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ONTOLOGY: UNREAL REALITY

While words such as “essence,” “substance,” and “form” belong to the language of philosophy as technical terms, and they are understood most often in accordance with some particular philosophical system where one or another meaning is attached to them, the word “thing” (*res*) and “reality” (*realitas*), which is derived from “thing,” are words that belong primarily to ordinary language, and it seems perfectly obvious how they should be understood. This is because when we refer to a thing, and above all, when we refer to reality (perhaps even to a greater degree than in the case of the word “being,” which is a technical term) we have in mind that which really exists. We contrast reality to what which does not really exist because it is found only in our thoughts or imaginings, or something that does not exist at all. At the level of common-sense knowledge, the difference between reality and thinking about reality is very strongly marked, and it is even treated as an impassible chasm. This is because reality exists, whereas the act of thinking about something is merely thinking when something is not real and cannot be found on the side of reality. Every normal man sees the chasm between the act of eating an apple and the act of thinking about an apple, because an apple that is only in our thought cannot be eaten; the mental apple does not exist, that is, it does not exist as a real apple, which amounts to the same thing. The question whether something is in the waking state or only the product of a dream is a dramatic question because it expresses the tension of a thought that at some moment loses its ground and is unable to distinguish between intentional states and real states.

This paper was originally published in Polish as a chapter of my book: *Metafizyka czy ontologia?* (*Metaphysics or Ontology?*) (Lublin: PTTA, 2011), 331–343.

Meanwhile it turns out that in the framework of ontology the meaning of the terms mentioned above (both “thing” and “reality”) were so greatly modified that reality ceased to be real from the point of view of common sense. This question was not well known among philosophers, and especially among metaphysicians. This means that what is not real for a normally thinking man who is not a philosopher is real for an ontologist.

In ontology, thought and its content become legitimate reality, and they are even treated as more real than reality, or even as the only reality. Then the question of reality loses its common-sense meaning in ontology, since in response it indicates something that cannot be regarded as reality in common-sense knowledge, e.g., the content of a concept as a content in itself. This is because in common-sense knowledge when we ask about an apple we are not interested in information about the content of a concept, which for ontology is already real, but we want to know about a true apple.

How did it happen that the concept of reality was subjected to such a perverse intellectual operation? Behind this situation are certain conclusions that appeared in medieval philosophy.

A “thing” (*res*) in medieval philosophy was a technical term and it meant one of the “transcendental properties” of being. Plato had spoken of truth, the good, the beautiful, and the one in a dimension that encompassed all reality, and he had in mind the highest ideas in which lower ideas and the material world participated, while Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* spoke of what belongs to being as being.¹ In that passage Aristotle was concerned primarily with unity, since being and one are the same.² In the subtext of such a formulation his intention was to refute the Platonic theory of ideas, since there is no unity as an idea, but unity is being apprehended from a certain point of view. However, Aristotle did not develop his theory of the properties of being any further. The theory was developed in the middle ages. Philosophers were interested in the properties of being that exceeded the scope of the categories, and so they began to call them the “transcendentals” (*transcendere*—to go beyond). The transcendental properties could be predicated of an entire being, or of an aspect of a being that did not comprehend the entire being, but at least transcended the categories.³

Avicenna introduced “thing” to metaphysics. Thomas Aquinas and Suarez later looked to Avicenna. All the more it is worth examining what

¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1003 a 20–21.

² Id., 1004 a 23–25.

³ Chancellor Philip was the author the first treatise on the transcendentals (twelfth century).

Avicenna understood by “thing” and in what context he discussed it in metaphysics. The term “thing” appears in the first treatise of the *Book of First Philosophy* in the chapter “On the Meaning of Thing and Being and on Their First Divisions, which should Be Mentioned in Order to Understand Them” (*Capitulum de assignatione rei et entis et de eorum primis divisionibus ad hoc ut exciteris ad intelligentiam eorum*).⁴

Avicenna began his exposition with the assertion that a thing, a being, and necessity find their original reflection in the soul. This means that they do not come from other concepts.⁵ This first sentence presents certain points that merit our attention. Here we are dealing with the order of knowledge, not the order of being, because Avicenna is speaking about the way being is known. The next point is that “thing” is mentioned before “being.” Finally, the three transcendentals differ in the way they pertain to being, because insofar as being as a whole is being, being as a whole is not necessary. At this stage Avicenna is concerned with connecting certain properties of being with our knowledge of being, where the most important thing in the process of knowledge is to establish what is first and what does not presuppose the possession of any prior concepts.

In the second passage, Avicenna again mentions “thing” and “being” (in that order), but the third term that appears is not “necessity” but “one.”⁶ Here also the order of knowledge comes into play. The triad mentioned is something that we can most quickly understand in itself. However, here Avicenna says that they are common to everything (*communia sunt omnibus rebus*). He could not have said this earlier since necessity is not common to everything, since some beings are possible and not necessary.

We see that Avicenna was more committed to showing the accidental properties of being as being with respect to their role in knowledge more than he was interesting in providing a complete list of those properties. Yet, what is a “thing?”

⁴ Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina. I–IV*, I, 5, 31; Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de existence d'après Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna)* (Paris 1937), 3–4.

⁵ “Dicemus igitur quod res et ens et necesse talia sunt quod statim imprimuntur in anima prima impressione, quae non acquiritur ex alii notioribus se . . .” (Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina. I–IV*, I, 5, A29, 1–4, éd. crit. de la trad. latine médiévale par S. van Riet (Louvain 1977)).

⁶ “Quae autem promptiora sunt ad imaginandum per seipsa, sunt ea quae communia sunt omnibus rebus, sicut res et ens et unum, et cetera” (id., A 30, 25–28).

Avicenna explains that a thing is that about which one can truly state something.⁷ Right away he notes that in this statement expressions such as “one can something,” or “truly state” are not as well known as “thing.”⁸ This would show that a thing is something cognitively prior and original. This is because each of those expressions indicate a thing, or something, either this or that.⁹ Those expressions are simply different words that mean “thing.”¹⁰

Avicenna observed that the concept of being and the concept of thing have different meanings. On the one hand, “being” (*ens*) and “something” (*aliquid*) are different names that have the same meaning. On the other hand, “thing” (*res*) and “whatever” are different names that also have the same meaning, are different from both the preceding names (“being” and “something”). “Thing” and “whatever” in all languages describe the certainty that something is precisely what it is, e.g., a triangle is a triangle, whiteness is whiteness.¹¹ “Something” is that which we treat as most proper to being. What is it? It is “something” that gives us certainty, and the essence is this “something.”¹² Hence when we want to affirm the identity of something, it is more fitting to say that certainty is a thing, and by “thing” we understand “being,” than to say that the certainty of “something” is the certainty that something is.¹³ Avicenna in his examples explains what his point is: one thing is our certainty concerning “*a*” and our certainty concerning “*b*” is another thing. If something were not what it is, it would not be a thing.¹⁴

When Avicenna described being with the help of “thing,” his intention was to emphasize the being’s identity, that this being is this being.

⁷ “[R]es est id de quo potest aliquid vere enuntiarī . . .” (id., 37).

⁸ “[C]erte potest aliquid minus notum est quam *res*, et vere enuntiarī minus notum est quam *res*” (id., 38–40).

⁹ “Igitur quomodo potest hoc esse declaratio? Non enim potest cognosci quid sit potest aliquid vel vere enuntiarī, nisi in agendo de unoquoque eorum dicatur quod est *res* vel aliquid val quid vel illud . . .” (id., 39–44).

¹⁰ “[H]aec omnia multivoca sunt nomini rei” (id., 42); “[I]d et illud et *res* eiusdem sensus sunt” (id., A 30, 47).

¹¹ “Sed *res* et quicquid aequipollet ei, significat etiam aliquid aliud in omnibus linguis; unaquaeque enim *res* habet certitudinem qua est id quod est, sicut triangulus habet certitudinem qua est triangulus, et albedo habet certitudinem qua est albedo” (id., A 31, 54–57).

¹² “[U]naquaeque *res* habet certitudinem propriam quae est eius quidditas” (id., 63–64).

¹³ “Quod igitur utilius est dicere, hoc est scilicet ut dicas quod certitudo est *res*, sed hic *res* intelligitur *ens*, sicut si diceres quod certitudo huius est certitudo quae est” (id., 71–73).

¹⁴ Id., A 32, 73–84.

Since the word “being” has many meanings, “thing” reveals in being the identity of the being, or what Avicenna called the certainty (*certitudo*) that this being is this being.

In his treatise *Summa de bono*, which was important for the theory of the transcendentals, Philip the Chancellor did not mention “thing,” and the reason was that the treatise was written from neo-Platonic positions. The term “thing” did appear in the work of Albert the Great. Albert treated the transcendentals not merely as modes of our knowledge of being (*prima intentiones*), but also as modes of the being of being (*modi essendi entis*).¹⁵

Duns Scotus held a completely different conception of the transcendentals. First of all, being understood as *natura commune* does not possess any property, because it is completely undetermined.¹⁶ However, the *passiones entis*, that is, the properties of a being, are virtually contained in a being. Between them and a being there is no mental difference, but there is a formal difference that results from the nature of things. For example, the truth and the good are aspects that are really different from being. They are not being, but are qualifications of being.¹⁷ They are divided into absolute (*unicarum*), and these include unity, good, and truth, and disjunctive (*disiunctarum*), and there we find pairs such as independent–dependent, absolute–relative, infinite–finite, prior–posterior, simple–composite, one–many, cause–effect, the determining end and that which strives for the end, that which is an efficient cause and that which is caused by an efficient cause, higher–lower, substance–accident, act–potency, similar–different, equal–unequal.¹⁸ We see that “thing” is not mentioned among the first ones or the second ones. Did Scotus then not consider at all “thing” as a transcendental, whether in an absolute sense, or as the member of a pair in an opposition? Not completely. We find “thing” elsewhere in an analysis of intellectual knowledge.

Scotus makes a distinction between two acts of intellectual knowledge. The first act apprehends its object without investigating whether the

¹⁵ A. Maryniarczyk, “Transcendentalia” (“Transcendentals”), in *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii* (*Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*), vol. 9 (Lublin 2008), 534.

¹⁶ L. Iammarrone, *Giovanni Duns Scoto metafisico e teologo. Le tematiche fondamentali della sua filosofia e teologia* (Roma 1999), 109.

¹⁷ *Id.*, 111–112.

¹⁸ Jan Duns Szkot (John Duns Scotus), *Traktat o pierwszej zasadzie* (*Treatise on the first principle*), trans. into Polish, introduction and commentary by T. Włodarczyk (Warszawa 1988), 107, footnote 8.

object really exists or whether it is really present. One example would be the universals that we apprehend as essences of things; we know the universals whether or not they are present.¹⁹ In the second type of knowledge, the object is apprehended independently of its existence apart from the knowing subject and independently of real presence. This is abstract knowledge. The second type of knowledge is intuitive, and without mediation it reaches the existing concrete thing, the *haecceitas*, which is the ultimate reality of being (*ultima realitas entis*).²⁰

Despite such a clear description of the status of the existing concrete thing as the most important reality, “thing” and “reality,” according to Scotus, can also refer to that which exists only in the intellect. This happens when we refer to the concept of being, which is not apprehended from the physical viewpoint, but from the logical or metaphysical viewpoint. It is then non-contradiction, which exists only in the intellect. However, Scotus also calls it “reality” (*realitas*).²¹ Scotus adds precision and says that this reality is indefinite because it does not contain any internal determination (*modus intrinsecus*); it is an imperfect thing (*res imperfecta*), but nevertheless it is a reality.²²

This presentation of the matter, also at the level of the concept of being, a concept that is supposed to include all reality, opens the way for the concept as such of being, and not simply being as such, to be reality. This concept as being-concept is found at the antipodes of reality, because after all it is not reality but a thought about reality, yet in spite of everything it is regarded as reality.

In that case, if the concept of being is reality, then what stands in the way for other concept with a narrow range of predication to become such a reality? Something that we apprehended cognitively becomes a thing (*res*), but with regard to whether a really existing thing does or does not correspond to that thing. The etymological interpretation of the word “*res*”

¹⁹ “Unus indifferenter potest esse respectu objecti existentis et non existentis, et indifferenter etiam respectu objecti non realiter praesentis, sicut realiter praesentis; istum actum frequenter experimur in nobis, quia universalia, sive quidditates rerum intelligimus, sive habeant ex natura rei esse extra in aliquo supposito, sive non, et ita de praesentia et absentia” (Ioannis Duns Scotus, *Opera omnia*, vol. 12: *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, VI, 1, 18 (Lugduni 1639); Jean-F. Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique* (Paris 1990), 157.

²⁰ Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 160.

²¹ T. Barth remarks on this (E. Zieliński, *Jednoznaczność transcendentálna w metafizyce Jana Dunsza Szkota* (*Transcendental univocity in the metaphysics of John Duns Scotus*) (Lublin 1988), 43).

²² L. Honnefelder emphasizes this aspect (id., 67).

presented by Henry of Ghent tended to such an approach (that interpretation is completely different from the Polish etymology of the word “thing” (*rzecz*), and therefore it is difficult to accept that line of reasoning).

Henry of Ghent connected “*res*” with “*reor*,” which means “to think” or “to believe.”²³ In that case, that which exists in itself and independently of our knowledge is not reality, but that about which we think is reality. This etymological interpretation allowed the philosophical concept of reality to be separated from true reality.

Scotus also went by the same road, and this is even more explicit in his system; because of the continuing influence of that notion, the belief could persist that a thing is something that does not have to exist, and so reality is not something that really exists. Concepts, which as concepts possess their own reality and their own existence, are such a reality.

A position of that sort was liable to a nominalistic interpretation. William Ockham said that the science concerning reality is not the science concerning what we know directly, but about what occurs as a representation of things.²⁴ In that case, concepts and representations alone become the reality known by science. Reality becomes identified with what is known without regard to any further relation to the reality that is found beyond the concept and beyond the representation.

In this way the ground was prepared for the future ontology, and Francis Suarez was the figure who gave the finishing touch to this conception of reality and things. Suarez also mentioned “thing” among the six transcendentals (*ens, res, aliquid, unum, verum, bonum*).²⁵ He defined “thing” as that which indicates the essence of a thing, as that essence is apprehended in the formal aspect. That essence is the real essence of a being.²⁶ However, precisely because a thing refers to an essence, some thought that “thing is more an essential predicate than a counterpart of being itself.”²⁷ When Suarez discussed “thing” he looked to Thomas Aqu-

²³ Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 158; O. Boulnois, *Être et représentation. Une généalogie de la métaphysique moderne à l'époque de Duns Scot (XIIIe–XIVe siècle)* (Paris 1999), 434–452.

²⁴ “Dico quod scientia realis non est semper de rebus tamquam de illis quae immediate sciuntur, sed de aliis pro rebus supponentibus” (Guilhelmi de Ockham, *Super quattuor libros sententiarum subtilissimae quaestiones aerumdemque decisiones* (Lyons 1495), I, 2, 4, M); Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, 175.

²⁵ Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, III, 2, 1.

²⁶ “[R]es solum dicit de formali rei quidditate, et ratam seu realem essentiam entis . . .” (id.).

²⁷ “[U]nde multi censent magis essentielle praedicatum esse rem quam ipsum ens” (id.).

nas, who in his opinion followed Avicenna and separated “thing” from actual existence so as to denote only essence with the help of “thing.” Meanwhile “being,” a name derived from “*esse*,” denotes an actually existing being. Hence Thomas supposedly treated “thing” not as a transcendental property, but as an essential predicate because it does not indicate being but indicates essence.²⁸

Suarez saw that the meaning of the transcendental “thing” was weakened because it lacked a connection with existence, and because consequently it became a predicate and not a property of being, since “thing” refers to essence, not to the entire being, while the transcendentals are supposed to encompass the entire being. However, as he continued his discussion of the various views, Suarez weakened the understanding of being as he looked to another position, the position that being is not only that which actually exists, but also includes what is capable of existence. This was in the context of his analysis of “thing.” Then the distinction between “being” and “thing” would mean that being is the first property of a thing. However, Suarez regarded this as unproven because in the first concept of real essence is contained the ability to exist, and here a distinction was made between real essence and unreal or thought-of essence. In turn, Suarez thought that Averroes had asserted that “thing” denotes not only a real thing, but also a thing that is thought of.²⁹

As Suarez presented his own position, he emphasized that “thing” does not formally contain a negation because it is found in the truth (when we say that a true being is one that is not merely thought of), or it is found in unity (*unum*), or again in separateness (*aliquid*). In the last case, the point is that one being is separate from another, and thereby it is also separate from being that is merely thought of.³⁰ If a thing contains something

²⁸ “Quod si velimus haec duo in eo rigore distinguere quo D. Thomas supra ex Avicenna illa distinxit, quod res praescindat ab existentia actuali et meram quidditatem significet, ens autem sumptum sit ab esse et solum dicat ens actualiter existens, sic constat rem non significare passionem entis, sed esse praedicatum maxime quidditativum” (id., 4).

²⁹ “Si autem, iuxta opinionem quamdam supra tractatam, ens non solum ut dicit actu existens, sed etiam ut dicit aptum ad existendum, distingueretur a re, prout absolute dicit habens quidditatem realem, sic ens esset prima passio rei; sed hoc supra improbatum est, quia in prima ratione quidditatis realis intrat aptitudo ad existendum, et in hoc primo distinguitur quidditas realis a non reali seu ficta. In his ergo duobus nulla passio entis continetur. Scio Averr., in sua paraphrasi, c. de Re, dicere *rem* significare non solum rem veram, sed fictam; sed hoc commune est enti, et solum est secundum aequivocam significationem” (id.).

³⁰ Id., 13.

positive, then that is precisely a relation or reference to essence, while a being contains a reference to existence.³¹

Suarez rejected Averroes' position. Averroes said that a thing could refer to a thing that was thought of. Suarez emphasized that he was concerned with a real essence. However, what does "real" mean? For Suarez, a real essence is not only an essence that actually exists, but one that does not reject existence, and one that can exist.³² At that moment, "thing" as a transcendental refers to essence, and an essence does not need actually to exist because it is enough if it is possible. It is the "thing" understood in just this way that was associated with essence, and this paved the way to essentialism. In essentialism, reality is something that does not actually exist, and so it is only possible reality. That is to say, something is real because it is possible. In this way, speculations on the transcendental "thing" bring the concept of thing and the concept of reality to the antipodes of realistic thought; there, reality is not only something that is possible, but even something that can be set in opposition to what is real. When someone is drowning, possible help is an absence of help; possible help is not help, and it ends in a drowning.

Since Suarez's position would be treated as authoritative for scholasticism as a whole, it is not surprising that his position would appear in the first ontologies as crucial for understanding being. Thus Clauberg said that what philosophers call a being is described in ordinary language as a thing or as something.³³ When Clauberg then explained what a thing is, he said that a thing is a substance to which accidents are opposed. However, already in *Logic*, a thing, albeit in a strict sense, is a substance that does not exist *per se*, but also in a broad sense it is something that is simply something (*aliquid*), that is, it is not nothing.³⁴ Thus a thing is some-

³¹ "Et ita distinguuntur res et ens, quia hoc ab esse, illud a quidditate reali sumptum est" (id., 10).

³² Suarez's free connection of the real with the possible also concerns the important question of the object of metaphysics. This is because when Suarez mentions six different positions, he evidently supports being as real being ("[E]ns in quantum ens reale . . ."—id., I, 1, 1, 26; id., II, 1, 1), but in the end he also includes mental beings (*entia rationis*) and the possible under real being (J. J. E. Gracia, "Suárez," in *Concepciones de la metafísica*, ed. J. J. E. Gracia (Madrid 1998), 106–110).

³³ "Quod a vulgo res et aliquid . . . a philosophicis etiam ens appellatur" (Clauberg, *Ontosophia*, 6; quoted after: Brosch, P. Brosch, *Die Ontologie des Johannes Clauberg* (Greifswald 1926), 20–21).

³⁴ "Res enim seu Ens sumitur vel generaliter et latè pro omni eo, quod est aliquid, non nihil; vel propriè et strictè pro eo, quod per se existit, et aliter vocatur *Substantia*, ein selbständig

thing that is not nothing. The thing can be presented on a par with an object, and an object in turn is that of which one can think (*quod cogitari potest*).³⁵ To summarize, “thing” and thereby “reality” are the sphere of what can be thought of. The possibility of being thought of is sufficient for it to be reality.

The definition of “thing” that Wolff presented was located in the current discussed, but with the lack of precision typical of the author. Wolff wrote that “everything that is or can be understood bears the name of thing, which is something; therefore a thing is defined as that which is something. Therefore in the scholastics, reality and essence are synonyms.”³⁶ Wolff identified a thing with separateness (*aliquid*), while “thing” and “separateness” formally express different things. The thing is shifted from the sphere of being to the sphere of knowledge, and finally it is identified with essence, and this is the case not only with a thing but also with all reality. To summarize, reality consists of all essences that can be thought of.

When at the beginning of the twentieth century, Edmund Husserl called for a return to things themselves (*zurück zu den Sachen selbst*), not only did he not have in mind the real world of things, but on contrary they were things already after the procedure of taking away reality, that is, after *epoché*; they were things that did not really exist, as a condition for the philosophical investigation of them.³⁷ Husserl went a step further than did ontology. When ontology opened up itself to what is possible, at least it did not eliminate what is real. Here, however, the elimination of what is real (*epoché*), was the condition for discovering things themselves. If we translate this position into the language of common sense, we may say that only that which is not real is a thing in the phenomenological sense.

Ding . . .” (J. Clauberg, *Logica contracta*, par. 14, in his *Opera omnia philosophica*, cura J. T. Schalbruchii, ps II (Amstelodami 1691), 913).

³⁵ Brosch, *Die Ontologie des Johannes Clauberg*, 21.

³⁶ “Quicquid est vel esse posse concipitur, dicitur *Res*, quatenus est *aliquid*: ut adeo *Res* definiri possit per id, quod est *aliquid*. Unde et *realitas* et *quidditas* apud scholasticos synonyma sunt” (C. Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia*, 3. Nachdr. (Hildesheim 2001), I, 3, 2, par. 243).

³⁷ E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy*, transl. F. Kersten (The Hague 1983), I, 67.

Let us return, then, to Thomas Aquinas and how he explained the meaning of the transcendental “thing.”³⁸ After some preliminary explanations to show what role the transcendentals play in reference to a known being, Thomas emphasized first that everything is contained in being, and so the transcendentals cannot add anything because anything they could add would still be being. However, in the case of the transcendentals the point is something else. The point is to express clearly what is not directly set forth in the concept of being.³⁹

The clear expression is made in two ways, in a particular way, and in a general way. The particular way of expression consists in recognizing the various degrees of being and the various modes or ways of being, such as in the case of substance and the other categories. The general way of expression retains its own generality, and that generality comprehends being as a whole. In addition, the act of expression can be performed in two ways, positively or negatively. When we are speaking of being as such and of a thing, being as taken in itself (*ens in se*) is viewed positively.

In every being, says Thomas, the essence is apprehended. The transcendental thing is supposed to render the meaning of being as that which possesses an essence. Thomas looks to Avicenna and explains that the word “being” (*ens*) comes from the act of existence (*sumitur ab actu essendi*), while the word “thing” (*res*) expresses something or the essence of a thing (*nomen rei exprimit quidditatem vel essentiam rei*).⁴⁰ The point is that in the concept of being we can put the emphasis either on existence or on essence. When the accent is on existence, then the transcendental being appears, and when the accent falls on essence, then we have the thing. The Latin terms are helpful because in their etymology they indicate these two different aspects. We see how up to his time the explanation is situated in a framework that we already know, and as it continues, Suarez’s exposition does justice to Thomas’ position.

In this case, let us try to delve more deeply into the etymology of the word “thing” (*res*) that Thomas presents. Here matters become complicated, because in another work Thomas does not present one etymology,

³⁸ S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae*, I, 39, 3, 3; J. O’Callaghan, “Concepts, Beings, and Things in Contemporary Philosophy and Thomas Aquinas,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 53:1 (1999): 84–94.

³⁹ “[S]ed secundum hoc aliqua dicuntur addere super ens, in quantum exprimunt modum ipsius entis qui nomine entis non exprimitur” (S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, cura et studio Fratrum praedicatorum, vol. 1 (Romae 1970), 1, 1, resp.).

⁴⁰ Id.

but two different ones. The first etymology agrees with what Suarez calls to attention, but the second etymology does not. In one case, a “thing” is something that refers to each and every being, including mental being (*ens rationis*). This happens when the word “thing” is derived from “*reor, reris*,” that is, to have an opinion. “*Res*” is simply something about which we have some opinion, and so it is something that does not have to be real, but it is enough for us to think about it. In the second case, the etymology is more restrictive. “*Reatus, rata*,” or “guilty” and “responsible” comes into play here. In this case, “*res*” pertains only to a real being, not to a being of which one thinks, a being that is non-contradictory, as the successors of Avicenna and Scotus thought. Possibility is not enough to determine any real responsibility. In the case of legal responsibility, it must be determined whether the fault is probable or factual, that is, real, and the verdict depends on this.⁴¹ This is because a possible fault, or a fault that can be thought of, is not in any case a foundation for the court to reach a verdict. A fault must be actual and real.

As we see, etymology allows us to translate the word “*res*” in two ways, either as merely what we think, or as something that is in the real world independently of our opinion.⁴² The problem with this is that neither Henry of Ghent nor Suarez considered this second interpretation, and so they found a facilitated transition from real being to possible being, so that possible being would acquire the status of real being.

Ultimately, however, while etymology can lead us to certain meanings, it does not resolve any questions. This is because “what a thing is” as a philosophical question already depends on the philosophical context in

⁴¹ S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis*, I, 25, 4, resp.

⁴² Polish etymology connects the word “rzecz” (thing) with the verb “rzec” (to say), although this connection is no longer perceptible. Thus, the Polish noun would be closer to the Latin *reor, reri*, that is, an opinion, or what is stated (Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego (Etymological dictionary of the Polish language)* (Warszawa 2000), 475). M. S. B. Linde (*Słownik języka polskiego (Dictionary of the Polish language)*, vol. 5 (Warsaw 1995), 186–189) indicates that in the Slavic languages a “rzecz” is a language, a speech, a discourse, an accusation, the judicial system, etc. The German noun *Ding* means a gathering (*Volksversammlung*) or a session of a court (*Gerichtsversammlung*) (H. Köbler, “Ding,” in his *Deutsches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1995), 85, online: <http://www.koeblergerhard.de/der/DERD.pdf>, accessed on 13.05.2011). In turn, in the English language, the word “thing” can be predicated of fictions such as a monster or a golden mountain, while we are aware that they are not real things (J. O’Callaghan, *Concepts Beings, and Things in Contemporary Philosophy and Thomas Aquinas*, 90).

which not only being as being, but also the other transcendentals, are described. When Thomas included “thing” in the series of the transcendentals, he had in view a cognitive accent on essence, but on essence as a non-independent element of being. Here we find the main difference between Thomas and Avicenna, Duns, Scotus, and Suarez. Thomas was not concerned that an essence by the fact that it is a thing could become a being, but that a real being is composed of essence and existence, which are really different elements but are also subordinated to each other; because they are different elements, then without isolating them from the concrete being that those elements constitute, we can put the emphasis in knowledge on one or the other element, and this is the case also in the framework of the formation of the “transcendentals.”⁴³

However, as soon as the composition of being from essence and existence is treated as purely mental (in Scotism) or real, but in a “reified” way (for Giles of Rome, essence and existence were independent elements), then essence as essence becomes a thing, and then simply becomes a being, or what is called reality. Both versions in how the relation between essence and existence is understood, in which the real difference disappears or in which the road leads to “reification,” influence the treatment of essence as independent, where essence as thing fills the field of reality. However, since essence is only possibility, the reality also is merely possible. However, if it is called reality, then even though it is possible, it remains reality, while really existing reality is pushed to the background or it becomes completely superfluous.

At that moment we become aware of how the realistic field of philosophical terminology has been curtailed. There are no terms to emphasize the difference between reality and possibility. Being does not differ from the concept of being, reality does not have to be real, and a thing does not need to exist really, to be called being and reality. This is all because the various philosophical distinctions and theories allow realistic terminology to be washed clean of its realism. Therefore it is so important to trace the philosophical context along with its assumptions that allow us to recognize the reasons why the new “realism” lost support in reality, or why it is not really realism. The new realism determines the field of enquiries for ontology; there is still room for reality in ontology, but

⁴³ M. A. Krapiec, *Metaphysics. An Outline of the History of Being* (New Haven 1991), 109–118; O. Blanchette, “Suárez and the Latent Essentialism of Heidegger’s Fundamental Ontology,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 53:1 (1999): 8.

only as an instance of possibility (up to Wolff), and later possibility becomes the only reality, in which the fact that reality is possibility, and not that reality is real being, will be most important. Then in a peculiar way ontology becomes divorced from metaphysics. The clearest sign of this tendency will be that traditional metaphysical terminology disappears, and the object takes the place of being and reality. This will be, as it were, a new incarnation of the ontology that separated knowledge from real being.

Each stage in the history of philosophy where there is a departure from knowledge of reality, whether in the name of the concept of being, of essence, or of the object, is celebrated as another step forward and as proof of the development of philosophy. Yet it is truly an expression of how philosophy has lost its main task that the ancient creators, the Greek thinkers, set for philosophy in the framework of the civilization they created. Thus philosophy does not develop, but the name "philosophy" is all that is left, just as the term "reality" is left while reality is lost, and the term does not mean "reality" at all.

ONTOLOGY: UNREAL REALITY

SUMMARY

The article examines the difference between ontology and metaphysics. It shows that as soon as the composition of being from essence and existence is treated as purely mental or in a "reified" way (where essence and existence are independent elements), then essence as essence becomes a thing, and then simply becomes a being, or what is called reality. Both versions in which the real difference disappears or in which the road leads to "reification," influence the treatment of essence as independent, where essence as thing fills the field of reality. However, if essence was only possibility, then (1) the reality also would be merely possible, (2) the realistic field of philosophical terminology would get curtailed, and (3) there would be no terms to maintain the difference between reality and possibility, between metaphysics and ontology.

KEYWORDS: metaphysics, ontology, reality, possibility, thing, essence, existence, Aristotle, Avicenna, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Henry of Ghent, Francis Suarez, Clauberg, Edmund Husserl.