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# AKVINIEČIO IR HEIDEGGERIO FENOMENOLOGINĖ SCHOLASTIKOS REDUKCIJA

## Aquinas and Heidegger's Phenomenological Reduction of Scholasticism

### SUMMARY

I assess a last Heideggerian critique of Aquinas. Using Suarez, Heidegger critiques the Thomistic real distinction between essence and existence. The distinction is presented as a distinction between two things (*rei*). The critique is as follows. If a thing is a being by reason of an addition, then the added thing is a being by a third thing *ad infinitum*. Because of the infinite regress we never have completion and so never have a thing. I argue that Suarez's critique assumes that every addition to a thing is a thing in the first sense. But additions to things can be acts that are accidents, or attributes. For example, the complexion of the man and the heat of the coffee add to these things. Moreover, acts in this sense do what they do without requiring an addition. Color colors. Heat heats. Hence, an explanation of the colored man is some color and an explanation of the hot coffee is some heat. I conclude by arguing that Aquinas considers existence to be another act of the thing along with its color or temperature and so avoids the regress and Heidegger's phenomenological reduction of Scholasticism to *Dasein's* productive comportment.

### SANTRAUKA

Vertinu paskutinę Heideggerio pateiktą Akviniečio kritiką. Heideggeris, remdamasis Suarezu, kritikuoja tominę esmės ir egzistencijos skirtį. Toji skirtis pateikiama kaip dviejų daiktų (*rei*) skirtingumas. Suarezas ją kritikuoja šitaip: jei daiktas yra esinys dėl to, kad jam kažkas pridėta, tai pridėtas daiktas taip pat yra esinys dėl to, kad jam yra pridėtas trečias daiktas. Ir taip iki begalybės (*ad infinitum*). Tad dėl begalinio regresio niekada neturime užbaigtumo, vadinasi, niekada neturime ir daikto. Teigiu, kad Suarezas vadovaujasi prielaida, jog kiekvienas daikto papildymas yra daiktas pirmine prasme. Tačiau daiktų priedai gali būti aktai,

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: realioji skirtis kaip *res et res*, aktas, atsitiktinis požymis, juslinis realizmas, produktyvusis derinys.

KEY WORDS: real distinction as *res et res*, *actus*, accident, sense realism, productive comportment.

kurie yra atsitiktiniai požymiai, arba atributai: pavyzdžiui, žmogaus veido spalva papildo jo veidą, o kavos karštis papildo kavą. Maža to, tai darantys aktai patys nereikalingi papildymo. Spalva spalvina. Šiluma šildo. Vadinas, tam tikra spalva paaikškina spalvą turintį veidą, o tam tikras karštis – karštą kavą. Pabaigoje darau išvadą, jog Akvinietis egzistenciją laiko dar vienu daikto aktu šalia jo spalvos ar temperatūros ir taip išvengia regreso bei Heideggerio fenomenologinės scholastikos redukcijos į *Dasein* produktyvųjį derinį.

In previous articles in *Logos zurnales*,<sup>1</sup> I discussed how Aquinas might defend himself from Heidegger's reduction of ontotheology to the productive comportment of *Dasein*. Aquinas' immediate sense realism transcends the net of productive comportment. In Aquinas' analysis of the data of this realism, Aquinas uncovers the thing's existence as a distinct *actus* that leads to a first cause before which we can dance and be in wonder.

Another reduction occurs in Heidegger's discussion of the Scholastic distinction between essence and existence in his *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*.<sup>2</sup> Heidegger's discussion is heavily indebted to Francisco Suarez's summary as given in Suarez's *Metaphysical Disputations*. For my purposes I will restrict myself to Heidegger's presentation of Suarez's critique of the Thomists and ask if the critique is appropriate to Aquinas.

In accord with Suarez's summary, Heidegger describes the Thomistic distinction of essence and existence as a distinction of one reality from another (*res et res*). Suarez's critique is that this understanding of the distinction destroys the unity of the thing. Suarez explains that if a *res* is a being by reason of a *res* added to it, then the added *res* is a being in a similar fashion. This thinking can then be repeated for the third added *res* and so on *ad infinitum*. We would never have one thing because there would never be completion. Hence,

for Suarez existence is not an extrinsic addition to the actualized possible. Existence is just the actualized possible, the fact of the possible.<sup>3</sup>

Suarez's conclusion is the opening that Heidegger needs. He quotes Aquinas that *esse* is the actuality (*actualitas*) of every form or nature. This sense of *actualitas* Heidegger connects with the meaning of the German "*Wirklichkeit*" and so concludes that the existence of the thing is the enactedness of the thing: "Something exists if it is actu, ergo, on the basis of an agere, a Wirken, a working, operating or effecting (energein)... . By actualitas, says Scholasticism, res extra causas constituitur – by actuality a thing, that is a mere possible, a specific what, is posited and placed outside the causes. This means: by actuality the enacted comes to stand on its own, it stands for itself, detached from causation and the causes."<sup>4</sup> This reduction of existence to enactedness is important because it is what enables Heidegger to phenomenologically reduce Scholastic causal considerations into *Dasein*'s productive comportment. Hence, Heidegger goes on to say:

The verbal definition of existentia already made clear that actualitas refers back to an acting on the part of some indefinite subject or, if we start from our own terminology, that the extant [*das Vorhandene*] is somehow referred by its sense to something for which, as it were, it comes to be before the hand, at hand, to be handed. The apparently objective interpretation of

being as *actualitas* also at bottom refers back to the subject ... in the sense of a relation to our Dasein as an acting Dasein or, to speak more precisely, as a creative, productive Dasein.<sup>5</sup>

So, by my count the above is a third strategy that Heidegger can and does employ against Aquinas.<sup>6</sup> In sum, use a fellow Scholastic to destroy the Thomistic understanding of existence as a distinct element needed for a thing to be a being. This destruction leaves us with "existence" meaning simply the realization or enactedness of the thing by its causes. This result openness the door for Heidegger going on to substitute a phenomenological reduction of the enacted for a metaphysical causal reduction.

I do not believe that Suarez's critique works against Aquinas' himself, though it may apply to some Thomists. I want to discuss the critique and then apply my discussion to Aquinas. The critique presupposes that any addition to the thing is a thing like the first. Not all additions, however, are like that. One coin added to another is like that, but heat added to the coffee is different. The heat is not a thing like the coffee. It is more like a modification and attribute of the coffee, or an accident as Aristotle says. But more importantly, to do what they do, attributes or accidents do not have to be referred to an extrinsic factor. Heat heats the coffee. Having heat means the coffee is hot. Also, color colors. The explanation of the colored man is some color. The implication is that if existence is like a modification or attribute of the thing, then it too will do what it does; namely, existence will render the thing to be existent or a being.

Aquinas in fact thinks of existence this way. He has a famous analogy not mentioned by Heidegger: just as a man is called a runner (*currens*) by having the act of running (*currere*), so too the man is called a being (*ens*), or an existent, by having existence (*esse*, or *actus essendi*).<sup>7</sup> The running is clearly what Aristotle would call an accident. Aquinas compares *esse* to it as something that the man has or possesses. Moreover, just as the running is distinct enough in its accidental status to render the man a runner, so too the *esse* is distinct enough to render the man a being. When Heidegger quotes Aquinas to say that *esse* is the *actualitas* of every form or nature, one should not take this to mean that *esse* is simply the realization or the fact of the thing. Rather, the meaning the word "*actualitas*" carries is that *esse* is a distinct act in virtue of which the thing is a fact. The *actus* sense of "*actualitas*" should not be ignored or downplayed, if one is to understand Aquinas.<sup>8</sup>

So, if Aquinas can philosophically elaborate this *actus* sense of *esse*, Suarez's critique of the Thomists will not apply to him. Also, Aquinas will not be swept downstream to Dasein's productive compartment. Does Aquinas provide the philosophical elaboration? Heidegger does not think so. He believes that the source of the distinction between essence and existence is religious.<sup>9</sup> Theologians think that the distinction is necessary to distinguish God from creatures. But Aquinas holds that we grasp the *esse rei* in the intellect's second operation, the *secunda operatio intellectus*. The twofold operation of the intellect,

the *duplex operatio intellectus*, is a reference to the doctrine of a pagan philosopher, Aristotle. Aristotle speaks of the second operation in chapter six of the third book of his *De Anima*. Elsewhere I have offered textual elaboration of this doctrine of Aquinas' philosophy.<sup>10</sup> I will not repeat it here. A summary in my own words will suffice now.

How does reality prompt us to distinguish an attribute from its subject? Reality does this by presenting the thing in various multiplicities. For example, experience gives us the coffee in a temperature multiplicity. We find the coffee both hot and cold. Reflection upon these facts leads us to do two conclusions. First, a distinction exists between the coffee and the hot temperature. The reason lies in the realization that if there were not a distinction, then when the hot temperature goes, the coffee should go. But that does not occur. We have the second instance of the multiplicity – the coffee as cold. Second, we conclude not only to a distinction between the coffee and the hot temperature, we also conclude to a stratification between them. In the stratification the coffee is more basic and fundamental than the temperature. The reason for this second conclusion is that the coffee is found without the hot temperature when the coffee is cold, but the hot temperature is nowhere apart from the coffee. Hence, the coffee appears as subject while the temperature appears as an attribute, accident, *actus*, of and in the coffee.

Other multiplicities will produce the same conclusions. For example, I can find Tom in a complexion multiplicity.

Tom is both ruddy and pale. Reflections like the above will discern these complexions as acts of Tom, the subject. So, if Aquinas is to philosophically offer his view that the existence of the thing is an *actus* of its own, Aquinas will have to catch the thing in an existence multiplicity. Does a thing multiply exist? At first thought it seems that the thing exists only in reality. Apart from really existing is not the thing nothing? It seems so; hence, the way to an *actus* appreciation of existence seems blocked. To move forward, Aquinas' immediate sense realism must be recalled. I defended this realism in the LOGOS articles mentioned above in footnote 1. It is another doctrine that Aquinas borrows from Aristotle. The doctrine makes the philosophies of both thinkers empirical. Sense experience is a jumping off point for both philosophies. Aquinas, however, sees metaphysical implications in the doctrine and lingers on the doctrine.

The claim of these realists is that sensation is a direct and immediate presentation of something real. By sensation is meant what I am doing right now as I look this way and listen. By 'real' is meant that the color and sound have their own existences such that if I was rendered blind or deaf, I would not understand the color or sound to cease. This claim is also an embarrassing minimal claim. Realists do not claim that cars and trees and people are directly and immediately present to me. In sensation the grasp of reality is superficial. It provides in an immediate way real color and sound, for example. The colored

field and sounding bell are conclusions from these real perceptibles.<sup>11</sup>

Also, how reality can be immediately present in my sensation should not lead one to question that evident fact that it happens. Many times we know that something is so without knowing how it is so. Now it is important to appreciate the marvelous fact that we do not *à la* Descartes and others have to get outside our sensation to find reality. We find reality precisely within our sensation. Every time that I open my eyes reality comes to exist in another way. I double the existence of the world. Besides complexion and temperature multiplicities, there are existential multiplicities. The way seems open to an *actus* sense of real existence.<sup>12</sup>

Just as the hot coffee of itself cannot be hot, so too the real thing of itself cannot be real. Just as hot coffee of itself hot excludes any other temperature for the coffee, so too a thing of itself real would exclude any other existence for the thing. Of itself the coffee is not temperatured; hence, it could be called of itself temperature neutral, while its temperatures can be regarded as attributes of this temperature neutral subject. Likewise, the thing of itself is not existent in any way; hence it could be called of itself existence neutral. Its real and cognitional existences can be regarded as acts of this existence neutral subject. In Aquinas, the possible is not an unactualized real thing. The possible is the unactualized thing itself. The multiplicity of really and cognitively existing precludes all existence from the thing. Likewise, the coffee itself is the possibility for the temperatures.<sup>13</sup>

Further points can be made about the thing, or subject, and its act of existence. Causal considerations can be revealed for the *esse*. As an act it cannot be understood as totally in and of its subject precisely as subject. Nor can it be understood to be dependent upon its subject in some other respect than subject. But all of that is for later, For now there is no need to understand any *actus* as dependent upon a cause. Presently the subject upon which the act is in some measure dependent is the subject intrinsic to the above analyzed data. As of yet there is no need to reduce the *actus* to a transcendent ontological cause like fire, the sun, or God or to a phenomenological cause like *Dasein*. Any further reduction must wait upon implications within the data. In this respect Heidegger proceeds to *Dasein* too quickly.

In conclusion, for Aquinas existence is not a *res* like the thing. So we cannot carry over considerations about the thing to its existence. It will not be true that if the thing needs the addition of existence, then the existence needs an addition. No infinite regress that threatens the unity of the thing results as Suarez claimed. As an *actus, esse*, like any other *actus*, does what it does. Heat qualifies the subject as hot, ruddy qualifies the subject as complected, existence qualifies the subject as existent. My point is that Aquinas is not in the Scholastic debate as Heidegger, using Suarez, pictures Aquinas. Hence, Aquinas does not fall prey to Heidegger's reduction of Scholasticism to *Dasein's* productive comportment. Aquinas' metaphysics is on a different path.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Knasas (2021) and Knasas (2022).
- <sup>2</sup> Heidegger (1988): ch. 2.
- <sup>3</sup> "For if existence, actuality, were itself a res, in Kantian terms a real predicate, then both things, essence and existence, would have a being. The question would then arise how the two can be taken together in a unity which itself is." Heidegger (1988), 95.
- <sup>4</sup> Heidegger (1988): 87.
- <sup>5</sup> Heidegger (1988): 101.
- <sup>6</sup> The first strategy uses the ontological difference between beings and beings. See Knasas (1994). The second employs the universality of productive comportment. See Knasas (2021).
- <sup>7</sup> "Yet we signify one thing through that which we call being [*esse*], and another thing through that which we call that which exists [*id quod est*]; just as we signify one thing when we say running [*currere*], and another through that which is called a runner [*currens*]. For running and being [*currere et esse*], are signified in the abstract, just as white; but what is, that is a being and a runner [*ens et currens*], are signified in the concrete, just as a white thing [*album*]. Aquinas, *In de Hebdomdibus*, ch. 2.
- <sup>8</sup> For a discussion of some Thomists who take *esse* as facticity, see Knasas (2019): 54–63.
- <sup>9</sup> "The Thomistic advocates of this doctrine surmise in the opposed interpretations the presence of a thesis that, because it denies that the difference is a real one, must at the same time deny the possibility of creation and thus the basic principle of this whole metaphysics." Heidegger (1988), 93.
- <sup>10</sup> Knasas (2003): 182–96; Knasas (2019): 46–54.
- <sup>11</sup> On the philosophical reduction from real accidents to substance, see Knasas (2003): 9–14.
- <sup>12</sup> "In fact one may claim that it is exactly this double existence of the same thing, say the Parthenon or a man or a horse, that enables metaphysics after Avicenna to get off the ground. The one thing is found to exist in two different ways. This shows that the thing itself is not the same as either existence thereby setting up the basic problem of metaphysics, namely being qua being in contradistinction to the things that have being." Joseph Owens (1967): 57. Realism can be reiterated using hylomorphic notions: "The form into which the percipient or knower is brought by the efficient causality is the same individual form that actuates the child in real life. It is not just specifically the same, as is human form in child and parents. It is individually the same form actuating both child and percipient in two different ways of existing. It makes the percipient be the individual that exists in reality." Owens (1992): 41–2. The key to explaining sense realism is formal reception of form: "From this viewpoint there is reception of form into form instead of form into matter. The result is that the one and the same form makes the sensible particular thing exist both in the real world and in the percipient." Owens (1992): 42–3.
- <sup>13</sup> Hence, Aquinas would not unqualifiedly agree with Aristotle, cited by Heidegger (1988): 97, that "man" and "existent man" mean the same thing.