

GAVEN KERR, O.P.

AUTHOR'S RESPONSE TO CONTRIBUTORS

It is both an honour and a privilege to comment on the fine papers presented in this volume. Whilst ostensibly concerned with my 2015 book, *Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in De Ente et Essentia*, the papers go beyond that to consider wider themes in Thomistic metaphysics. Effectively then my book is merely the springboard for the papers in this volume to address important issues in philosophy which are of interest to those appreciative of Aquinas's philosophical outlook. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the contributors for their papers and many of the challenges they presented. No doubt in a response such as this I can do no more than offer a summary account of how I would like to respond in a much fuller fashion. Nevertheless, I am glad that we are discussing the proof of God in the *De Ente et Essentia* and that sustained philosophical attention is being given over to its study. In what follows I address what I take to be the most pressing issues presented by each author. I apologise if the issues I address are not in fact those that the author took to be the most pressing, and I also apologise if at any point I take the author's thinking in a direction that was not intended.

The upshot of this kind of engagement is not so much that an individual feel wholly justified in his or her position; for if there is any synthetic *a priori* in philosophy it is that philosophers will disagree. Rather, the upshot is that we come to agree or disagree over the position of a philosopher that we all hold in high esteem and whose thinking we find worthwhile. And the philosopher in this case is St Thomas Aquinas. It is pleasing to me that various philosophers from different philosophical persuasions have come together to discuss the thought of Aquinas, and my hope is that such engagement with Thomas will continue long into the future.

GAVEN KERR, O.P., PhD — Pontifical University St Patrick's College Maynooth, Maynooth, Co., Kildare, Ireland; address for correspondence—e-mail: Gaven.kerr@spcm.ie; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5225-6900>.

GYULA KLIMA (2019, 7–26)

It is a joy to read a commentator state that he agrees with everything you have to say and that his paper is not offered as a criticism. I thank Klima for these kind words, and for his treatment and development of issues left untreated or undeveloped in my book; I especially thank him for the formal reconstruction of Aquinas's argumentation which he provides at the end of his paper. Given the nature of his paper and our agreement, there is nothing that I can say at this point on Klima's paper.

ANDRZEJ MARYNIARCZYK, S.D.B. (2019, 27–51)

Andrzej Maryniarczyk presents a nice paper which offers a summary of Thomistic metaphysics. I think he does well in his paper to outline those principles that are important to understanding the proof of God in *De Ente*. However, he states that the problem of reinterpreting various concepts from the philosophical tradition prior to Thomas seems to have escaped my attention. I'm not sure what to make of this point. I certainly don't address all the metaphysical issues that Maryniarczyk discusses, nor do I address all the issues discussed by Thomas in the *De Ente*. However, I do believe that I engage with those metaphysical teachings necessary for understanding the proof of God in *De Ente*, e.g. essence, *esse*, their distinction, causality, infinite series etc. Thus I don't think it is entirely accurate to say that the problem of interpreting Thomas in this regard has escaped my attention; rather I think it is better to say that what I do interpret in Aquinas's thought is what is relevant for understanding the proof of God. One point I will make is that at times in his paper Maryniarczyk speaks of the act or fact of existence of a thing, running the two together. I think this conflates two different realities. There is the act of existence or *esse* which is the act by means of which the essence actually exists; but then there is the fact of the thing's existence which is the reality of the existing thing as grasped and affirmed in judgement. The former is the fundamental metaphysical principle by which there is anything at all; the latter pertains more to our grasp and affirmation of reality. The fact of a thing's existence is dependent on the actual existence of the thing, i.e. its *esse*, but it is not identical to it. Hence the two cannot be conflated.

KRZYSZTOF OŚKO, O.P. (2019, 53–69)

In his paper, Krzysztof Ośko presents a lucid account of the chain of reasoning running throughout my book. I thank him for the engagement and the focus that such a presentation must have taken. I also thank Ośko for observing that in the interpretation of the real distinction that I offer, the objection that Thomas moves from one consideration of existence in the *intellectus essentiae* argument to another notion of existence in later stages of argument and crucially in the proof of God is one that seems to be closed from the outset, since on the interpretation I adopt the *intellectus essentiae* argument is not the crucial argument for establishing real distinction. Rather, as Ośko observes, it is the argument immediately following the *intellectus essentiae* argument which establishes real distinction. Briefly, this argument holds that given that there could only be one possible thing in which essence and *esse* are identical, in everything else there is distinction of essence and *esse*. Hence regardless of the existence or not of that in which essence and *esse* are identical, if we have real multiple things we have distinction of essence and *esse* as real metaphysical principles, and not just distinction of conceptual contents pertaining to essence and *esse*.

Ośko believes that my endorsement of this argument is problematic; and he does so because he holds that for the argument of the second stage (the impossibility of multiplication argument) to work, the notion of *esse* involved therein must be the same notion of *esse* as involved in the first stage, i.e. the *intellectus essentiae* stage. But as I argue, the first stage remains at the conceptual level, but the second stage concludes to real distinction and thus envisages real metaphysical components. So there is a jump from one consideration of *esse* to another.

My response to this is that Ośko gives no reason why the *esse* envisaged in the impossibility of multiplication argument needs to be the same as that in the *intellectus essentiae* argument. The impossibility of multiplication argument is robust enough in and of itself to be divorced from the *intellectus essentiae* argument and presented as an independent argument for real distinction; and indeed in *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 150–157 John Wippel, whose interpretation I share on this issue, goes through a number of presentations of the impossibility of multiplication argument. Hence, given its robustness as an argument in itself, the impossibility of multiplication argument can employ *esse* as a real principle of a thing and this in independence from the more conceptual character of the immedi-

ately preceding *intellectus essentiae* argument. Nevertheless given that I interpret the *intellectus essentiae* argument as being conducted on the conceptual level, it would seem fitting that the impossibility of multiplication argument at least begin on the conceptual level. And this is exactly what Thomas does, he begins by considering the hypothesis of a being in which essence and *esse* are identical, and from the impossibility that there could be any more than one such being, he concludes that in whatever is of a nature capable of being multiplied there is distinction of essence and *esse*. The move here is from conceptual impossibility to real impossibility, since possibility is a necessary though not sufficient condition for actuality. Hence in this manner we can move from a conceptual consideration of such things to their reality.

Oško proceeds to query my reply to Twetten's objection to Aquinas's argumentation for real distinction. Twetten's objection is that it implicitly presupposes a Thomistic notion of *esse*, so that only one convinced of the Thomist notion would hold that there is a distinct act of being which accounts for the real existence of the thing. Twetten argues that one not convinced of Thomist *esse* could just as easily account for the existence of something in terms of its form. Now my objection was that form *qua* form is not existential in character since it simply structures matter; not only that, if form were to be what made a thing exist, then form and existence would be identical in which case all forms would self-exist. Oško objects here because he believes that it is unclear what notion of 'existence' is being deployed in this argument. Is it 'existence' as act of being (Thomist *esse*) or is it 'existence' as signifying the truth of a proposition? He holds that it cannot be the former since that is what is up for grabs in the argument, in which case it must be the latter in which case we are left with the same problems as the *intellectus essentiae* argument, i.e. a conceptual notion of existence and its distinction from essence, which is not enough to show that there is a real metaphysical principle of *esse* in things.

I agree with Oško that it cannot be 'existence' as signifying the truth of a proposition in my argument against Twetten. The 'existence' envisaged in my rebuttal is that of the act of being; the real world actuality of the thing. This does not mean that I presuppose that there is Thomist *esse* and chide Twetten for not figuring that into his reasoning. Rather, my point, or at least, my concern is with the real existence of things. Unless one wants to hold that form is what makes things really exist, there must be some non-formal principle of the real existence of things. But if one holds that form is what

makes things exist (and so rejects Thomist *esse*) then the question arises as to the reality of innumerable forms that clearly do not exist. Given that only some forms are real, they exist, and others are not, form alone is not sufficient to account for the real existence of things. Instantiation of form simply gives us instances of this or that kind of thing, but it does not explain why there is at all this or that kind of thing; form presupposes being, for if there is nothing, then there isn't even any form. Assuming that there are matter/form composites we can acknowledge the existence of such things, but the composition of matter and form does not ground that assumption, rather it is what is assumed. So there must be some other principle at work here without which these matter/form composites would not be, and that precisely is Thomist *esse*.

JOHN KNASAS (2019, 71–88)

John Knasas is an existentialist Thomist; I am an existentialist Thomist.¹ We both take it to be the case that a significant contribution made by Aquinas to the history of philosophy was his discovery of *esse* as the fundamental metaphysical reality. It is unsurprising that the two of us agree on quite a bit, and I was certainly pleased to read his most recent book *Thomistic Existentialism and Cosmological Reasoning* published this year (2019) by CUA press; I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on this work. It is no surprise given our agreement on several fundamental issues in Thomism that we would come to disagree on exactly how to go about defending these positions. To outsiders it may look like our disagreement is an exercise in scholastic pedantry, but to those convinced of Thomism (and to ourselves) it is simply a matter of getting things right. I thus thank Knasas for his contribution to this volume and for the opportunity to engage with his own reasoning on these issues.

I think Knasas's reading of Aquinas on the understanding of essence is somewhat too Avicennian to be Thomistic. The Latin Avicenna distinguished between three states of being for essence: (i) in the thing, (ii) in the

¹ I did not set out to be an existentialist Thomist; I simply engaged with Thomas and the literature and found myself adopting positions which resonate with the existential Thomists. Thus, I don't see my existential Thomism as being any kind of loyalty to a school of Thomism (nor do I think does Knasas) rather it is simply a loyalty to Thomas because I think he got things right in this regard.

mind, (iii) in itself.² It is this treatment of essence that in my eyes is in affinity with the so-called Meinongian slum. For Thomas the essence exists either in the thing or in the mind, it has no third state of being independent of these two. Now, certainly there is much attenuation that can be added to the existence in the mind of the essence, especially in its absolute consideration. But this does not free the essence from its being in the mind. Hence its absolute consideration does not render the essence in some third state of being in itself. Knasas maintains that there is some third state that essence can be in and which abstracts from all *esse*, including mental existence, thereby making it existence neutral; I myself cannot fathom what this could be unless it is some Meinongian state. Thus, in order to avoid the latter, I take it that the absolute consideration of essence is in abstraction from actual real existence, and this abstraction occurs in or is performed by a subject with the appropriate cognitional faculties

One issue that Knasas brings up about my treatment of causality and the *per aliud* principle is that I work PSR reasoning into the defence of that principle. Thus, as I argue, the composition of essence and *esse* is one such that there needs to be some reason as to why essence and *esse* are so composed. I seek this reason in a cause, and thus I hold that Thomas is committed to a causal explanation of composites of essence and *esse*. This indeed is how the whole argument for God in the *De Ente* kicks off in the first place, and Thomas has recourse to the same reasoning elsewhere.³ I don't think that Knasas and I are in actual disagreement here, since we both hold that an essence/*esse* composite's dependence for *esse* requires some explanation. I think that perhaps mention of the PSR has suggested allusions to non-Thomistic accounts of PSR in terms of the contingent relations between things. But this is not my view, and I was explicit in *Aquinas's Way to God* to point out that the limited PSR to which Aquinas is committed is a causal one. Both Knasas and I indeed agree on causal dependence when it comes to the relationship between essence and *esse*, and so I think that Knasas criticises me here for a position that I do not adopt.

On the other hand, Knasas and I do indeed disagree insofar as he doesn't see the need for the sort of defence of the *per aliud* principle that I offer; ra-

² See Gyula KLIMA (ed.), *Medieval Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 225–226 for some telling texts.

³ See for instance *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, qu. 3, art. 7: “. . . [O]mne compositum causam habet, quae enim secundum se diversa sunt, non conveniunt in aliquod unum nisi per aliquam causam adunantem ipsa.”

ther for Knasas, once we understand that *esse* is the fundamental principle of act there is no further need of an explanation. Adopting this outlook, we do not need to fill in what is missing from the *De Ente* argumentation in terms of consideration of *per se* ordered series, since once we realise that *esse* is the principle of act, we come to understand that nothing but *esse* itself can account for the actuality of anything at all. The dependency stops with *esse*.

I grant that once we realise that given a composite of essence and *esse* we need no further explanation than an understanding that *esse* is the principle of act with nothing more fundamental than it to account for actuality. And for somebody with a broad and in-depth familiarity with the Thomistic metaphysical outlook, one can just see that the explanation of essence/*esse* composites cannot go any further than pure *esse* itself. However, the givenness of the existing thing itself does call for explanation, especially for one not convinced or not so familiar with Thomism; and we have the resources for such an explanation in terms of *per se* ordered series in the thinking of Thomas. So we are justified in reasoning causally from the existence of any one essence/*esse* composite to its dependence on what is pure *esse* itself, which reasoning will require us to show that what is *per aliud* depends on what is *per se*.

Finally, Knasas points out the need to appreciate paradox in appreciating Aquinas's philosophical thinking on some crucial points. He hints that one trained in analytical methods of philosophising might find this difficult and so will attempt to resolve the paradox rather than simply dwelling with it. Whilst trained in the analytical philosophical tradition, I have criticised that tradition of philosophy for its failure to appreciate Aquinas's thinking on *esse*; not only that, in criticising the analytical tradition I argue that one needs to think one's way into Aquinas's understanding of *esse*.⁴ So I do have some sympathy for Knasas's point, but I do not think that it entails that we must affirm paradox. If one were to characterise the analytical mode of thinking in terms of univocity whereby precision requires sameness of meaning throughout, and if one were to characterise Knasas's paradoxical thinking in terms of equivocity whereby there can be identity in difference through the differentiation of meaning in different contexts that we can only think when in a certain frame of mind, then I think Aquinas's thinking should be deemed analogical such that there is sufficient sameness in meaning to be clear and

⁴ See Gaven KERR, "Thomist *Esse* and Analytical Philosophy," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 55 (2015), 1: 25–48.

precise in our philosophical consideration of metaphysical issues, whilst at the same time allowing for the kind of attenuation appropriate to the subject matter for discussion. But I don't think this is the same as affirming paradox; rather all it is affirming is that to appreciate the thinking of a great philosopher, one cannot be constrained by contemporary paradigms of philosophical explanation alien to that philosopher. Thus, I would resist Knasas's appeal to paradox, especially when non-paradoxical explanations of Aquinas's thinking are forthcoming.

JACEK WOJTYSIAK (2019, 89–103)

In his paper Jacek Wojtysiak deals with a number of critical issues in my treatment of Aquinas's proof of God from *De Ente*, much of what he says is both complementary and complimentary, and I thank him for his engagement. He highlights several issues which are worthy of further study (or have been studied adequately in the literature), and in particular the merging of Platonic participation and Aristotelian composition in Aquinas's metaphysical thought. At the end of his paper, Wojtysiak states that he would like to see more detailed treatment of this, especially on the issue of participation and causality. I have two brief points to make in this regard. The first is that to my mind these issues have been adequately dealt with by those Thomists of the mid to late twentieth century who undertook to unearth or at least recognise the non-Aristotelian and more Platonic elements of Aquinas's thought, e.g. Fabro, Geiger, Norris Clarke etc. The second point is that often when one calls for greater scrutiny of how Aristotelianism and Platonism interact in Aquinas's thought, it comes from a position of deference to one or the other influence. What I mean is that one is accustomed to thinking of Aquinas as devoted to one or another thinker of the ancient world e.g. Aristotle, so that when we see something in his thinking which is not strictly in line with that thought, e.g. his defence and development of a Platonic participation metaphysics, we immediately think that there is an issue here that needs resolved. But Thomas is not slavishly devoted to any one particular thinker (though a case can be made for a non-slavish devotion to the mighty dead); rather he is an original thinker who seeks to think through the difficult problems of philosophy. In the latter respect then, the presence of and consistency of what were irreconcilable differences in his predecessors need only pose a problem if Thomas has failed to reconcile them. But it is a well-trodden path in the Thomist literature how Thomas can fit Platonic participa-

tion in with Aristotelian metaphysics. Briefly, he grants the Aristotelian model of substance and accident, and the attendant analysis of material substance in terms of matter and form along with the four causes. But insofar as he recognises a principle of act deeper than that of form, i.e. *esse*, Thomas can have recourse to a Platonic notion of participation which he both defines and develops in terms of causality. The competition between Platonism and Aristotelianism in the ancient world centred principally on the role of form, but Thomas is clear that he endorses the Aristotelian account here; the Platonic framework comes in not to explain form, and so not in competition with the Aristotelian account, but to explain how essence and *esse* are related. To be sure there is an Aristotelian element to the latter as well in terms of act and potency, but this element is not in competition with the Platonic participation structure that Thomas endorses, and indeed Thomas explicitly states in the *De Substantis Separatis* that the relation between act and potency is a participation relationship.⁵

The foregoing brings me to two substantive points I'd like to address in Wojtysiak's paper. The first pertains to participation whereas the second pertains to how we go about doing metaphysics. Concerning participation, Wojtysiak outlines my understanding of Thomistic participation in a way that I think is problematic. As he depicts my thinking on the matter: (i) essence participates in *esse*, (ii) *esse* participates in *esse commune*, and (iii) *esse commune* participates in *esse divinum*. I reject this model. Every creature has its own act of existence by which it is, this is its *esse*, and its ontological correlative is essence. Now insofar as the *esse* of every creature is limited in a certain respect and does not express the fullness of *esse* in itself, created *esse* is not equal in any way to divine *esse*. *Esse commune* is simply the notion of all and any created *esse*, it is not a real intermediary between a creature's *esse* and *esse divinum*. Wojtysiak is surely correct in highlighting this, but he seems to be of the view that I *don't* think this. I gave no indication in *Aquinas's Way to God* that *esse commune* is itself a real intermediary, and throughout I spoke of a double participation: (i) that of essence in *esse* or *es-*

⁵ *Tractatus De Substantis Separatis* (West Hartford: St Joseph College, 1962), Cap. 3, p. 46: 26–35: “. . . Omne participans oportet esse compositum ex potentia et actu, id enim quod recipitur ut participatum oportet esse actum ipsius substantiae participantis; et sic cum omnes substantiae praeter supremam quae est per se unum et per se bonum sint participantes secundum Platonem, necesse est quod omnes sint compositae ex potentia et actu. Quod etiam necesse est dicere secundum sententiam Aristotelis.”

se commune, and (ii) that of *esse commune* in *esse divinum*.⁶ Thus there is only created and uncreated *esse*; essence participates in its own *esse* in order to be, but such *esse* would not be were it not to participate in God's *esse*.

The next point I would like to address then is how we go about doing metaphysics. Frequently in his paper Wojtysiak asks for some empirical evidence/observation/proof of some metaphysical reality. At one important point, he asks for such empirical evidence for the fact that the *esse* of essence/*esse* composites is sustained in such composites thereby locating such causality within a *per se* series. Otherwise, Wojtysiak charges that my thinking (and Thomas's) on this matter must be speculative or theoretical. But I think the dualism of empirical vs speculative in metaphysics is a product of modern, more specifically, analytic ways of doing metaphysics; a dichotomy I reject.

On the one hand we can do metaphysics in a rather Quinean fashion by determining what there is. In that case, we take some authoritative non-philosophical discipline, usually natural science, interrogate that for our commitments to reality, and then see what exactly we are committed to. In this case, all our metaphysical commitments must have some empirical evidence in their favour.

On the other hand, if we see metaphysics as not merely determining what there is, we can swing in the more speculative direction by thinking about how the world could be and considering what would necessarily be the case in every possible world. Thus, we have modal metaphysics which seeks to justify its conclusions without empirical observation in support.

It seems to me that Wojtysiak wants to interpret my thinking (and I submit, Thomas's) into a dualism akin to this. But I resist such a move. I don't think Thomist metaphysics is based on empirical observation, nor do I think it is purely speculative. Thomas is quite clear that the subject matter of metaphysics is being. Like any other scientist, the metaphysician encounters being through his senses, and so our initial contact with being is an empirical affair. But whereas other scientists consider being in some respect, the metaphysician considers being as being, and, in particular, he is concerned with what it is to be. Just as there is a kind of thinking about being which is proper to the mathematician or the natural scientist, so too there is a kind of

⁶ Note my explicit denial that *esse commune* is a subsisting reality in itself in which things participated; rather it simply represents the abstracted totality of the individual acts of existence of creatures (*Aquinas's Way to God*, 62, n. 9).

thinking characteristic of the metaphysician. This kind of thinking, the metaphysical, is labelled by Thomas as *separatio*. In such thinking the metaphysician can consider features of being pertinent to all beings, e.g. potency, form, act, and not just to a limited domain of beings. In doing so he is doing metaphysics, and once he enters upon that pattern of experience the metaphysician does not need empirical observation to justify his positions. Whilst it is indeed true that empirical observations can generate metaphors to help think oneself into metaphysics (just like diagrams help one think about Euclidean geometry), the actual truth of the matter at hand is not dependent on such empirical observations.

So far so good, but doesn't this now look like the more speculative metaphysics adverted to above? I don't think it does, and this is because whilst there is a special kind of thinking characteristic of metaphysics (just as there is for mathematics and natural science) there is not a special metaphysical reality, such as possible worlds, that the metaphysician fixes his gaze upon and interrogates. The metaphysician interrogates the real world, like the mathematician and the natural scientist, but it is how he interrogates it, *qua* being, that distinguishes him from the other scientists. Thus, the metaphysician is engaged in a kind of thinking peculiar to metaphysics which does not require empirical observation to justify his reasoning, yet this does not render his activity merely speculative since he is not focussed in on a privileged metaphysical domain, he is focused on the same reality that other non-metaphysical thinkers are thinking about; it is just that the kind of thinking he uses to think about that reality differs from theirs.

Accordingly, the Thomist metaphysician can interrogate reality for its metaphysical significance; he can come to know that without which there would be nothing. This involves not only essence, not only *esse*, but also how they relate and the causality involved in their so relating. This causality is understood from an understanding of the dependency of essence on *esse* in order to be, so that were it not for *esse* the thing would not be. But if the latter is the case, then *esse* is not only originated but sustained in a thing, and this serves to locate the causality of *esse* within a *per se* series. There is no need of an empirical demonstration here or an observation to justify this reasoning, since such reasoning pertains to the intelligibility of the metaphysical components themselves, which components, let me repeat, are garnered from our consideration of being *qua* being, and not from some speculative grasp of a privileged metaphysical domain.

PAUL O'GRADY (2019, 105–116)

I am very pleased to have Paul O'Grady's contribution to this volume. Both O'Grady and I are Thomists of a sort, yet the sort of Thomists we are differs somewhat for each of us. At the outset O'Grady raises an important issue as to the relationship between traditional arguments for God's existence and the wider scope of religious belief. He notes the allure of Aquinas's argumentation, yet he also notes how it is out of step with several contemporary voices in philosophy. I think that it is out of step precisely because when it comes to the issue of the existence of God, Aquinas is concerned with the truth of the matter. This is not to say that contemporary philosophers are not concerned with truth; rather it is to say that when it comes to the existence of God Aquinas is concerned only or merely with the question of whether God exists. The deeper, more existential, question of how to integrate that truth into one's life in terms of a fundamental project is not so much to the forefront of metaphysical considerations of God's existence.

Aquinas of course is a saint and a spiritual master. He did not become these things through cold abstract philosophising; rather it was through his love for God and devotion to him that he engaged upon cold abstract philosophising in order to discern the truth about God Whom he loved. And in this case that meant going where the metaphysics led him and affirming that one can make this metaphysical argument for God's existence (as opposed to a more design like argument or a first cause Kalam style argument). Thus, it seems to me that a lot of contemporary philosophers who discuss religious issues are engaged in a different project from that in which Aquinas was engaged.

O'Grady does well to situate the task of philosophy within a form of life and to discuss how that is integrated into the philosopher's form of life. He is right to point out that often in philosophy there are as many counter arguments as arguments that are offered, and that there are rarely knock down arguments in favour of either side. Thus, we need to appeal to metaphilosophical considerations pertinent to the form of life of the philosopher in order to determine a position.

However, I think the latter move might be over hasty. Certainly, a philosopher can be motivated to adopt a position because of metaphilosophical positions pertinent to his form of life. In that case, one's form of life makes one sympathetic to a position, even when there are no knock down arguments in favour. So several different factors (both philosophical and metaphilosophical) converge to prompt assent. But if tricky philosophical dis-

putes are to be resolved by means of appeal to non-philosophical considerations, then we have something like a double indexical approach to true philosophy: the true philosophical position is the one that interests *me* right *now*.⁷ I think there is another way of resolving issues which seem intractable without appealing to metaphilosophical considerations.

Consider the old problem of the one and the many. Purveyors of the flux doctrine seemed to have arguments just as strong as purveyors of the one; and so the argumentation went back and forth. The decisive contribution of Plato or Aristotle to this issue was not that they offered stronger arguments for one side or the other; rather they found a third position that recognised all that was good, and true, and noble in either position and found a way of bringing all of that together into a new position. In this case, it was recognised that being is a plurivocal notion which admits of both unity and diversity. A significant advance then was made in the philosophical problematic insofar as the old tension of the one and the many was resolved by uniting the two in a new position. A similar process can be found in Neoplatonism which attempts to unite the opposing forces of Platonism and Aristotelianism, and, so I believe, the same is found in Thomism. In that case, we can appeal to philosophical considerations for the adoption of a new position, and part of these considerations is that the new position is able to preserve all that is good in opposing positions and overcome what is bad. So, whilst I wouldn't be as skeptical as O'Grady in the dearth of knock down arguments in philosophy (since we can have a knock down argument even if nobody is convinced by it), I recognise that there can be metaphilosophical considerations for adopting a position. However, I think that before appeal to metaphilosophical considerations is made, we should look to see whether

⁷ In my article "Thomist *esse* and Analytical Philosophy," 38 *et seq.*, I argue that if we don't have a substantive account of what the 'analytical' in 'analytical philosophy' signifies, then we have a double indexical view: it is any piece of philosophical activity that interest *me* (an analytical philosopher) right *now*. The obvious problem with this is that we are none the wiser as to what makes a person an 'analytical' philosopher. The same is the case more generally for what O'Grady says concerning my conception of metaphysics and my charge that the analytics fail to think metaphysically; for he states that several analytical philosophers consider themselves to be doing metaphysics, yet it is not the metaphysics of being. But my problem here is that we cannot say someone is doing metaphysics simply because they think that what they are doing is metaphysics (just as we cannot say that someone is doing analytical philosophy because what they think they are doing is analytical); there has to be an identity to what metaphysics is, and whilst this may take on new dimensions in contemporary philosophy, it cannot exclude the investigation into being that our predecessors took it to be.

there are good reasons for adopting a new position and whether that new position can accommodate the insights of the old positions that stand in tension with each other. In my view, when properly understood, Aquinas's notion of *esse* can overcome any objections made against it and gives a better account of reality than its contemporary competitors whilst at the same time preserving their insights.

I think that O'Grady's points at the end of his paper are insightful, to the effect that philosophy is embedded within the life of the philosopher. But I also think that philosophy is something itself distinctive within the philosopher's life, in which case it can be divorced from that life and considered in itself. Unless we think that philosophy is just something the philosopher does, philosophy has an identity and its concerns are subject to rational discussion (even if at times we must perform the delicate task of separating that discussion from the life of the philosopher). Accordingly, the life of Socrates is one of noble tragedy, but whilst I am moved by Plato's depiction of the death of Socrates in the *Phaedo*, philosophically speaking, I am more interested in the arguments that he amasses there for life after death. Similarly, whilst I find Aquinas's wrestling with the heterodox Aristotelians at Paris interesting and I find it notable that he loses his temper with them in the *De Unitate Intellectus*, as a philosopher I am much more interested in Aquinas's views on the intellect, and I divorce that from the context in which he articulates those views.

I think that O'Grady and I disagree over what the philosophical task is. He speaks of convincing others, but if it was the task of the philosopher to convince others then Socrates would have been a failure, as would have been many other philosophers in the great tradition. Rather I take the philosophical task to be one that searches out the truth of the appropriate subject matter and thinks that through; this may convince others for a time, or it may not. The point is that the truth is discovered and put forth; if others are convinced, so be it. But as O'Grady points out, people will be convinced of a position for a number of non-philosophical reasons; and this to my mind indicates that the task of convincing others is not the task of the philosopher, but more the task of the apologist or the orator or even the politician. The task of the philosopher is to find the truth, to think it through, and to disseminate it. When it comes to Aquinas's argumentation for God, I think that this is something he does particularly well in *De Ente*, Cap. 4, so that one can say that the existence of God is a truth that can be known by means of natural reason.

MAREK PIWOWARCZYK (2019, 117–128)

Marek Piwowarczyk offers a paper which interrogates the intelligibility of the distinction between essence and *esse* in Aquinas's thought, and raises some important issues for how they relate. In discussing participation, Piwowarczyk offers a general account of it, but it is not exactly one the Thomist can endorse without clarification. Piwowarczyk defines participation in terms of some participant and the perfection in which it participates. Generally speaking, this is correct but it is not quite how Aquinas defines participation, since on his account participation obtains when something possesses in an individual fashion what is in itself universal.⁸ The difference here is subtle but important. On Piwowarczyk's account of participation, the participant needs the participated perfection, and the latter, as a perfection, is also separated off from the participant. But on Thomas's definition the individual simply has the reality in question in a non-universal sense, and unless one is a Platonist about universals, the universal need not exist in a Platonic realm. Hence participation and composition can go hand in hand for Thomas, since the participated actuality can be limited by some corresponding potency that participates in it. Piwowarczyk grants this, but he proceeds to raise a problem as to the mutual inseparability of the act/potency components in the thing, in this case essence and *esse*.

The basic reason why act is limited by potency is because it is the actuality *of* that potency. In other words, the potency is being actualised such that were there no further potency, there would be nothing more to actualise. Thus, the principle of act actualises the thing to the extent that the thing is in potency. It does not actualise its corresponding principle to any greater extent than that the corresponding principle of potency is in potency, and this is precisely because there would be no more potency left to actualise. This insight is even more explicit when we consider existential actualisation, since *esse* actualises the essence of the thing, in which case whatever exists in the thing exists because of the *esse*. There is nothing more for *esse* to actualise in the thing, for if there were *esse* would have actualised it, i.e. made it exist. Hence, the *esse* of the thing actualises the thing, making it exist, to the extent that the thing is in potency to exist, and the latter is the thing's es-

⁸ See for instance *Expositio De Ebdomadibus*, lect. 2, p. 271:70–73: “Est autem participare quasi partem capere; et ideo quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet universaliter, dicitur participare illud”; *In II De Caelo et Mundo*, Lect. 18, n. 463: “. . . [N]am participare nihil aliud est quam ab alio partialiter accipere.”

sence. *Esse* then is limited by essence and as so limited it is the *esse* of that essence and that essence alone. Thus, we have real distinction of essence and *esse*, but mutual inseparability.

My concern with Piwowarczyk's discussion of the foregoing issue, especially in the final section of his paper, is that he conceives of *esse* as a formal principle of act and therefore pertaining to the essence of the thing. Thinking of *esse* in this way enables Piwowarczyk to ruminate over how *esse* as act could possibly relate to essence as potency, and to express confusion over how it can be that essence plays a determining role in the limitation of *esse*. But one need not buy into Thomist *esse* in order to see how a principle of potency can limit a principle of act without that principle of potency being some sort of causally determinative principle. Take the limitation of form by matter. Matter doesn't actually do anything to form *qua* form in limiting it; rather form as the principle of act is at work in forming the matter. But given the particular chunk of matter, there is only so much matter that can be formed, hence there is only so much work that form has to do, and once the chunk of matter is formed, there is no more matter to be formed in this instance. Hence the universality of the form is limited to the determinations of matter in that instance, yet the causality involved by matter here is not one of determining activity on the form, but one of passive reception. The case is similar with essence and *esse*, so that *esse* can be the act of all acts, and yet limited by essence without thereby being acted upon by essence. Piwowarczyk dismisses this view as trivial and holds that in that case it is impossible to determine the priority of *esse* to essence. I think the triviality objection follows only if real distinction means real separability, but this of course is not the case; and I am unclear why he thinks one cannot determine the priority of *esse* to essence on this account. Surely *esse* would be metaphysically prior to essence since without *esse* the essence simply would not be.

Now the foregoing account of the relationship between essence and *esse* raises issues for creation, since if creation is the granting of *esse* to essence, yet prior to creation there are no essences, to what is *esse* being added and by what is it being limited in the act of creation? This is certainly an issue for Aquinas's metaphysics of creation. I treat of this issue in my latest book, *Aquinas and the Metaphysics of Creation*, and briefly the solution runs as follows. God has ideas of all that He could possibly create. It is these ideas which go to inform creation, so that when God creates something He causes the essence (formally determined after a divine idea) to be composed with *esse*, which *esse* actuates that essence to the degree that the essence can be

actuated, i.e. as a human, a dog, a cat etc. But to be clear, the creature is the existing substance whole and complete, including all its metaphysical components. Thus, when the creature is brought to be, it is not just essence and *esse* that are united in it, all its metaphysical components are brought together in the creature. None of these metaphysical components are themselves created. Thus, neither essence, nor *esse*, nor matter, nor form etc are created; rather the substance is created and these components are co-created with the creature.⁹ Thus, it is not the case that in creating God takes some essence and adds some *esse* to it (the so-called thick essence view); rather God creates the substance, and as so created we can in turn analyse the substance for its compositional structures, one of which is essence and *esse*, which relate as potency and act.

Moving on, I think Piwowarczyk is wrong to hold that the reason that matter, form *et al* cannot be identified with a thing's *esse* is because they are inseparable. It is not their inseparability, and hence dependence, which means that various metaphysical components of the thing cannot be *esse*; rather it is the fact that they simply would not be were it not for *esse*. Unless one wants to hold that there is no real distinction between essence and *esse* in the thing, or that the argumentation for real distinction is false, then given real distinction none of the metaphysical components of a thing pertaining to essence can be the *esse* of the thing.

Now I appreciate the argumentative move that one inspired by Twetten might want to make here: the argumentation for real distinction presupposes the plausibility of *esse* to begin with, and so one cannot argue for real distinction and in turn hold that nothing pertaining to the essence is *esse* unless one already presupposes *esse*. But I think such an argumentative move ends up establishing too much, for it is a variation of the old objection to syllogistic reasoning viz that it never demonstrates anything except what is already contained in its premises. To a certain extent the latter is true, but what is contained in the premises of a syllogism is not explicit in those premises and not drawn together except for in the conclusion, in which case we are enlightened by some new discovery about the relationship of major and minor terms and what they signify. So *mutatis mutandis* when considering the real distinction, prior to making the argument for real distinction we

⁹ *De Potentia*, qu. 3, art. 1, ad. 12: "Neque materia neque forma neque accidens proprie dicuntur fieri; sed id quod fit est res subsistens. Cum enim fieri terminetur ad esse, proprie ei convenit fieri cui convenit per se esse, scilicet rei subsistenti; unde neque materia neque forma neque accidens proprie dicuntur creari, sed concreari."

are considering things, and it is implicit that we are considering real things; but it is not quite clear how those things are real, and prior to the argument for real distinction, it is an open question as to whether or not the things exist in virtue of what they are or in virtue of something distinct from what they are. The argument for real distinction merely establishes that such things do not exist in virtue of what they are (their essences) but in virtue of something which does not pertain to their essences, and this is the act of existence or *esse*. The conclusion may be contained implicitly in the premises of the argument, but it takes the argument to bring it out. So, the notion of *esse* may be implicit in our consideration of beings, for after all, we can't not be aware of the reality of things around us and how that contrasts with the lack of reality of certain things; hence the argumentation for real distinction makes what is implicit explicit by demonstrating that the *esse* of things is not identical to essence.

In his summation Piwowarczyk gives a clue as to the metaphysical framework within which he is working in interrogating Aquinas's metaphysics of essence and *esse*; for he closes his discussion in terms of contingency and accounting for the fact of a thing's existence, and it seems clear that when he reads Aquinas's distinguishing between essence and *esse* in things, he reads this in terms of accounting for the fact of the existence of contingent things. But Thomas's concern in the distinction of essence and *esse* is not with the fact of the existence of contingent things, and this is for two reasons. The first is that the whole discussion of real distinction in *De Ente*, Cap. 4 kicks off through a consideration of immaterial creatures, which Aquinas takes to be necessary beings since they are not subject to corruption. Hence, Aquinas holds that even necessary creatures are subject to real distinction of essence and *esse*. Secondly, and more importantly, by conceiving the discussion in terms of the fact of the existence of contingent things, Piwowarczyk seems to have in mind the reality of things that happen to exist, but possibly could not exist. These are contrasted with the reality of things that necessarily exist. On this outlook then, existence is a mere fact or addition that possible things have, so that possibility and necessity are more fundamental than existence. But as I argued in *Aquinas's Way to God*, Chapter 3, when I rejected actualism, possibility is not more fundamental than actuality for Aquinas. The actuality of things is not something derivative of possibility; possibility is derivative of actuality, fundamentally the actuality of *esse*. Accordingly, the task is not to explain the fact of the existence of some set of contingent things, e.g. humans, dogs, cats, as opposed to the

non-existence of others e.g. wizards, orcs, elves. Rather, what does need explained is the reality of actual things, and this is through an analysis of their metaphysical components. By engaging in the latter, Thomas is not concerned with the mere fact that existing possible things are differentiated from non-existing possible things; rather he is concerned with the very reality of existing things, and this is part of his concern for the being of things. Hence, Aquinas approaches the whole issue of real distinction from a different metaphysical perspective than Piwowarczyk appears to do, in which case disagreements between these two perspectives will run deeper than the question of the relationship between essence and *esse*.

DAVID TWETTEN (2019, 129–144)

Twetten is an author whose presentation of the Aristotelian question begging objection has already been discussed. Just to review, that objection goes as follows: unless one is antecedently convinced that there is Thomist *esse* in things, the existence of things can be accounted for by the metaphysical principles of form and matter. In his contribution to this volume, Twetten is not so much focussed on preserving this objection as to saving the *intellectus essentiae* argument for real distinction. There is much that I find admirable in Twetten's paper: his focus on quidditative existentialism to correct the forgetfulness of essence that can be a characteristic of *some* existentialist Thomists;¹⁰ his focus on the essence-supposit distinction, another metaphysical distinction important to Aquinas's metaphysics of creation; and his concern for the semantic principles underlying Aquinas's metaphysics of being (to reiterate the title of Klima's paper on the same which both Twetten and I admire).

In saving the *intellectus essentiae* argument Twetten has recourse to reading the argument as quidditatively as possible. So as opposed to reading the argument as pertaining to how we understand essences, Twetten is concerned with the characterisation of the essences that are understood. Accordingly, we are dealing with the essences or quiddities of real things, such that our focus is on those real things themselves. And given that it is one thing to understand the essence of such a thing and another to understand its existence, we in turn distinguish between the essence and existence of such things.

¹⁰ Twetten mentions Gilson in this respect, though to be clear Gilson only rallied against a sterile conceptualism that loses sight of the real. He certainly had no problem with consideration of the essences of real things, so long of course as such a consideration did not make the mistake of missing the fundamentality of *esse* as the act of all acts.

On this reading of the argument, we are not caught up in distinguishing between one conceptual content and another, conceptual contents that for all we know could be identical in reality. Rather, we are concerned with distinctions pertaining to the very real things themselves.

Twetten sees a similar form of reasoning pertaining to Aquinas's distinction between essence and supposit in creatures. Briefly, that distinction obtains when the essence of the individual thing has something added to it from without such that the individual thing possesses both the essence and that which is added to it, thereby distinguishing the individual from both. Aquinas's typical consideration here is with material creatures, such that a given material creature has an essence plus some designated matter, in which case the individual itself is not identical to that essence. Hence there is a distinction between essence and supposit.

The lesson to be learned here is that we can arrive at real distinctions in things by attending to the metaphysical principles of those things themselves, in which case we can read the so called *intellectus essentiae* argument as pertaining to the metaphysical principles of real things themselves and not to our understanding thereof. I submit that interesting as this interpretation is, it does not save the *intellectus essentiae* argument.

Appeal to the essence-supposit distinction is unhelpful here, since elsewhere Aquinas argues that for all in which essence and *esse* are distinct essence and supposit are distinct. He reasons that when there is something other than essence in the existing thing, that thing itself is not identical to its essence. Now essence and *esse* are distinct in all things other than God, in which case essence and supposit are distinct in all such things. So in Aquinas's own reasoning, the essence-*esse* distinction is used to establish the essence-supposit distinction.¹¹ But if this is the case, then the essence-supposit distinction cannot be used as a premise in establishing real distinction, in which case premise 2 of Twetten's reformulation at the end of his paper is out. Now one might reply that this may be the case for immaterial creatures, since the only way to show that essence and supposit in them is distinct is to

¹¹ *Quodlibet* II, qu. 2, art. 2: “. . . [C]uicumque potest aliquid accidere quod non sit de ratione suae naturae, in eo differt res et quod quid est, sive suppositum et natura. Nam in significatione naturae includitur solum id quod est de ratione speciei; suppositum autem non solum habet haec quae ad rationem speciei pertinent, sed etiam alia quae ei accidunt; et ideo suppositum signatur per totum, natura autem, sive quidditas, ut pars formalis. In solo autem Deo non invenitur aliquod accidens praeter eius essentiam, quia suum esse est sua essentia, ut dictum est; et ideo in Deo est omnino idem suppositum et natura. In Angelo autem non est omnino idem: quia aliquid accidit ei praeter id quod est de ratione suae speciei: quia et ipsum esse Angeli est praeter eius essentiam seu naturam.”

show that they have something distinct from their essences, and this is *esse*; but the same is not the case for material creatures, since one can appeal to matter/form composition in them in order to show that essence and supposit are distinct, as Thomas does on a number of occasions. This is certainly a worthwhile response, but then we are far removed from the reasoning of the *De Ente*; for the motivation for establishing the real distinction, and hence the *intellectus essentiae* argument and all that follows, is to account for the potency of immaterial creatures, which potency is located in their potency to exist. Accordingly, the *intellectus essentiae* argument, if it is to establish real distinction, will need to establish that the distinction between essence and existence applies to both material *and* immaterial creatures. But since the essence-supposit distinction in immaterial creatures is derived from the distinction of essence and *esse*, the former cannot be used to establish the latter in immaterial creatures, in which case Twetten's re-formulation of the *intellectus essentiae* argument cannot establish the real distinction in immaterial creatures, which was a key motivation for Thomas in *De Ente*, Cap. 4 in the first place.

DAVID BURRELL (2019, 145–146)

Burrell offers quite an endorsement of my book and makes suggestions for further development. One issue I would like to comment upon is that of the manifestation of God in creation given the participation structure involved in the relationship between God Who is pure *esse* and creatures who have but are not identical to their *esse*. This of course is an outlook that Thomas finds in the Neoplatonic tradition, and in an important passage from his commentary on the *De Divinis Nominibus* of Pseudo-Dionysius Thomas points out that every individual creature participates in its own act of existence whereas a creature's *esse* (*esse commune*) participates in God's *esse* (*esse divinum*). There is much that can be unpacked here, but what it immediately speaks to is the Neoplatonic recognition of the presence of the participated perfection to the participants. Yet in this case, it is the intimate presence of God as creator to all things that are created. This conception of God is one of both immanence and transcendence. Immanence insofar as God is intimately present to all creatures making them be in every respect that they are, since nothing would be were it not to participate in *esse*. Yet God is transcendent insofar as no creature is identical to its *esse*; its *esse* is derived. Accordingly, God's intimate presence is also a transcendence – no creature could possibly be like God. God is so intimately present to creatures then that He is absent. This is a truth contained in Thomistic metaphysics on

which it is good to meditate and with which to dwell, since it opens the possibility of a mystical metaphysics not unknown to the Neoplatonic tradition within which Thomas here works.

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AUTHOR'S RESPONSES TO CONTRIBUTORS

Summary

The text represents the author's responses to the contributors who have addressed issues in my 2015 book, *Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in De Ente et Essentia*, published by Oxford University Press.

ODPOWIEDZI AUTORA

Streszczenie

Tekst zawiera odpowiedzi na kwestie poruszane przez autorów, którzy podjęli się dyskusji na temat problemów zawartych w mojej książce *Aquinas's Way to God: The Proof in De Ente et Essentia*, wydanej w 2015 r. przez Oxford University Press.

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Informacje o Autorze: Dr GAVEN KERR OP—Pontifical University St Patrick's College Maynooth, Maynooth, Co., Kildare, Irlandia; adres do korespondencji — e-mail: Gaven.kerr@spcm.ie; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5225-6900>.