

The distinction of substance and accident and the analogy of being

Aristotle's Ontological Square

The medieval distinction between substance and accident goes back to Aristotle's remarks in his *Categories*, describing what is often referred to as his *ontological square*.¹ The basis of the four-fold distinction is provided in terms of two criteria, yielding what is meant to be an exhaustive and mutually exclusive division of the realm of all existents.

Of those that exist, some are said of a subject, but are in no subject: as *man* is said of some subject, namely of some man, but is in no subject. Others, however, are in a subject, but are said of no subject. And I say *that* to be in a subject which, while it is in something not as a part, cannot exist apart from the thing in which it is. For example, some particular literacy is in a subject, namely in the soul, but is not said of any subject, and this whiteness is in a body as in its subject, for any color is in a body. Others both are said of and are in a subject. For example, *knowledge* is in the soul, and is said of a subject, say, of literacy. Still others neither are in a subject, nor are said of a subject, for example, some particular man, or some particular horse: for none of these is either in or is said of a subject. In general, individuals, and what are numerically one are said of no subject, but nothing prevents them from being in a subject, for some particular literacy is in a subject.

Following Boethius's translation and interpretation of this passage, the resulting division was usually taken to provide the division of all entities into particular and universal substances, and particular and universal accidents:

Particular substance this man	Particular accident this whiteness
Universal substance man	Universal accident Whiteness

This is perhaps the most fundamental division of Aristotelian ontology. Accordingly, slight differences in its interpretation led to vastly different solutions to several problems it generated, both in metaphysics and in theology.² The following discussion provides a sampling of these problems, relating them to these interpretational differences, and to the resulting differences in their proposed solutions.

¹ Angelelli, I: "The ontological square", in Burkhardt, H., and Smith, B.: *Handbook of Metaphysics and Ontology*, 2 vols., Philosophia Verlag, Munich 1991.

² Cf. "parvus error in principio magnus est in fine" – Aquinas, *De Ente*, c. 1, Aristotle, *De Caelo*, lb. 1, c. 5, A271; *Commentary of St. Thomas*, lc. 9.

Some problems with the Ontological Square

The problems generated by the Aristotelian Ontological Square can roughly be grouped into *extensional* on the one hand, and *intensional*, on the other. The *extensional* problems concern the *sufficiency* and *necessity* of the division of entities provided by the Square. The *intensional* problems are related to the interpretation of the extent and criteria of the fourfold division.

The problem of the *sufficiency* of the division is whether these divisions really comprehend *all* entities, or perhaps there are others that cannot be placed in any of the four domains of the Square. The problem of the *necessity* of the division is whether it contains perhaps more than what is needed for classifying all entities, that is to say, whether it contains some non-entities.

The first, naturally emerging Aristotelian suspicion concerning the Square should be that about its *necessity*. After all, the division is supposed to contain universals, whereas Aristotle denies the existence of universal entities. If, therefore, the Square contains universals, and universals are not entities, then it seems that the Square has to contain some non-entities, i.e., it contains *more* than is *necessary* for the classification of all entities, for all entities are either particular substances or particular accidents, but there are no universal substances or accidents among real existents.

The problem of *sufficiency*, however, is generated by considerations concerning entities that somehow would not seem to fit into Aristotle's four-fold division. A case in point is provided by the *significata of propositions*, described most poignantly by the anonymous author of the 12th-century tract *Ars Burana* as follows:

Note that whether we speak about the *dictum* of a proposition or of the *significatum* of a proposition or of an *enuntiabile*, it is the same. For an *enuntiabile* is what is signified by a proposition. For example: 'A man is an animal', this proposition is true, because what it signifies is true; and that true thing that you in this way understand is the *enuntiabile*, whatever it is. Similarly, when I say: 'Socrates is an ass', this proposition is false, because what it signifies is false, and the false thing that you conceive in this way is the *enuntiabile*. And this cannot be seen, nor heard or sensed, but it is only perceivable by the intellect. If you ask in which category of things it belongs, whether it is a substance or an accident, of the *enuntiabile* we have to say that it is neither a substance nor an accident nor does it belong to any of the categories. For it has its own peculiar type of existence. And it is said to be extrapredicamental, not because it does not belong to any category, but because it does not belong to any of the categories distinguished by Aristotle. Therefore it belongs to some category that can be called the category of *enuntiabilia*. And in this category the most general item will be that co-signified by the term 'enuntiabile'. And this can be divided further as follows. Some *enuntiabilia* are of the present, some are of the past and some are of the future. Furthermore, some *enuntiabilia* are true and some are false. And further: of the true ones some are necessary and some are not necessary, and of the false ones some are possible and some are impossible. This is how it is to be understood what an *enuntiabile* is.³

Earlier on, Abelard's *dicta* were also assigned by him a peculiar place, apparently outside the Aristotelian Square. And later authors, continuing in the tradition of assigning propositions their *significata* as distinct from the *significata* or *supposita* of their categorematic terms, would also place them outside the divisions of the Square: thus *enuntiabilia* as conceived by 13th century authors, or the *real propositions* of Walter Burley, or the *complexe significabilia* of Adam

³ De Rijk, L. M. (ed.), *Logica Modernorum*, Vol. II, Part II, Van Gorcum: Assen, 1967, pp. 357-359.

Wodeham or Gregory of Rimini, not being identifiable with either substances or accidents, were placed in their own, separate category.

The problem with all these additions is that since Aristotle's division was provided in terms of contradictory criteria (*being-in/predicated-of vs. not-being-in/not-predicated-of a subject*) it was supposed to be an exhaustive and mutually exclusive division of *everything there is*.

This way of putting the problem, however, directly leads us to the *intensional* problems of the *Square*. Aristotle's opening words in the previously quoted passage indicates that his division is supposed to cover *all existents*. However, depending on the interpretation of what we take to be existent and in what sense, different items will be taken to fall within the realm of existents to be divided by the *Square*.

Taking his cue from Boethius' remarks concerning the subject matter of Aristotle's *Categories*, almost a millennium later, Thomas de Vio Cajetan characterized the entities to be considered here in the following way:

So the intention of the present work is to unite all the dispersed things of infinite multitude under the ten genera, and to distinguish them systematically, so that in this way it can regulate the first operation of the intellect.⁴ And since incomplex things do not get united, nor are distinguished with the conditions that they have in the nature of things, but only as so conceived by the intellect, that is, as they stand under the simple apprehension of the intellect, or in other words, as objects of this simple apprehension, and the things so conceived are nothing but the things distinguished by interior verbs, or (which is the same) things conceived by simple concepts, and things like these are none else but things signified by incomplex words, for words are the signs of concepts and concepts are signs of things, even some distinguished men say that the intention of this book is to treat of incomplex words insofar as they signify incomplex things. For it is the same to treat of things *as conceived* by simple apprehension and of words that signify the things so conceived, for whatever is attributed to the one is attributed to the other, analogically, however, because to the thing so conceived and signified it is attributed as to a thing, to the word, on the other hand, as to a sign; for man is posited in the category of substance as a thing placed there, the word 'man', however, as the sign of the thing that is a man. And even if this interpretation of the intention of this book is to be maintained, we must not forget what Avicenna so aptly says in the beginning of his *Logic*, namely that to treat of words does not pertain to logical discussions on purpose, but it is only a sort of necessity that forces this on us, because the things so conceived we cannot express, teach, unite and arrange, but by the help of words. For if we were able to carry out all these things without the use of external words, satisfied alone by the use of internal speech, or if by other signs would these things be achieved, it would be pointless to discuss words. And so if one is to ask whether it is words or things which are principally treated of here,

⁴ Incidentally, notice how Cajetan embeds his discussion of the intention of the *Categories* in the context of the purpose of logic in general, and its correspondence with the operations of reason distinguished by Aristotle in his *De Anima*. For according to Aristotle there are three basic operations of reason, the first of which is simple apprehension, by which our intellect forms its simple concepts of things, the second is composition and division, by which our intellect forms judgments about things and the third operation is reasoning, by which the intellect infers new judgments from others. The first operation is regulated in logic by the doctrine of the *Categories*, the second operation by the doctrine of the *Perihermeneias*, and the third by the remaining books of the Aristotelian *Organon*, of which the first, namely, the *Prior Analytics*, deals with the formal requirements of valid inference, the second, the *Posterior Analytics*, deals with the further, material requirements of demonstration, the third, the *Topics*, deals with rules of probable inference, while the last one, the *Sophistic Refutations* teaches the detection of fallacious reasoning.

we have to say that it is things, though not absolutely, but insofar as they are conceived in an incomplex manner, and, by consequent necessity, insofar as signified by words.⁵

Cajetan's interpretation of the subject matter of the *Categories* provides an elegant solution to both problems with the *Square* posed above. Since the entities to be considered here are not only mind-independent real beings, but any objects of our simple concepts, universals fit into the *Square*, even if there are no mind-independent entities existing in a universal manner, insofar as universals are beings of reason, having some foundation in reality; for the same reason, however, *enuntiabilia* are ruled out, insofar as they are the objects not of simple, but of complex concepts, namely, of complex thoughts formed by the judgment-forming intellect [*intellectus componens et dividens*].

Clearly, Cajetan's solution can accommodate beings of reason, because it presupposes the Thomistic interpretation of what and how is being divided in the Aristotelian Square, namely, the extension of an analogical notion into the extensions of its *analogata*. Aquinas himself provides the best description of this sort of division in contrast to the division of a genus into its species in the following passage:

... there are two ways in which something common can be divided into those that are under it, just as there are two ways in which something is common. For there is the division of a univocal [term] into its species by differences by which the nature of the genus is equally participated in the species, as animal is divided into man and horse, and the like. Another division is that of something common by analogy, which is predicated according to its perfect concept [*ratio*] of one of those that divide it, and of the other[s] imperfectly and with qualification [*secundum quid*], as being is divided into substance and accident, and into being in actuality and in potentiality, and this sort of division is as it were midway between [the division of something] equivocal and [something] univocal.⁶

⁵ Est ergo praesentis operis intentio adunare ad decem genera omnia entia dispersa et infinita, ordinateque distinguere ac singillata suis proprietatibus clarificare, ut sic primam operationem intellectus ... dirigere queat. Et quum res incomplexae non adunantur et distinguantur cum conditionibus quas habent in rerum natura, sed ut sic acceptae per intellectum, id est, ut stant sub simplici apprehensione intellectus, id est, ut obiecta simplici apprehensioni intellectus, et res sic conceptae nihil aliud sunt, quam res distinctae verbis interioribus, vel (quod idem est) quam res conceptae simplicis conceptibus, et res huiusmodi nihil aliud sint, quam res significatae vocibus incomplexis, quia voces sunt signa conceptuum et conceptus rerum, ideo dicitur etiam ab illustribus viris quod intentio huius libri est tractare de vocibus incomplexis ut signa sunt rerum incomplexarum. Idem enim est tractare de rebus ut conceptis simplici apprehensione, et de vocibus ut significant res sic conceptas, quoniam quicquid attribuitur uni, attribuitur et reliquo, servata tamen proportione, quia rei sic conceptae et significatae attribuitur ut rei, voci vero, ut signo: homo enim reponitur in praedicamento substantiae ut res ibi posita, ly vero homo ut signum illius rei quae est homo. Quamvis autem sic intellecta intentio ista sustinenda sit, memores tamen esse oportet eius quod optime ab Avicenna in principio suae Logicae dicitur, scilicet quod considerare de vocibus non est logici negotii ex intentione, sed necessitas ad hoc compulit, quoniam res sic conceptas non nisi verbis exprimimus, docemus, adunamus et ordinamus. Si enim absque verbis exterioribus haec omnia explere possemus, solo sermone interiore contenti, aut aliis signis haec fierent, de vocibus tractandum non esset. Et propterea si quaeratur, de vocibus an de rebus principaliter hic tractetur, respondendum est, quod de rebus, non absolute, sed incomplexis conceptis, et ex consequenti necessitate, significatis. Cajetan, Thomas de Vio: *Scripta Philosophica: Commentaria in Praedicamenta Aristotelis*, ed. M. H. Laurent, Angelicum, 1939, Romae, pp. 4-5.

⁶ "... est duplex modus dividendi commune in ea quae sub ipso sunt, sicut est duplex communitatis modus. Est enim quaedam divisio univoci in species per differentias quibus aequaliter natura generis in speciebus participatur, sicut animal dividitur in hominem et equum, et huiusmodi; alia vero divisio est ejus quod est commune per analogiam, quod quidem secundum perfectam rationem praedicatur de uno dividendum, et de altero imperfecte et secundum quid, sicut ens dividitur in substantiam et accidens, et in ens actu et in ens potentia: et haec divisio est quasi media inter aequivocum et univocum." *In Secundum Sententiarum* 42.1.3, in corp. Cf.: "Unum enim eodem modo dicitur

According to this doctrine, then, the extent of the Aristotelian Square should cover both beings in an absolute sense, without qualification, and beings in some diminished sense, with qualification. This is the basis of Aquinas' understanding of the Aristotelian idea of inherence, that is, an accident's being-in a subject. For an accident *to be* is nothing but for its subject *to be informed* by it: *accidentis esse est inesse*. This is precisely why on Aquinas's conception an accident cannot be said *to be* in the same sense as a substance. When we say that an accident, say, the whiteness of this sheet of paper, exists, the act of being signified by the predicate of this predication is not the *act of being of this sheet of paper* without qualification, but the *act of being of the sheet with respect to its whiteness*; it is not *the being of the sheet* absolutely, rather, it is *the sheet's being white*.

But this interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of being-in, i.e., of the notion of the inherence of an accident in its subject, seems to be in direct conflict with the theological doctrine of the miracle of the Eucharist, which would require at least the logical possibility of the existence of the accidents of transubstantiated bread and wine without inhering in any substance. For if for an accident to exist is for its subject to be informed by it, then it seems to involve a direct contradiction to claim that an accident exists and yet it does not inform any subject. This consideration is very clearly stated by Aquinas in an objection he raises in his *Commentary on the Sentences*:

Whoever separates the definition from what it defines, posits two contradictories to be true at the same time; for the very thing that is a man is a rational mortal animal; and so, if a man is posited to be and not be a rational mortal animal, then a man is posited to be and not to be. But the definition of an accident is that it is something that is in a substance, whence even in the definitions of single accidents one has to place substance. Therefore, since God cannot make contradictories true at the same time, he cannot make an accident exist without a substance either.⁷

The theological requirement of the separability of accidents in continued existence from their subject, therefore, introduced a number of complications into the interpretation of the Aristotelian doctrine of accidental being. The fundamental question is of course whether the Aristotelian doctrine is absolutely incompatible with the theological doctrine of the Eucharist, or whether there is some authentic interpretation of the Aristotelian doctrine that would allow the separate existence of accidents to be at least supernaturally possible, i.e., free from contradiction. The handling of this issue, however, required a careful spelling out of Aristotle's doctrine, along with those of its implications that would possibly prevent it from accommodating the theological doctrine.

aliquid sicut et ens; unde sicut ipsum non ens, non quidem simpliciter, sed secundum quid, idest secundum rationem, ut patet in 4o Metaphysicae, ita etiam negatio est unum secundum quid, scilicet secundum rationem." *In Perihermeneias* 2.2, n. 3.

⁷ "Praeterea, quicumque separat definitionem a definito, ponit duo contradictoria esse simul vera: quia hoc ipsum quod est homo, est animal rationale mortale; et ita si ponatur esse homo et non esse animal rationale mortale, ponitur esse homo et non esse. Sed definitio accidentis est quod inest substantiae; unde etiam in definitione singulorum accidentium oportet quod ponatur substantia. Ergo cum deus non possit facere contradictoria simul esse vera, neque facere poterit quod accidens sit sine substantia." 4SN, d. 12, q. 1, a. 1a, obj. 2

Aristotle vs. the theologians, according to Buridan

A striking exposition of the “incompatibilist position” can be found in the *Questions on Aristotle’s Metaphysics* of the nominalist philosopher John Buridan, who argues that since Aristotle’s position is incompatible with Christian faith, Christians actually have to have a radically different concept of accidental being from that of Aristotle.

Buridan lays out Aristotle’s position in the following way:

I believe that he [Aristotle] was of the opinion that if a man is white, then nothing else contributes to this fact, except the man and [his] whiteness. Furthermore, although the white thing [*album*] is the same thing as the man, nevertheless, Aristotle believed that [the thing’s] being white [*esse album*] is not the same thing as the man, for it will be said in book 7 of this work that in the case of those that are predicated *per accidens*, the thing and its being are not the same, such as the white thing and its being white. Therefore, since his being white is not the man, Aristotle believed that being white is the same thing as whiteness, and being big the same as bigness, being so-shaped the same as shape, and so forth. And so, Aristotle in general believed that accidents are not separable from their subjects by any power, for it appeared to imply a contradiction that *being white* is, unless there is something that is white. And, for the same reason, since being white is the same thing as whiteness, it seems to imply a contradiction that whiteness is, unless there is something that is white.⁸

Buridan finds this reasoning to be inevitably leading to the conclusion that on the Aristotelian conception accidents are inseparable even by divine power. Indeed, he also finds the Aristotelian position so interpreted to amount to the claim that accidents are not beings in the same sense as substances, because on the Aristotelian position the very concept of an accident must be connotative, necessarily implying its being an accident *of* some substance; that is to say, an accident on this conception cannot be some being in and of itself, but it is only a being *of* something that is a being in and of itself. (*Accidentia sunt entis entia.*) Therefore, Buridan finds it inevitable that Christians, who uphold the supernatural separability of accidents, must part company with Aristotle on the issue of accidental being, as well as the Aristotelian doctrine of the analogy of being:

Now we have to reply to the question raised, holding what we are supposed to hold on the basis of faith. I say, therefore, that we hold that by God’s power accidents can be separated from substances and subsist separately without a substance subjected to them. And we say that they subsist in this way *de facto* in the sacrament of the altar. If, therefore, we posit that some whiteness subsists in this way without inhering in a subject, then it is obvious that this whiteness is truly a being and is truly something. But from this it is also clear that the concept from which the name ‘whiteness’ is taken is just as simple without any connotation as is a substantial concept. And if the name ‘being’ or the name ‘thing’ is predicated of the term ‘whiteness’, it does not have to be done according to some attribution to the subjected substance, or to some substantial term. For [some whiteness] is a being and is something without a subjected substance, and it is no less

⁸ "Credo enim quod ipse (i.e., Aristotiles) opinabatur, si homo est albus, quod ad hoc non concurrat nisi homo et albedo. Modo ultra: quamvis album sit idem quod homo, tamen Aristotiles credit quod esse album non sit homo, quia dicitur in septimo huius quod in dictis secundum accidens non est idem ipsum et esse ipsum, ut album et esse album. Et ideo, cum esse album non sit homo, Aristotiles credit quod esse album est idem quod albedo, et esse magnum idem quod magnitudo, et esse figuratum idem quod figura, et sic de aliis. Et ideo universaliter Aristotiles credit quod accidentia nulla virtute sunt separabilia a subiectis suis, quia videtur implicare contradictionem quod sit esse album nisi aliquid sit quod est album. Et ita pari ratione: cum esse album sit idem quod albedo, videtur implicare contradictionem quod esset albedo nisi aliquid esset quod esset album." John Buridan, op.cit., IV.6: MS Carpentras, Bibliotheque Municipale, fo1. 60va- vb and MS Paris, Bibliotheque nationale de France, fo1. 130rb--va

a being or something when it inheres than when the substance is removed. Therefore, the name 'being' or the name 'something' is predicated of whiteness equally absolutely, and by means of a concept equally simple as it would be predicated of a stone or a donkey. ... Having seen these points, it seems to have to be conceded that the name 'being' and the name 'something' are predicated truly univocally about the terms signifying substances and about those signifying such accidents, according to the same common concept absolutely rid of any connotation whatsoever.⁹

Thus, Buridan's position closely ties together the Aristotelian doctrine of the analogy of being with that of the absolute inseparability of accidents, and, consequently, he also holds that the Christian doctrine of the supernatural separability of accidents directly leads to the conception of the univocity of being with regard to substance and accident.

In fact, the nominalist theologian Marsilius of Inghen, summarizing what he takes to be "the common opinion of many theologians" expressly on the basis of the doctrine of the philosopher, John Buridan, explicitly draws the conclusion that on the basis of this opinion 'being' should be regarded as a genus common to substance and all accidents, or at least to those accidents that are supernaturally separable by divine power from substance. Marsilius, however, does not want to side with the common opinion as described by Buridan. Working out what he takes to be a "more metaphysical" solution, he affirms the analogy of being between substance and accident; still, he does not equate it with the inseparability of accidents in the way Buridan does. He argues that substance and accident do not have the sort of essential agreement on the basis of which we could form a common univocal concept of the two; however, this does not mean that an accident remaining of the same nature could not be miraculously preserved in its being.

Now, this certainly seems to be a curious role-reversal between the philosopher, Buridan, and the theologian, Marsilius. As in the conclusion of his analysis of Buridan's and Marsilius of Inghen's position Paul Bakker insightfully remarks:

From the viewpoint of an historian of medieval philosophy, the foregoing inquiry leads to a somewhat surprising outcome. For the position of the theologian Marsilius comes remarkably close to that of the philosopher John of Jandun, who recognizes the claim of the faith while at the same time refusing to give any philosophical explanation of it. On the other hand, the position of the philosopher Buridan seems comparable to that of the theologian Duns Scotus, insofar [as] both authors seek to make the theological doctrine of the separability of accidents philosophically comprehensible. Moreover, Scotus and Buridan both try to achieve this by defending the doctrine of the univocity of being.¹⁰

⁹ John Buridan, op.cit., IV.6: MS Carpentras, Bibliotheque Municipale, fol. 61 ra-rb and MS Paris, Bibliotheque nationale de France, fol. 130vb: "Nunc dicendum est ad questionem motam, tenendo que debemus tenere ex fide. Dico ergo quod nos tenemus quod per potentiam Dei accidentia possunt separari a substantiis et separatim subsistere [et] sine substantia sibi subiecta. Unde dicimus quod sic de facto subsistunt in sacramento altaris. Si ergo ponamus quod albedo sic per se subsistat absque hoc quod alicui subiecto inhereat, tunc manifestum est quod illa albedo vere est ens et vere est aliquid. Et etiam ex hoc manifestum est quod conceptus a quo sumitur hoc nomen 'albedo' est ita simplex sine aliqua connotatione sicut aliquis terminus substantialis. Et si de isto termino 'albedo' predicetur hoc nomen 'ens' vel hoc nomen 'aliquid,' non oportet quod de eo predicetur secundum aliquam attributionem ad substantiam subiectam vel ad aliquem terminum substantialem, quia sine substantia subiecta ipsa est ens et aliquid, et non minus ipsa est ens vel aliquid quando inheret quam si subiectum esset ablatum. Ipsa enim est illud idem quando inheret quod ipsa esset si subiectum esset ablatum. Ideo hoc nomen 'ens' vel hoc nomen 'aliquid' eque simpliciter et secundum conceptum eque simpliciter dicitur de albedine sicut diceretur de lapide vel de asino.... Et istis visis, videtur quod oportet concedere quod hoc nomen 'ens' vel hoc nomen 'aliquid' dicuntur vere univoce secundum unum conceptum communem simpliciter absolutum a connotatione de terminis significantibus substantias et de terminis significantibus talia accidentia."

¹⁰

But this role-reversal will not be so surprising, if we take a closer look at the reasons behind the respective positions of earlier and later philosophers and theologians.

Thomists, Averroists, Augustinians, Nominalists

After all, we have just considered the position of Aquinas, an earlier theologian, who definitely held the Aristotelian view concerning the analogy of being, and yet he found it to be compatible with the Christian doctrine of the Eucharist. As in his reply to the objection quoted earlier Aquinas states:

... as Avicenna proves in his *Metaphysics*, 'being by itself' is not the definition of substance, for it does not exhibit its quiddity, but its being. And its quiddity is not its being, for otherwise it [the quiddity of substance] could not be a genus. For being cannot be common in the way a genus is, since the singulars contained under the genus differ in their being; but the definition or quasi-definition of substance is that it is a thing having a quiddity that acquires or demands being not in another. Likewise, being in a subject is not the definition of accident. Rather, an accident is a thing that demands being in a subject. And this is never separated from any accident, nor can it be, for the thing that is an accident by reason of its quiddity always demands being in a subject. But it may happen that something that demands something by reason of its quiddity does not get it, on account of divine intervention; and thus it is clear that making an accident without a substance does not amount to separating the definition from the thing defined; and if sometimes this is said to be the definition of accident, then that definition has to be understood in the way just explained, for the authors sometimes, for the sake of brevity, do not formulate definitions properly, but merely allude to what the proper definition can be taken from.¹¹

The division of 'being', therefore, into substance and accident is not the division of a genus by means of essential, specific differences, but a division of the extension of an analogical term into the extensions of its analogata, in which the nature of the thing, determining the kind of being the thing has, functions as a diminishing determination added to a distinct determinable, the act of being of the thing. Thus, the kind of being the thing demands by its nature is determined by the thing's nature, however, if a superior power overrides the natural tendency of this nature to have a certain kind of being, this does not take away the natural tendency of the thing itself, and hence does not destroy the thing's nature, just as a heavy body preserves its natural tendency to be down, even if an external power lifts it up. The crucial point in Aquinas's solution, therefore, is the Avicennian interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of the analogy of being, as based on the real distinction between the essence and existence of created beings. For this is what grounds his claim that even if the actual mode of being of an accident changes in the Eucharist (say, from "inherent" to "subsistent"), still, this may leave the nature of the thing unaffected, which only contains the natural tendency to be in a subject; as he says:

¹¹ "Ad secundum dicendum, quod sicut probat Avicenna in sua *Metaph.*, per se existere non est definitio substantiae: quia per hoc non demonstratur quidditas ejus, sed ejus esse; et sua quidditas non est suum esse; alias non posset esse genus: quia esse non potest esse commune per modum generis, cum singula contenta in genere differant secundum esse; sed definitio, vel quasi definitio, substantiae est res habens quidditatem, cui acquiritur esse, vel debetur, ut non in alio; et similiter esse in subjecto non est definitio accidentis, sed e contrario res cui debetur esse in alio; et hoc nunquam separatur ab aliquo accidente, nec separari potest: quia illi rei quae est accidens, secundum rationem suae quidditatis semper debetur esse in alio. Sed potest esse quod illud quod debetur alicui secundum rationem suae quidditatis, ei virtute divina agente non conveniat; et sic patet quod facere accidens esse sine substantia, non est separare definitionem a definito; et si aliquando hoc dicatur definitio accidentis, praedicto modo intelligenda est definitio dicta: quia aliquando ab auctoribus definitiones ponuntur causa brevitatis non secundum debitum ordinem, sed tanguntur illa ex quibus potest accipi definitio." 4SN, d. 12, q. 1, a. 1a, ad 2-um

... according to Avicenna in his *Metaphysics*, being cannot be placed in the definition of a genus or a species, for in the definition of a genus or a species all particulars are united, whereas the genus or species is not according to one being in all. Therefore, this is not a genuine definition of substance 'a substance is something that is by itself', nor is this [a genuine definition of accident] 'an accident is a thing that is in something else'. Rather, this is a circumlocution of a genuine description, which is understood to be this: a substance is a thing whose nature demands not to be in another, whereas an accident is a thing whose nature demands to be in another. Hence it is clear that although by miracle an accident is not in a subject, nevertheless, it does not fall under the definition of substance, for on that account its nature does not demand not to be in another; nor does it "leave" the definition of accident, for its nature still remains such that it demands to be in another.¹²

But then it should not come as a surprise that the philosopher Siger of Brabant, who rejects the Avicennian interpretation of Aristotle, and sides with Averroes on the issue of the real distinction, could not endorse this sort of solution.¹³ His position is actually the closest to the position of Aristotle *as described by Buridan*.

In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, after vehemently denying the thesis of the real distinction between essence and existence in the creatures as stemming from an error of Avicenna's,¹⁴ Siger insists in his reply to one of Aquinas's arguments for the real distinction that *esse* need not multiply in beings because of something added to it, but rather it is multiplied on account of its *ratio essendi*, the diversity of which in different kinds of beings is entailed by Aristotle's claim that *ens* cannot be a genus.¹⁵ However, in the question directly addressing this latter issue, he

¹² "Ad secundum dicendum, quod secundum Avicennam in sua *Metaph.*, esse non potest poni in definitione alicuius generis et speciei, quia omnia particularia uniuntur in definitione generis vel speciei, cum tamen genus vel species non sit secundum unum esse in omnibus. Et ideo haec non est vera definitio substantiae: substantia est quod per se est; vel: accidens est quod est in alio. Sed est circumlocutio verae descriptionis, quae talis intelligitur: substantia est res cuius naturae debetur esse non in alio; accidens vero est res, cuius naturae debetur esse in alio. Unde patet quod, quamvis accidens miraculose sit non in subiecto, non tamen pertinet ad definitionem substantiae; non enim per hoc eius naturae debetur esse non in alio; nec egreditur definitionem accidentis, quia adhuc natura eius remanet talis ut ei debeatur esse in alio." QDL 9, q. 3, ad 2-um

¹³ "Unde sophisticè quidam arguunt credentes naturali ratione ostendere et demonstrare quod causa prima possit facere quod accidens existat sine subiecto illius accidentis, propter hoc quod causa prima est causa omnium causarum mediarum accidentis inter ipsam et accidens, et ideo sola facere possit quod existat accidens, quamquam accidenti nulla existat aliarum causarum accidentis; et cum substantia sit aliqua causa accidentis, poterit facere ut sine substantia subsistat accidens. Ratio, ut manifeste apparet, deficit secundum ea quae prius dicta sunt. Ut tamen sane intelligatur, sciendum est quod primariam causam posse facere accidens existere sine subiecto illius accidentis confitemur. Hoc tamen est non propter istam rationem: est enim oratio conclusa peior seipsa non conclusa." *Les Quaestiones super Librum de Causis de Siger de Brabant*, ed. Marsala, A., Publications Universitaires: Louvain, Béatrice-Nauwelaerts: Paris, 1972, p. 41.

¹⁴ Siger de Brabant: *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, (ed. A. Maurer), Louvain-la-Neuve: Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de philosophie, 1983, *Introductio*, q. 7, p. 34, ll. 30-40.

¹⁵ "Ad aliud, quod similiter fuit medium Thomae (ScG, II, 52), dicitur quod esse per se subsistens, quod est maxime proprie esse et actualissimum, illud est unum tantum, scilicet Esse Primum. Esse tamen posterius et causatum, quod accedit ad naturam potentiae, non est unum sed plura, secundum quod sunt plura entia causata. Et tu arguis quod esse illud, secundum quod esse est, non est multiplicatum; ergo multiplicatur per aliquid cuius est esse illud. Et dicendum quod bene argueres si esse in omnibus entibus causatis esset unius rationis: tunc enim non multiplicaretur nisi per aliquid additum sibi. Nunc autem non est unius rationis in omnibus entibus. Et ideo ex sola multiplicatione rationis essendi multiplicatur esse in entibus. Nec potest ratio essendi multiplicari per aliquam rationem sibi additam, quia non est aliqua ratio sibi addita. Omnis enim ratio est essendi ratio. Ex hoc enim probat Aristoteles IIIo hujus quod ens non potest esse genus." *Ibid.* pp. 36-37.

explicitly concludes that the reason why *ens* cannot be a genus is that the *ratio essendi* of accidents, being a non-absolute *ratio*, cannot be the same as the *ratio essendi* of substances, which is an absolute *ratio*.¹⁶ In a different context — most notably in the context of the question whether the intellect can be both subsistent and inherent — he also insists that these *rationes essendi* are so incompatible, that they cannot belong to the same thing.¹⁷ But also in the context where he directly addresses the question of what sort of quiddity accidents have, he explicitly asserts:

... an accident does not have a *ratio essendi*, except in relation to a substance, whence it cannot be defined, except in relation to substance.¹⁸

Now the implication of this, along with Siger's identification of essence with existence, is clearly that the same thing, while remaining the same thing, cannot have one *ratio essendi* after the other, and thus, an accident, having the *ratio essendi* of an inherent being, cannot, while remaining what it was, an accident, have later on the *ratio essendi* of a subsistent being, on pain of contradiction. But this leaves him with a sheer "fideistic" position concerning the possibility of the accidents in the Eucharist, without resolving the contradiction with his philosophical conclusions. This is the sort of Aristotelianism, then, which is sternly rejected by theologians, such as Henry of Ghent and later Duns Scotus. However, since they also reject the Thomistic thesis of the real distinction, they more radically reinterpret the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accident, ending up with positions closer to what Buridan described as the "common opinion" of theologians.

Conclusion

Thus, the most fundamental issue concerning the interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of *inesse* and its compatibility with the doctrine of the Eucharist seems to be whether the Aristotelian notion can consistently be interpreted in such a way that according to this interpretation transubstantiation does not have to destroy the nature of accidents. Aquinas's

¹⁶ "Dico ad hoc quod ens non significat aliquam rationem unam contractam ad substantiam et ad accidentia, sed significat rationem diversam in substantia et accidentibus. Quod probatur sic. Omnis enim ratio quam significat aliquod nomen vel est ratio absolute dicta, vel est ratio dicta per ordinem ad aliud, quia nulla potest esse his communis. Si igitur ens significet aliquam rationem unam in substantia et accidentibus, vel illa erit ratio absolute dicta vel erit ratio dicta per habitudinem ad aliud. Si primo modo, tunc ens non praedicabitur de accidente, cum accidentis non sit ratio essendi absolute dicta. Si secundo modo, tunc ens non praedicabitur de substantia, cum substantiae non sit ratio essendi dicta per habitudinem ad aliud. Relinquitur igitur quod ens non significet aliquam rationem unam in substantia et accidentibus." Ibid. lb 3, q. 12, p. 101.

¹⁷ "Praeterea, alia est ratio essendi formae materialis et compositi seu formae per se subsistentis. Ratio enim essendi formae materialis est secundum quam est aliquid aliud, ut ratio compositionis est secundum quam habet esse compositum, et ratio figurae secundum quam habet esse figuratum unde ratio essendi formae materialis est quod sit unita alii. Ratio autem essendi compositi vel formae liberatae a materia est quod sit ens per se et separate, non unum ens cum alio. ... Et sunt istae rationes essendi, qua aliquid habet esse unite ad materiam et qua aliquid habet rationem subsistentis per se et separate, oppositae adeo ut eidem inesse non possunt. Unde anima intellectiva non potest habere rationem per se subsistentis et, cum hoc, unum facere cum materia et corpore in essendo." Siger of Brabant: *De Anima Intellectiva*, in: Bazán, B.: *Siger de Brabant*, Louvain-Paris, 1972, pp. 79-80. Cf. also St. Thomas's *De Unitate Intellectus* nn. 37-38.

¹⁸ "accidens non habet rationem essendi nisi in habitudine ad substantiam, et ideo definiri non potest sine substantia", Siger de Brabant: *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, (ed. A. Maurer), Louvain-la-Neuve: Éditions de l'Institute Supérieur de philosophie, 1983, lb. 7, q. 10, p. 341.

“Avicennean solution” is based the thesis of real distinction between essence and existence, on the basis of which even if the mode of being of the thing changes, this can leave the distinct nature of the thing unaffected.

Those, however, who reject this Avicennean interpretation of Aristotle, be they philosophers, like Siger or Buridan, or theologians, like Henry or Scotus, end up either with an irresoluble conflict between their Aristotelianism and their faith, as Siger did, or with a more radical departure from Aristotle in their interpretation of the Aristotelian doctrine of the analogy of being, as Henry, Scotus, and Buridan did. Either way, abandoning the Thomistic interpretation of the Aristotelian distinction seems to drive a wedge between faith and reason, culminating in the attribution of radically different notions of accidental being to philosophers and to theologians by Buridan. Perhaps, this is what motivated Marsilius of Inghen’s “more metaphysical” solution, echoing the gist of Aquinas’s:

As for the reason for the other opinion [the opinion of the theologians as described by Buridan] we should say that although an accident can be separated from its subject by the first power, and preserved in its existence and action, nevertheless, this is entirely miraculous and outside the regular course of nature, for the natural tendency of an accident is toward the subject, just as it is of form toward matter. Therefore, on account of such a miraculous preservation, an accident is not turned into a thing absolutely speaking [*simpliciter*].¹⁹

As can be seen, the gist of the solution is the permanence of the natural tendency of the accident to be in a subject, even if its actual existence changes from inherent to subsistent, just as it was in Aquinas. However, for Marsilius, the nominalist theologian, this solution is no longer based on the Avicennean interpretation of Aristotle provided by Aquinas.

¹⁹ Marsilius: "Et ad rationem alterius opinionis dicitur quod, licet accidens per primam potenciam possit separari, et separatum conservari in esse et agere, a suo subiecto, nichilominus hoc totum est preter nature cursum solitum et miraculosum, nam naturalis tendencia accidentis est ad subiectum, sicut forme ad materiam. Et ergo ex tali conseruacione miraculosa non fit accidens quid simpliciter." (Bakker, p. 262, n. 33.)