim ita se habet ad veritatem sicut ad esse". --- In I Sent., d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, sol. --- "Quod est maximum in unoquoque genere est causa aliorum quae sunt in illo genere". --- C. G. I, c. 41.

ratio entis, as having esse in some way. (1) For being is common to all things, however different they may otherwise be. (2) For some things are corporeal and sensible, but there are other beings who are insensible and incorporeal; (3) beings of a higher order, we might say, than the beings of our direct experience. (4)

Although the principal intention of the Metaphysics is the first and universal causes of things, it is impossible for us in this life to know the quiddity of such beings. (5) It is true, they are more known as they

(1) "Unde quantum ad metaphysicum et naturalem, qui considerant res secundum suum esse, nec hoc nomen, corpus, nec aliquid aliud dicitur univoce de corruptibilibus et incorruptibilibus". --- In I Sent., d. 19, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1. --- "Sed naturalis et philosophus primus considerant essentias secundum quod habent esse in rebus". --- In Boet. de Trin., q. 6, a. 3c.

(2) "Hoc autem quod est esse, communiter invenitur in omnibus rebus, quantumcumque diversis". --- Ia, q. 65, a. 1c.

(3) "Quia in rebus non solum sunt corporea, sed etiam quaedam incorporea, ut patet ex libro de Anima", --- In I Metaph., lect. 12, n. 181.

(4) "Illi qui 'faciunt theoricam' idest considerationem de omnibus entibus, et ponunt, quod entium quaedam sunt sensibilia, quaedam insensibilia, perscrutantur de utroque genere entium". --- Ibid., lect. 13, n. 201. --- "Patet ergo in quibus oportet ponere formas separatas, et in quibus non. Nam omnium eorum quae sunt secundum naturam suam sensibilia, formae non sunt separatae. Sed illa quae sunt secundum naturam suam intelligibilia, sunt a materia separata. Non enim substantiae separatae sunt naturae horum sensibilibus, sed sunt altioris naturae, alium habentes ordinem in rebus". --- In III Metaph., lect. IX, n. 455.

(5) "Impossibile est, quod anima humana huiusmodi corporis unita cognoscat de veritate rerum, nisi quantum potest elevari per ea quae abstrahendo a phantasmatibus intelligit. Per haec autem nullo modo potest elevari ad cognoscendum quidditates immaterialium substantiarum, quae sunt improporcionatae istis substantiis sensibilibus. Unde impossibile est quod anima humana huiusmodi corpori unita, apprehendat substantias separatas cognoscendo de eis quod quid est". --- In II Metaph., lect. 1, n. 285.

are in themselves, since they are more actual and have more being; nevertheless they are not proportionate to our intellect, which has for its object being as it exists in sensible things. That is why, St. Thomas says, the order of determination demands that metaphysics begin with sensible things, as a necessary preliminary to its main work, the determination of immaterial substances and beings. (1)

While it thus pertains to metaphysics to discuss all these things, i.e. sensible substances, immaterial substances, and the highest causes, it does not, however, discuss any of them precisely as its proper subject. This is true, St. Thomas remarks, even of sensible being which it considers principally; for the discussion of the principles of sensible substance belongs to natural philosophy. (2) All things whatsoever it treats of, then, it considers them solely under the aspect of being.

(1) "Assignat rationes praemissi ordinis; et dicit, quod ideo prius dicendum est de essentiis substantiarum sensibilium, quia hoc est 'praeparare', id est ante opus sicut praeparatorium et necessarium ad opus, ut ex his substantiis sensibilibus, quae sunt magis manifestae quoad nos, transeamus ad illud, quod 'est notius simpliciter et secundum naturam', id est ad substantias intelligibiles, de quibus principaliter intendimus. Ita enim fit disciplina in omnibus rebus, sive omnibus hominibus, per ea quae sunt minus nota secundum naturam, procedendo ad ea quae sunt magis nota secundum naturam". --- In VII Metaph., lect. 2, n. 1300.

(2) "Haec enim perscrutatio est propria huius scientiae. In hac enim scientia tentamus determinare de substantiis sensibilibus 'hujus gratia', id est propter substantias immateriales, quia speculatio circa substantias sensibiles et materiales quodammodo pertinet ad physicam, quae non est prima philosophia, sed secunda, sicut in quarto habitum est. Prima enim philosophia est de primis substantiis quae sunt substantiae immateriales, de quibus speculatur non solum inquantum sunt substantiae, sed inquantum substantiae tales, inquantum scilicet immateriales". --- In VII Metaph., lect. 11, n. 1526.

In the light of what we have thus far seen, it would appear that being for St. Thomas means being in the sense of ens participialiter, i.e. that which has esse in some way; for it is of this, he says, that metaphysics is intent upon proving the causes and principles. From this point of view, metaphysics is no different from the other sciences; for science, continues St. Thomas, is concerned primarily and principally with actual being, and only secondarily with potential being. (1) We must examine this point a little more closely, however, since we want to be sure that we understand St. Thomas correctly.

3. The Divisions of Being.

Being, as St. Thomas so often repeats, is spoken of in many ways. Now, because of this multiplicity and its consequent obscurity, it is necessary at the very outset to divide these various senses of being into certain, definite groups. The most natural and, at the same time, the most proper method of

(1) "Scientia non est nisi entis, eo quod ens et verum convertuntur. Dupliciter autem dicitur aliquid ens: uno modo, simpliciter, quod scilicet est ens actu; alio modo, secundum quid, quod scilicet est ens in potentia. Et quia, ut dicitur in IX Metaph., unumquodque cognoscitur secundum quod est actu, non autem secundum quod est in potentia, scientia primo et principaliter respicit ens actu. Secundario autem respicit ens in potentia, quod quidem non secundum seipsum cognoscibile est, sed secundum quod cognoscitur illud in cuius potentia existit". --- IIIIa, q. 10, a. 3o. Cf. also, In II Metaph., lect. 1, n. 280; In IX Metaph., lect. 19, n. 1894; Ia, q. 5, a. 2o; In I Sent., d. 38, q. 1, a. 4, sol. and ad 4.

manifesting the nature of anything is to give its definition; for the definition is that which tells us what a thing is. But since being cannot be defined, the next best procedure is that of division; for division is likewise ordered to science, in the sense that it helps to explain and manifest its object with respect to the multitude or confusion of parts that surround it. (1) Following Aristotle, St. Thomas lists two comprehensive, all-embracing divisions of being: being per se and being per accidens.

Ens dicitur quoddam secundum se, et quoddam secundum accidens. Sciendum tamen est quod illa divisio entis non est eadem cum illa divisione qua dividitur ens in substantiam et accidens.....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. (2)

As St. Thomas indicates here, this division of being is not to be confused with the division of being into substance and accidents, where being is considered absolutely in its own nature either as existing in itself or in another. Hence, being per se is being considered in itself in so far as it is a per se unit; while being per accidens, on the other hand, is a being of a

(1) John of St. Thomas, op. cit., Summul., p. 18: "Quando ergo aliquid ignotum seu obscurum indiget explicatione per aliquam orationem, quae explicet et tollat illam obscuritatem, talis oratio dicitur modus sciendi, quia omnis manifestatio scientia dicitur aut ad scientiam ordinatur. Duo autem sunt, quae intellectui possunt manifestari per orationem, scilicet vel aliquid incomplexum vel aliqua veritas complexa. Id quod est incomplexum, ut homo, coelum, terra, etc., explicatur definitione, quantum ad obscuritatem suae quidditatis, aut divisione, quantum ad confusionem partium aut multitudinis, quae in re aliqua invenitur".

(2) In V Metaph., lect. IX, n. 885.

per accidens unity, the union of substance and accidents which is signified by the word is, as when an accident is predicated of a substance. It is easy to see why this type of being does not fall within the plan of the Metaphysic. For since this being has only a per accidens unity, it has not strictly speaking a principle and a cause; and hence it does not belong to the consideration of the metaphysician, who must search above all for the principles and causes of things. (1) Hence, being here or esse signifies nothing more than a pure coincidence, or a contingent fact. (2)

This being per se is likewise spoken of in various ways; and consequently, in order to know what the being is that metaphysics considers, as well as to avoid any possible confusion, three distinct divisions must be kept in mind: (a) the first division is that of the being of the predicaments; (b) the second is that according to which being signifies the truth of a thing, or the composition which the intellect makes adequating itself to things; (c) the third division is that of being into act and potency. We must attempt to show now how St. Thomas goes about treating these different divisions of being.

(1) "Cum ens multipliciter dicatur, ut dictum est, primo dicendum est de ente per accidens; ut quod minus habet de ratione entis, primo a consideratione hujus scientiae excludatur. Hoc autem dicendum est de eo, quod nulla speculatio cujuscumque scientiae potest esse circa ipsum..... quod rationali-biliter hoc accidit quod scientia non speculatur de ente per accidens; quia scientia speculatur de his quae sunt entia secundum rem; ens autem secundum accidens est ens quasi solo nomine, inquantum unum de alio praedicatur. Sic enim unumquodque est ens inquantum unum est. Ex duobus autem, quorum unum accidit alteri, non fit unum nisi secundum nomen; prout scilicet unum de altero praedicatur, ut cum musicum dicitur esse album, aut e converso. Non autem ita, quod aliqua res una constituatur ex albedine et musico". --- In VI Metaph., lect. 2, nn. 1172, 1176.

(2) "In omnibus enim his, Esse, nihil aliud significat quam accidere". --- In V Metaph., lect. IX, n. 887.

4. Being as Divided into the Predicaments.

The first kind of being per se is being outside the mind, the being of the predicaments, which is called perfect being. (1) This division of being into the predicaments is not the division of a genus into species through differences, for being is not a genus. There is nothing outside the essence of being which, when added to it, would constitute a species of being, since outside of being there is nothing. (2) What is added, then, when being is contracted is not some accident or difference outside the essence of being, but a determined mode of being founded on the very essence of the thing. (3) In the composite notion of being, essence is that in which and through which the thing has esse. When being is contracted, therefore, into the predicaments, substance signifies an essence to which it belongs to have esse not in a subject and accident an essence to which it belongs to have esse in a subject. (4)

(1) "Primo distinguit ens, quod est extra animam, per decem praedicamenta, quod est ens perfectum..... Dicit ergo primo, quod illa dicuntur esse secundum se, quaecumque significant figuras praedicationis". --- In V. Metaph., lect. IX, n. 889.

(2) "Sciendum est enim quod ens non hoc modo contrahi ad aliquid determinatum, sicut genus contrahitur ad species per differentias. Nam differentia, cum non participet genus, est extra essentiam generis. Nihil autem posset esse extra essentiam entis, quod per additionem ad ens aliquam speciem entis constituat; nam quod est extra ens, nihil est, et differentia esse non potest". --- Ibid., n. 889.

(3) "Ens contrahitur per decem genera, quorum unumquodque addit aliquid super ens; non aliquod accidens, vel aliquam differentiam quas sit extra essentiam entis, sed determinatum modum essendi, qui fundatur in ipsa essentia rei". --- De Ver., q. 21, a. 8o.

(4) Ia, q. 3, a. 5, ad 1.

Consequently, being is contracted according to the various ways an essence has its esse; for the predicaments follow the different ways of predicating only because they depend on the various ways or modes of being. (1)

Metaphysics, therefore, treats of the predicaments in so far as they are modes of being, i.e. essences having a determined mode of esse. Since esse, as St. Thomas explains, is something common and does not determine any mode of being, while essence is that whose act is esse, essence and esse are common to all the predicaments. (2) To each essence belongs a determined mode of being, i.e. one of the ten enumerated in the predicaments. St. Thomas brings

(1) "Unde oportet, quod ens contrahatur ad diversa genera secundum diversum modum praedicandi, qui consequitur diversum modum essendi; quia 'quoties ens dicitur', idest quot modis aliquid praedicatur, 'toties esse significatur', idest tot modis significatur aliquid esse. Et propter hoc ea in quae dividitur ens primo, dicuntur esse praedicamenta, quia distinguuntur secundum diversum modum praedicandi". --- In V Metaph., lect. IX, n. 890.

(2) "Patet enim quod esse, commune quoddam est, et non determinat aliquem modum essendi; subsistere autem dicit determinatum modum essendi, prout scilicet aliquid est ens per se, non in alio, sicut accidens; substat autem idem est quod sub alio poni. Inde patet quod esse dicit id quod est commune omnibus generibus; sed subsistere et substat id quod est proprium primo praedicamento secundum duo quae sibi conveniunt; quod scilicet sit ens in se completum, et iterum quod omnibus aliis substatatur accidentibus, scilicet quae in substantia esse habent. Unde dico, quod 'essentia' dicitur cujus actus est esse, 'subsistentia' cujus actus est subsistere, 'substantia' cujus actus est substat. Hoc autem dicitur dupliciter, sicut in singulis patet. Esse enim est actus alicujus ut quod est, sicut calefacere est actus calefacientis; et est alicujus ut quo est, scilicet quo denominatur esse, sicut calefacere est actus caloris". --- In I Sent., d. 23, q. 1, a. 1c.

This same thought is expressed by St. Thomas in a passage from the *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 7o: "In qualibet autem re naturali invenimus quod est ens et quod est res naturalis, et quod est talis vel talis naturae. Quorum primum est commune omnibus entibus; secundum omnibus rebus naturalibus; tertium in una specie".

out this factor very clearly in the following passage.

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. Sed hoc esse attribuitur alicui dupliciter. Uno modo ut sicut ei quod proprie et vere habet esse vel est; et sic attribuitur soli substantiae per se subsistenti; unde quod vere est, dicitur substantia in I Physic. Omnia vero quae non per se subsistunt, sed in alio et cum alio, sive sint accidentia sive formae substantiales aut quaelibet partes, non habent esse ita ut ipsa vere sint, sed attribuitur eis esse. Alio modo, idest ut quo aliquid est; sicut albedo dicitur esse, non quia ipsa in se subsistat, sed quia ea aliquid habet esse album. (1)

This statement certainly expresses St. Thomas' convictions on the nature of being as divided into the predicaments. In a way, it is even more explicit than many others which we have already had occasion to review. For that reason, we have delayed mentioning it until now, in order to allow St. Thomas' own reasoning to lead us to it. As the text indicates, the essence which has esse in the proper sense is substance. In the natural order of things outside the soul it is first substance or the suppositum. Essences, natures and forms always signify that by which (quo) something has esse; the suppositum always that which (id quod) has esse. It is the suppositum, therefore, that has the substantial essence or nature by which it has esse, the final perfection, actualizing its substantial perfection and making the individual a unified and complete whole. (2) That is why St. Thomas, following Aristotle, calls this division of being perfect being.

(1) Quod., 9, q. 2, a. 30.

(2) "Esse ergo proprie et vere non attribuitur nisi rei per se subsistenti; huic autem attribuitur esse duplex. Unum scilicet esse resultans ex his

The chief characteristic of this being is its individuality, its particularity, and also its multiplicity. Consequently, metaphysics which investigates being as being must inquire primarily into first substance, for there the common ratio of being is principally found. (1) First substance alone is said to be in the primary sense, for it has an esse firmly and solidly as existing in itself. Other things are said to be or have being because of some relation they have to this substance which has being principally. St. Thomas reduces these modes of being in relation to this subject to four.

Sciendum tamen quod praedicti modi essendi ad quatuor possent reduci. Nam unum eorum quod est debilissimum, est tantum in ratione, scilicet negatio et privatio, quam dicimus in ratione esse, quia ratio de eis negotiatur quasi de quibusdam entibus, dum de eis affirmat vel negat aliquid.

Aliud autem huic proximum in debilitate est, secundum quod generatio et corruptio et motus entia dicuntur. Habent enim aliquid admixtum de privatione et negatione. Nam motus est motus imperfectus.

Tertium autem dicitur quod nihil habet de non ente admixtum, habet tamen esse debile, quia non per se, sed in alio, sicut sunt qualitates, quantitates et substantiae proprietates.

Quartum autem genus est quod est perfectissimum, quod scilicet habet esse in natura absque admixtione privationis, et habet esse firmum et solidum, quasi per se existens, sicut sunt substantiae. Et ad hoc sicut ad primum et principale omnia alia referuntur. (2)

ex quibus ejus unitas integratur, quod proprium est esse suppositi substantiale. Aliud esse est supposito attributum praeter ea quae integrant ipsum; quod est esse superadditum, scilicet accidentale". --- Ibid.

(1) "Unde concludit quod determinandum est 'de hoc' idest de subjecto vel de substantia prima, quia tale subjectum maxime videtur substantia esse". --- In VII Metaph., lect. 2, n. 1274.

(2) In IV Metaph., lect. 1, n. 540 ff.

Consequently, first substance alone in a simple sense is being, for it alone is. Our way of predicating or speaking manifests this, St. Thomas remarks, for when one tells what a thing is absolutely speaking he gives the essential nature of its substance. (1) First substance, then, or the suppositum, the really existing thing, is the chief consideration of metaphysics.

6. Being as Signifying the Truth

The second division of per se being is according to the manner esse or est signify the composition of a proposition which the intellect makes by composing and dividing. (2) The being of this proposition is a product of the judgment; it is an ens rationis, a mental being or a mental whole that arises at the moment when the intellect, out of two concepts, forms a composition understanding both concepts as one in so far as out of them a certain unity is made. (3)

This being is compared to the first mode of being, as St. Thomas tells us, as an effect to its cause; it is in this mode of being that truth first

(1) "Minorem autem dupliciter manifestat. Primo ex ipso modo loquendi sive praedicandi; dicens, quod ex hoc patet est quod substantia sit primum entium, quia quando dicimus..... quid est de aliquo, non dicimus ipsum esse album, nec calidum, quae significant qualitatem; nec tricubitum, quod significat quantitatem; sed hominem aut Deum, quae significant substantiam". --- In VII Metaph., lect. 1, n. 1249.

(2) In V Metaph., lect. 9, n. 895.

(3) In VI Metaph., lect. 4, n. 1229.

resides, for truth and falsity are in the judgment. (1) In a thing outside the mind there is its quiddity and its esse; and while the first operation of the mind looks to the quiddity, the second looks to the esse. Therefore, truth is founded on the esse of a thing rather than on its quiddity, just as also the name of being is taken from esse. (2) In other words, just as the thing is by its esse, so this mental whole is by the esse of the judgment which mirrors and imitates the esse of the thing.

Every essence, consequently, which has an esse outside the mind may have an esse inside the mind. This need not necessarily be, however; for whether the being is truly affirmed to be is quite accidental to it. In this sense, esse is an accidental predicate. (3) But not everything which has an esse as the result of the operation of the intellect has an esse outside the mind,

(1) "Veri enim ratio consistit in adaequatione rei et intellectus; idem autem non adaequatur sibi ipsi, sed aequalitas diversorum est; unde ibi primo invenitur ratio veritatis in intellectu ubi primo intellectus incipit aliquid proprium habere quod res extra animam non habet, sed aliquid ei correspondens, inter quae adaequatio attendi potest. Intellectus autem formans quidditates, non habet nisi similitudinem rei existentis extra animam, sicut et sensus in quantum accipit speciem rei sensibilis; sed quando incipit judicare de re apprehensa, tunc ipsum iudicium intellectus est quoddam proprium ei, quod non invenitur extra in re. Sed quando adaequatur ei quod est extra in re, dicitur iudicium verum esse. Tunc autem iudicat intellectus de re apprehensa quando dicit quod aliquid est vel non est, quod est intellectus componentis et dividitis". --- De Ver., q. 1, a. 3o.

(2) "Cum autem in re sit quidditas ejus et suum esse, veritas fundatur in esse rei magis quam in quidditate, sicut et nomen entis ab esse imponitur". --- In I Sent., d. 19, q. 5, a. 1c.

(3) "Accidit autem unicuique rei quod aliquid de ipsa vere affirmatur 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 substantiale. Nam ens est superius ad unumquodque entium, sicut animal ad hominem. Si autem accipitur secundo modo, est de praedicato accidentali". --- In V Metaph., lect. 9, n. 896.

because something which in itself is non-being may be given an esse in the mind. (1)

It was the confusion of this type of being with that of predicamental being, it will be recalled, that led Avicenna to state that esse was an accidental predicate and that being, since it signifies esse, did not signify the essences of things but something added to them. (2) We can see now what a grave error that was. It should also be possible for us, too, to understand more clearly the truth of what Cajetan pointed out when discussing the position of ens nominaliter, that the solution of St. Thomas is rather difficult to understand, but it is extremely profound.

This kind of being likewise does not belong to the consideration of the metaphysician, for metaphysics is concerned with the modes of being in the order of nature and not with the modes of being formed by the intellect. This being formed by the intellect is the subject-matter of logic. (3) And thus, concludes St. Thomas, if the being as divided into the predicaments is determined sufficiently, these other forms of being will become equally manifest.

(1) "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". --- In V Metaph., lect. 9, n. 896.

(2) "Similiter etiam deceptus est ex aequivocatione entis. Nam ens quod significat compositionem propositionis est praedicatum accidentale..... 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". --- In X Metaph., lect. 5, n. 1982.

(3) "Et ideo utrumque est praetermittendum; scilicet et ens per accidens, et ens quod significat verum; quia huius, scilicet entis per accidens, causa est indeterminata.... Illius vero, scilicet entis veri, causa est 'aliqua passio mentis' idest operatio intellectus componentis et dividitis. Et ideo pertinet ad scientiam de intellectu". --- In VI Metaph., lect. 4, n. 1242.

This confirms a point, moreover, that was mentioned earlier when discussing a possible agreement between the position of ens nominaliter and ens participialiter, namely, that metaphysics is not concerned with establishing the existence of things. This is a matter that is presupposed in metaphysics, just as well as it is in any other science. Every one admits that beings exist or, as Aristotle remarks, that there are individual, sensible substances in existence. Concerning this fact there is no difficulty whatsoever. But granting that things do exist, it is the concern of metaphysics to show how they do exist. Thus, although the existence itself of things is of no concern to the metaphysician, it does not follow that he is not concerned with actual or existing beings. It is simply illogical to confuse or to identify these two very distinct factors. As history has a way of repeating itself, this erroneous conception is, in many respects, closely akin to the error of Avicenna.

This brings to mind a point that should, perhaps, be mentioned in this connection; for it is quite possible that what we have thus far considered may not have sufficiently outlined a rather important distinction which appears quite frequently in the writings of St. Thomas. We refer to the distinction between quid est and an est. It will be impossible, of course, to consider these two factors in any detail at the present time; nor do we feel it necessary, in view of what has already been said in the previous headings on predicamental being and being as signifying the truth. For it is quite obvious that the first two divisions of per se being which we have just discussed are nothing else than what answers the questions quid est and an est. (1) We

(1) "Sicut dicitur in V Metaph., ens dupliciter dicitur. Uno modo se-

mention this fact, however, for the simple reason that it might possibly be objected that, although it is true that St. Thomas does not employ the expressions ens nominaliter and ens participialiter, nevertheless he does acknowledge such a distinction by his frequent usage of the terms quid est and an est, corresponding respectively to ens nominaliter and ens participialiter; and consequently, the being that is divided into the predicaments, in the mind of St. Thomas, is ens nominaliter and not ens participialiter. We trust that the fallacy in such an objection is evident from what we have already discussed; for it supposes that the answer to the question quid est is ens nominaliter sumptum, whereas we have shown that it is ens participialiter, and that the answer to the question an est does not pertain to the consideration of the metaphysician.

6. Division of Being into Act and Potency

The third division of being per se is the distinction of being into act and potency. This distinction of being applies not only to the being of the predicaments but also to the being of the mind. (1) Since the third member

cundum quod significat entitatem rei, prout dividitur per decem praedicamenta, et sic convertitur cum re..... Alio modo dicitur ens quod significat veritatem propositionis, quae in compositione consistit, cuius nota est hoc verbum est; et hoc est ens quo respondetur ad quaestionem an est". --- Ia, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2. "Ens dicitur dupliciter. Uno modo secundum quod significat naturam decem generum. Alio modo secundum quod respondetur ad quaestionem an est quia esse aliquid non solum significat quod respondetur ad quaestionem an est, sed etiam quod respondetur ad quaestionem quid est". --- De Malo, q. 1, a. 1, ad 19.

(1) "Ponit distinctionem entis per actum et potentiam; dicens, quod ens et

of the division of being per se includes being after a fashion or imperfect being, namely, being in potency, it is much wider in extent than perfect being, the being of the predicaments, i.e. an essence which has an esse in the natural order of things.

Our first notion of act and potency comes from the observation of movement; for, as St. Thomas says, potency and act for the most part are said of those things which are in motion. In fact, motion is nothing else than the act of a being in potency in so far as it is in potency. (1) This point of departure is very significant. For one thing, it brings to light the foundation and basis upon which the Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics are reared. This factor has been overlooked in a great many cases, with the natural result that the study of metaphysics has been represented and looked upon as a science that busies itself with abstract and aloof notions that have no bearing upon reality. But metaphysics is not a treatise of things remote and foreign to the actual world. It is an exposition of that which is most intimately bound up with reality; and by the same token our mastery of it must stand and be rooted in experience. This factor has been well noted by St. Thomas

esse significant aliquid dicibile vel affabile in potentia, vel dicibile in actu. In omnibus praedictis terminis, quae significant decem praedicamenta, aliquid dicitur in actu, et aliquid in potentia..... Et sicut in rebus, quae extra animam sunt, dicitur aliquid in actu et aliquid in potentia, ita in actibus animae et privationibus, quae sunt res rationis tantum". --- In V Metaph., lect. 9, n. 697.

(1) "Potentia enim et actus, ut plurimum, dicuntur in his quae sunt in motu, quia motus est actus entis in potentia". --- In IX Metaph., lect. 1, n. 1770.

in his commentary on the Metaphysics. (1) This explains, too, the rather lengthy development given these notions prior to their proper consideration as such.

The primary intention of metaphysics, however, in treating of potency and act in movable things is not to consider them merely as the natural philosopher who considers them as principles of ens mobile; but rather it is the concern of the metaphysician to consider potency and act in movable things only that he may arrive at the general notions of potency and act applicable to all being, especially to immaterial substances, and that he may come to some conception of the principle and cause of all being who is preeminently Act. (2)

As for the meaning of act and potency in metaphysics, we should note the following. Since they are correlatives and potency can only be defined through act, it is necessary first to determine the meaning of act. Strictly speaking, however, act cannot be defined. As St. Thomas remarks, act belongs to those primary concepts consequent upon the notion of being; it can only be manifested inductively by pointing out in singular examples what is meant by act, and the mind immediately grasps the idea. (3) By these simple comparisons, the

(1) In III Metaph., lect. 1, n. 344.

(2) "Principalis intentio hujus doctrinae non est de potentia et actu secundum quod sunt in rebus mobilibus tantum, sed secundum quod sequuntur ens commune. Unde in rebus immobilibus invenitur potentia et actus, sicut in rebus intellectualibus. Sed cum dixerimus de potentia, quae est in rebus mobilibus, et de actu ei correspondente, ostendere poterimus et de potentia et actu secundum quod sunt in rebus intelligibilibus". --- In IX Metaph., lect. 1, nn. 1770, 1771.

(3) "Inducendo in singularibus per exempla manifestari potest illud quod

simple notion of act is obtained by the intellect, which conceives act as the existence of a thing in contrast to the capacity for that existence, (1) or as something brought to completion and perfection, while potency is a capacity for that perfection. (2)

Thus it is, continues St. Thomas, that the composition of potency and act is wider in extent than the composition of matter and form; for matter and form divide natural substance, whereas potency and act divide common being. (3) For that reason, whatever characterizes potency and act as such, such as to receive and to be received, to perfect and to be perfected, is common to both material and immaterial substances. (4) A summary of these characteristics reveals the

volumus dicere, scilicet quid est actus, 'et non oportet cujuslibet rei quaerere terminum', idest definitionem. Nam prima simplicia definiri non possunt, cum non sit in definitionibus abire in infinitum. Actus autem est de primis simplicibus; unde definiri non potest. Sed per proportionem aliquorum duorum ad invicem, potest videri quid est actus. Ut si accipiamus proportionem aedificantis ad aedificabile, et vigilantis ad dormientem, et ejus qui videt ad eum qui habet clausos oculos cum habeat potentiam visivam. Sed quorumlibet sic differentium altera pars erit actus, et altera potentia". --- In IX Metaph., lect. 5, nn. 1826, 1827.

(1) "Primo ostendit quid est actus; dicens, quod actus est, quando res est, nec tamen ita est sicut quando est in potentia". Ibid., n. 1825.

(2) "Materia est in potentia donec veniat ad formam vel speciem; sed tunc primo est in actu, quando habet speciem. Et ita est in omnibus aliis, quae moventur propter finem. Unde, sicut docentes putant ad finem pertingere, quando demonstrant discipulum, quem instruxerunt, operantem ea quae sunt artis; ita et natura pertingit ad finem, quando consequitur actum. Et sic manifestum est quod actus est finis in motu naturali". --- Ibid., lect. 8, n. 1860.

(3) "Sic igitur patet quod compositio actus et potentiae est in plus quam compositio formae et materiae. Unde materia et forma dividunt substantiam naturalem: potentia et actus dividunt ens commune". --- C. G., II, c. 54.

(4) "Et propter hoc quaecumque quidem consequuntur potentiam et actum in-

following important factors: A thing is perfect in so far as it is in act, imperfect in so far as it is in potency. (1) Nothing acts except in so far as it is in act but it receives according to its potency. (2) What is in potency is not reduced to act except by a being in act; hence simply speaking act is prior to potency, although in the same subject potency may precede act. (3) Potency and act are really distinct. (4) Since potency is ordered to act, it must be distinguished according to that to which it is said to be a potency. (5) Potency and act are principles of being, and out of their union one thing strictly speaking arises, whereas two acts can only be united imperfectly and accidentally. (6) Act is limited and restricted by potency. (7)

In all substances composed of matter and form, St. Thomas tells us, there is a twofold composition of act and potency. (8) First of all, there is the

quantum hujusmodi, sunt communia substantiis materialibus et immaterialibus creatis, sicut recipere et recipi, perficere et perfici". --- C. G. II, c. 54.

(1) Ibid., I, c. 28.

(2) Ibid.

(3) In IX Metaph., lect. 7, n. 1884 ff.

(4) Ibid., lect. 3, n. 1803.

(5) Ia, q. 54, a. 3o.

(6) In VII Metaph., lect. 13, n. 1588.

(7) C. G. I, c. 43.

(8) Ibid., II, c. 54.

substance itself which is composed of matter and form; secondly, the composition of the substance with esse. In intellectual substances, on the other hand, since they are simple essences or simple forms, there is found only a single composition of act and potency, namely, that of their essence and esse. (1)

This is the way St. Thomas applies the doctrine of potency and act to essence and esse; for esse can only be properly understood in the light of act and potency. St. Thomas illustrates this in many ways. For instance, he says that form is compared to esse as to shine is to shining or as whiteness is to being white. (2) Esse is the actuality of substance or essence. (3) Esse is the very act of the essence just as to live, which is the esse of living things, is the act of the soul. (4) Esse, therefore, must be compared to essence as act to potency. (5)

Accordingly, all created perfections are included in the perfection of being, for things are perfect in so far as they have esse in some way. (6) Esse is the ultimate perfection of a thing; it actualizes all other perfections or acts of the thing. (7) And that is why, continues St. Thomas, that not only does

(1) Ibid., II, c. 54.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ia, q. 54, a. 10.

(4) In I Sent., d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1.

(5) C. G. II, c. 53.

(6) Ia, q. 4, a. 20.

(7) De Bot., q. 7, a. 2, ad 9.

esse pertain to the constitution of the thing, but it can be said that esse is that which is innermost in everything there is, since it is formal in regard to everything else. (1) It is the actuality of all acts, the perfection of all perfections, for nothing is more formal and simple than esse. (2) It cannot be diversified as far as it itself is concerned except by something outside itself; and since it is the final act, the final perfection, the only thing outside of it to diversify it is potency.

Consequently, finite being is placed in a genus because it is composed of potency and act; it is placed in a genus, however, by reason of its essence and not by reason of its esse. (3) Thus, the definition of a being is formed by a genus and a specific difference; the genus being taken from what is potential in the thing, the difference from what is actual. (4) Although it does not pertain to the concept of essence as essence to be composite, (5) nevertheless potency and act enter into the very essence of material things which are composed of a potential principle, the matter, and an actual principle, the form. The genus is taken from the matter and the difference from the form in this sense that by matter is not meant prime matter, but what is material and potential in relation to that from which the difference is taken. (6)

(1) Ia, q. 8, a. 10.

(2) C. G. I, c. 23.

(3) De Pot., q. 7, a. 30.

(4) Ia, q. 3, a. 50.

(5) In II Sent., q. 1, a. 3.

(6) De Pot., q. 7, a. 30.

In the same way, the difference is said to be taken from the form; but not, however, in such a way that the form itself is the difference, but because it is the principle of the difference. And such a difference, continues St. Thomas, is said to be a simple difference, because it is taken from that which is a part of the quiddity of the thing, namely, the form. (1) In intellectual or spiritual substances, on the other hand, the genus is taken from the whole essence, as is also the difference; and therefore in them genus is taken from that which belongs to them inasmuch as they are immaterial, while their difference is taken from that which follows upon the degree of perfection in them. (2) But the genus and difference are still according to potency and act, for no difference can be taken from esse which is outside the essence of finite things. (3)

This is, in brief, St. Thomas' application of potency and act to being outside the mind. From finite beings of our direct experience comes the composite notion of being made up of quod est and esse, the act of being from which the name of being is taken. From the movement of sensible things comes

(1) "In sensibilibus genus sumitur ab eo quod est materiale in re, differentia vero ab eo quod est formale in ipsa. Unde dicit Avicenna in principio libri sui de Anima quod forma in rebus compositis ex materia et forma est differentia simplex ejus quod constituitur ex illa; non autem ita quod ipsa forma sit differentia, sed quia est principium differentiae..... et dicitur talis differentia esse differentia simplex, quia sumitur ab eo, quod est pars quidditatis rei, scilicet a forma". --- De Ente et Essentia, c. 8.

(2) "Hoc tamen sciendum quod non eodem modo sumitur genus et differentia in illis substantiis et in substantiis sensibilibus..... Cum autem substantiae spirituales sint simplices quidditates, non potest in eis differentia sumi ab ea quod est pars quidditatis sed a tota quidditate..... similiter etiam in eis ex tota essentia sumitur genus modo tamen differenti". --- Ibid.

(3) "Et similiter in angelis ex ipsa natura substantiae ipsorum accipitur

the notion of potency signifying imperfection and limitation and act signifying completion and perfection. Potency and act enter into the very essence of material things composed of matter and form; spiritual things have no matter but do differ according to their greater or less perfection. In all finite things, however, esse, the final act which actualizes all the other perfections of the thing, is really distinct from the essence, which is its limiting and potential principle. Only in God who is without any composition of potency and act is esse unlimited and absolutely perfect.

Thus we are brought back to the very problem with which we began this tentative solution, namely, why it is that God cannot be in a genus. It is hoped that these considerations, necessarily brief as they are, will be some indication of what was in the mind of St. Thomas when he said, that if it were possible for God to be in a genus, that genus would be being.

genus, ex proportionem vero huiusmodi substantiae ad esse accipitur specifica differentia. Unde secundum hoc angeli differunt specie, secundum quod in substantia unius est plus vel minus de potentia quam in substantia alterius".
--- Quod., 9, q. 4, a. 6o.

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