NOESIS

JEAN DUNS SCOT

L'OUBLI DE L'ÊTRE

N° 42

Printemps 2024

NOESIS

Revue philosophique du Centre de Recherches en Histoire des Idées (dirigé par Grégori Jean) de l'Université Côte d'Azur

Directeur de la publication
Sébastien Poinat

Secrétariat d'édition
Claire Gaugain

Administration
Laurence Fulconis-Loth

Conseil de rédaction
Florence Albrecht, Serge Audier, Michaël Biziou, Christian Bracco, Ondine Breaud, Jean-Luc Gautero, Elsa Grasso, Grégori Jean, Thomas Morisset, Vanessa Nurock, Hervé Pasqua, Mélanie Plouviez, Sébastien Poinat, Valentina Tirloni

Comité scientifique
Miguel Garcia Barò, Angela Ales Bello, Magali Bessonne, Michel Blay, Olivier Boulnois, Pierre Destrée, Benoît Frydman, Denis Kambouchner, Bruno Karsenti, Jerrold Levinson, Paisley Livingston, Glenn Most, Christian Nadeau, Charles Ramond, Gunnar Skirbekk, Giuseppe Tognon, Franco Trabattoni

Diffusion-distribution
Librairie philosophique J. Vrin
6, place de la Sorbonne – 75005 Paris

Pour toute correspondance :
Centre de Recherches en Histoire des Idées
Faculté des Lettres, arts et sciences humaines
Université Côte d'Azur
98, boulevard Édouard Herriot – BP 3209
06204 Nice Cedex 3
Téléphone : (+33) (0)4 93 37 54 15
Télécopie : (+33) (0)4 93 37 54 81
Courriel : laurence.fulconis-loth@univ-cotedazur.fr

Tous droits de reproduction et d'adaptation des textes réservés

ISSN : 1275-7691
Dépôt légal : 2024
© Revue *Noesis*

Jean Duns Scot
L'oubli de l'être

Volume publié sous la direction de Hervé Pasqua

Présentation
Hervé Pasqua 7

Quel « *subiectum* » pour la métaphysique ? La distinction entre sujet (*subiectum*) et objet (*obiectum*) dans le débat scotiste
Maria Manuela Brito Martins 13

La différence onto-théologique selon Thomas d'Aquin et Jean Duns Scot
Alain Contat 37

***Haecceitas* et *actus entis*. Individuation et individualité chez Duns Scot et Thomas d'Aquin**
Hervé Pasqua 79

De quel amour sommes-nous capables ? Le cas du citoyen courageux dans *Ordinatio* III d. 27
François Loiret 113

Trinité et relations dans l'essence divine. Retour sur le débat Scot et Ockham
Philippe Rozin 157

Potentia Dei absoluta et ordinata. Thomas d'Aquin et Duns Scot
Santiago Sanz Sánchez 181

Thinking as engaging "divine ideality": Gustav Siewerth's critique of John Duns Scotus' philosophy
Jan C. Bentz 209

"God can do anything that does not include a contradiction". John Duns Scotus on Divine Omnipotence
Rupert Mayer O. P. 241

Ludwig Wittgenstein. La fin du « troisième règne » de l'*esse objectivum*
André de Muralt 317

Résumés 323

Auteurs 329

Thinking as engaging "divine ideality": Gustav Siewerth's critique of John Duns Scotus' philosophy

Jan C. Bentz

1. Introduction

John Duns Scotus' relation to and influence on 'modernity' remains a persistent topic of discussion.[1] While interpretations vary to a large degree, the contours of some general classifications are perceptible. Some authors see in Scotus a revolutionary figure paving the way for modern science and judge his preparations for a kind of 'emancipation' of reason in a positive light. Others judge the Scotus and specific features of his philosophy to introduce an epochal transformation in thinking "being" and decry his approach as the beginning of a certain "forgetfulness-of-being" leading to man's "destitution" in the world.[2] Gustav Siewerth pioneers the latter group.[3]

---

[1] In his numerous studies, Ludger Honnefelder has maintained that metaphysics as "Transzendentalwissenschaft" began with Duns Scotus. The Radical Orthodoxy movement maintains that Scotus is responsible for (at least certain) modern and post-modern currents of thought. Dupré maintains that Scotus was responsible for separating the natural from the supernatural. See respectively: L. Honnefelder, *Ens inquantum ens: Der Begriff des Seienden als solchen als Gegenstand der Metaphysik nach der Lehre des Johannes Duns Scotus*, Münster, Aschendorff, 1979, p. 396-405; C. Pickstock, "Duns Scotus: his historical and contemporary significance", in J. Milbank (ed.), *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, London, Routledge, 2009, p. 116-146. L. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, New Haven, Yale University press, 1993, p. 175 *sqq*. Also O. Boulnois finds in univocity the beginning of metaphysics as ontology or, more recently, as ontotheology. See: O. Boulnois, *Sur la connaissance de Dieu et l'univocité de l'étant*, Paris, PUF, 1988. Etc.

[2] M. Heidegger, *Brief über den Humanismus* [1946], in GA vol. 9, *Wegmarken*, p. 313-365, p. 328.

[3] Gustav Siewerth (1903-1963) was a German philosopher and pedagogue. Siewerth was considered an expert on the life and work of Thomas Aquinas and attempted to build a pedagogical bridge to his teachers, Martin Honecker and Martin Heidegger, especially in critical confrontation with Hegel and later in contrast to his former teacher Heidegger. From 1926 to 1930, he studied philosophy as well as art history and history at the Albert-Ludwig-University in Freiburg under Martin Honecker, Martin Heidegger, and

Turning to Siewerth, we are confronted with a somewhat neglected philosopher of the 20th century, whose speculation is of decisive importance for the study of Thomism and the philosophy of being in general. Siewerth, equipped with the philosophical arsenal of Thomas Aquinas, enters into critical confrontation with German idealism, especially Georg W. F. Hegel and, in his later years, with his own teacher, Martin Heidegger. Siewerth's philosophy is profoundly speculative, complex, at times difficult to penetrate, and above all, thoroughly metaphysical. His delineation of the history of philosophy as a presentation of the "forgetfulness-of-being" from Thomas to Heidegger is second to none.[4]

This present study intends to scrutinize Gustav Siewerth's critique of John Duns Scotus' philosophy along the parameters selected by Siewerth himself. Siewerth's analysis of Scotus is of particular interest for a variety of reasons. 1) He approaches Scotus from a decidedly Thomistic standpoint. 2) He develops his Scotus-critique in view of its influence on subsequent philosophies, chiefly Nicholas Cusanus, Francisco Suárez, Immanuel Kant, and Georg W. F. Hegel. 3) He specifically displays Scotus' philosophy within the context of advancing the "forgetfulness-of-being" as the fate of metaphysics. 4) His critique does not remain purely historical, but

---

Edmund Husserl. In 1930, he was awarded a doctorate in philosophy for his dissertation, *Die Metaphysik der Erkenntnis nach Thomas von Aquin*. Siewerth habilitated in 1937 with the Habilitationsschrift *Die Apriorität der Erkenntnis als Einheitsgrund der philosophischen Systematik nach Thomas von Aquin* at the University of Freiburg. In 1945, Siewerth was appointed professor of philosophy and pedagogy and director at the Pädagogische Hochschule Rheinland. Siewerth died on October 5, 1963, during a conference of the Görres-Gesellschaft in Trento, Italy. For further biographical details and bibliography, see: F.-A. Schwarz, "Lebensdaten Gustav Siewerths und Bibliographie", in W. Behler, *Gustav Siewerth zum Gedächtnis*, Freiburg i. B., Pädagögische Hochschule Freiburg, 1989, p. 107-123. In English, the letter correspondence between Siewerth and Hans-Urs von Balthasar has been published. See: A. Wiercinski, *Between Friends: The Hans Urs von Balthasar and Gustav Siewerth Correspondence 1954-1963*, Konstanz, GSG-Verlag, 2007. In French, research on Siewerth has been done predominantly by Emannuel Tourpe. See E. Tourpe, *Siewerth après Siewerth*, Louvain, Peeters, 1997; *L'audace théosophique. Premiers pas dans la philosophie religieuse de Franz von Baader*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2009; *Donation et consentement. Une introduction méthodologique à la métaphysique*, Bruxelles, Lessius, 2001; *L'être et l'amour. Un itinéraire métaphysique*, Bruxelles, Lessius, 2010; "Gustav Siewerth et la métaphysique. Libres approches", *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, vol. 95, nº 2, 1997. Siewerth's *Gesammelte Werke* are still in the process of publication. His philosophical works are presented in volumes 1-5.

4 G. Siewerth, *Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 4: Das Schicksal der Metaphysik von Thomas zu Heidegger*, Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1987.

endeavors to be profoundly speculative, epistemological, and metaphysical, thus presenting some effects of Scotus' re-imagination that are pertinent for the development of a whole worldview and thus significant beyond mere philosophy.

For Siewerth, Scotus' denial of the real distinction between *esse* (Being) and *essentia* (essence), marks the pivotal emergence of "Seinsvergessenheit". Consequently, Scotus is understood to introduce a 'new way' of philosophy, effectively ending the Medieval way and introducing a path leading to modernity.[5]

For the purpose of this chapter, we presuppose some familiarity with Scotus and dedicate ourselves primarily to the analysis and evaluation of Scotus by Siewerth.[6]

2. Gustav Siewerth's Critique of John Duns Scotus

2.1. John Duns Scotus' "theological philosophy"

It has been thoroughly developed already, that Scotus is a pivotal figure in the formation of a "transcendental philosophy." In fact, it has been suggested that metaphysics conceived as transcendental science is *the* most significant contribution of Scotus in the history of philosophy and programmatic for the development of Modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant.[7] Among different interpretations, Jan Aertsen takes the view that Scotus'

---

[5] Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, *Regensburg Lecture*, September 12th, 2006, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html: "In all honesty, one must observe that in the late Middle Ages we find trends in theology which would sunder this synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit. In contrast with the so-called intellectualism of Augustine and Thomas, there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which, in its later developments, led to the claim that we can only know God's *voluntas ordinata*."

[6] Due to limitations of space, what we cannot achieve here is to show exhaustive textual evidence in Scotus justifying Siewerth's verdict.

[7] Cf. J. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, p. 371: "He introduced a significant expression, which would make career in the history of philosophy and to whose introduction modern scholarship has attached programmatic importance. In the prologue of his *Questions on the Metaphysics*, Scotus designates metaphysics as the 'transcendental science' (*scientia transcendens*)." Cf. L. Honnefelder, *Ens inquantum ens. Der Begriff des Seienden als solchen als Gegenstand der Metaphysik nach der Lehre des Johannes Duns Scotus*, Münster, Aschendorff, 1979; *id.*, *Scientia transcendens. Die formale Bestimmung der Seiendheit in der Metaphysik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit (Duns Scotus - Suárez - Wolff - Kant - Peirce)*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990.

philosophy does not present a "step towards" a transcendental philosophy, but rather is a "turn in the history of the doctrine of the transcendentals."[8] He founds this view on Scotus' proclivity to advance a new conception of "transcendentality" by thinking being as *communia*, more radically than his predecessors, and as univocally convertible with God and creatures. The condition of possibility of metaphysics itself he locates in this transcendental univocal understanding of being.

> Against the general opinion that 'analogical' commonness is the mark of transcendentality Scotus introduces a new kind of univocation, which 'transcends' the univocation of a genus, as a precondition of a science of being in general.[9]

Siewerth's presentation of Scotus would certainly subscribe to such an interpretation, yet he lays the emphasis on the fact that Scotus adopts a thoroughly *theological* mindset in philosophy as his vantage point and point of departure.[10] In this, then, the assertions overlap: Scotus' transcendental metaphysics has an apparent "onto-theological structure."[11]

The "theological" mindset that Siewerth detects is apparent primarily in the method Scotus employs to answer the question of the possibility of metaphysics in general. How is metaphysics as a science possible? In order to answer the question, Scotus sets out to develop a proper object of the science of metaphysics, i. e. a robust concept of being as being.

Being as being –or rather a *concept* of being cannot be derived from cognition by *phantasmata*, argues the subtle doctor, since sensible quiddity cannot be identified as the adequate object of human intellection.[12] The adequate object demands above all *universality*.[13] But it must be a qualified universality. As Scotus reasons, if the quiddity would be the first, proper, and adequate object of our intellect, then *being per se* –which by nature (in Scotus' understanding!) is more general than the individual quiddity, would indeed be

---

[8] Cf. J. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 431.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 432.

[10] SMTH, 154 & 156.

[11] Cf. J. Aersten, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 432.

[12] C. Shircel, "Analogy and Univocity in the Philosophy of John Duns Scotus", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, nº 18, 1942, p. 143-164: "For the Subtle Doctor the sensible quiddity as the object of the intellect is only of secondary importance…"

[13] Cf. P. King, "Duns Scotus on Metaphysics", in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 15.

wholly beyond and inaccessible to our intellect. Its universality would preclude any proper intelligibility of an immaterial faculty which has as proper object something much more limited and delineated (i.e. the quiddity).[14] Our intellect would be *restricted* to knowing the individual only. Metaphysics as a science would lack a proper subject, and would consequently be impossible. The intellect would be hostage to the physical realm. Not only science, but also the vision of God would be impossible and unnatural, a thesis to which Scotus did not want to subscribe. Only if the intellect is naturally disposed to transcend the individual quiddity can it be open to being as such, and therefore open to metaphysics. Scotus needs a concept of being that is at the same time universal and graspable by our intellect.

In order to safeguard the possibility of science as well as the (at least potential) vision of God by our faculties, Scotus proposes as the first proper object of our intellect being (*ens*) in its "commonality and virtuality" because "everything *per se* intelligible either essentially includes the meaning of being (*rationem entis*) or is contained either virtually or essentially by essentially including the meaning of being."[15] By identifying being according these parameters, Scotus understood himself to satisfy the subject genus requirement Aristotle called for in his qualifications of a science.[16] In his

---

[14] Cf. John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, p. 1, q. 3, n. 186 (ed. *Commissio Scotistica*, vol. III, p. 112-113): "Respondeo. Obiectum primum potentiae assignatur illud quod adaequatum est potentiae ex ratione potentiae, non autem quod adaequatur potentiae in aliquo statu: quemadmodum primum obiectum visus non ponitur illud quod adaequatur visui exsistenti in medio illuminato a candela, praecise, sed quod natum est adaequari visui ex se, quantum est ex natura visus. Nunc autem […] nihil potest adaequari intellectui nostro ex natura potentiae in ratione primi obiecti nisi communissimum; tamen et pro statu isto adaequatur in ratione motivi quiditas rei sensibilis, et ideo pro statu isto non naturaliter intelliget alia quae non continentur sub isto primo motivo."

[15] John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, p. 1, q. 3 (ed. Vat. III), n. 137: "primum obiectum intellectus nostri est ens, quia in ipso concurrit duplex primitas, scilicet communitatis et virtualitatis, nam omne per se intelligible aut includit essentialiter rationem entis, vel continetur virtualiter vel essentialiter in includente essentialiter rationem entis." Cf. B. Kemple, *The Latin Thomists and Ens Primum Cognitum*, Leiden, Brill, 2017, p. 25.

[16] John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, no. 70 (ed. Vat. III, 49): "De tertia proritate habetur I Posteriorum, in definitione 'universalis', quia 'primo' ibi dicit praecisionem sive adaequatione." Cf. S. Dumont, "Scotus's Doctrine of Univocity and the Medieval Tradition of Metaphysics", in J. Aertsen and A. Speer, *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1998, p. 193-212, p. 211. For a refutation of the thesis that Aristotle conceived the concept of being as univocal but instead as analogical see: P. Aubenque, *Le problem de l'être chez Aristote*, Paris, PUF, 2017; A. De Muralt, *Comment dire l'être?*, Paris, Vrin, 1985.

search for the propter subject of metaphysics, Scotus embarks on developing his univocal concept of being.

It is natural to the intellect, more precisely the active intellect, to be the complete effective cause of the object in the possible intellect, Scotus explains. This is due to the fact that the intellect's natural object is in a state of complete indeterminacy and universality. The active intellect produces its own object (*causa integra effective obiecti*), which in turn is qualified by its universality and indetermination (*completam indeterminationem universalis*).[17] Due to being's universal character –equally applicable to all transcendental concepts– there is a science transcendentally applicable to creatures *and* Creator. In order to safeguard this science, i. e. metaphysics, Scotus develops a concept of being so utterly indeterminate and so utterly transcendental, that it truly embraces *all* being. Only such a concept is, for him, sufficiently transcendental as to be the first among the transcendentals and the foundation of metaphysics. Transcendentally espousing all being, this concept functions logically and epistemologically as a genus.[18]

> Scotus himself recognizes that in its univocal character the concept of being functions logically and epistemologically like that of genus… Although being is not a genus, it functions logically like a genus.[19]

---

[17] John Duns Scotus, *Questiones in Met.*, bk. VII, q. 18, 8, *Opera Philosophica*, New York, The Franciscan Institute, 1997-2006, vol. III-IV: "Intellectus igitur agens concurrens cum natura aliquo modo indeterminata ex se, est causa integra effectiva objecti in intellectu possibili secundum esse primum, et hoc secundum completam indeterminationem universalis; next es alia causa, quod intellectus agens cum natura facit objectum sic esse, nisi quia est talis potentia, sicur nec quare ealidum calefacit; est ergo natura in potentia remota ad determinationem singularitatis, et ad indeterminationem universalis, et sicur a producnte conjungitur singularitati, ita a re agente, et simul ab intellectu agente conjungitur universalitati." Cf. SMTH, 155.

[18] The identification of being as a genus was hailed as the final stage of development in the science, since Aristotle's demand for a proper subject for Metaphysics only came to fruition in Scotus: "With Scotus' doctrine of univocity the subject of metaphysics was, for the first time in Western philosophy, brought into full conformity with the requirement of the subject genus as conceived in Aristotle's Analytics. From the καθόλου of Aristotle, to the *ens commune* of Avicenna and Aquinas, to the *ens analogum commune ad Deum et creaturam* of Henry of Ghent, to the *ens univocum et in quid dictum* of Scotus, the full circle was achieved. After more than a millennium and a half of development, Scotus made metaphysics a universal science of being qua being as set forth in the Analytics, because with univocity being finally became, in the relevant sense, a genus." Cf. S. Dumont, "Scotus's Doctrine…", art. cit., p. 211.

[19] John Duns Scotus, I *Rep. par.*, d. 8, q. 5, A. Wolter (trans.), *John Duns Scotus: The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture: Reportatio I-A*, vol. 1, New York, Franciscan Institute, 2004: "Ad

The proper terminology applicable to this concept of being is a *univocal concept of being*. Being is defined by its "indetermination."[20]

Siewerth's criticism arises here. Scotus, in Siewerth's view, has need for a univocal concept of being, due to a certain type of naivety, i. e. not finding Aquinas' analogical concept of being sufficient for "univocal attributions" within a confused potentiality (i. e. creation).[21] Where Scotus develops the *highest genus* as the referent to univocal being, Thomas poses the *ens commune* as a remarkably more effective alternative, argues Siewerth.[22]

Siewerth begins his intricate critique by applying the Aristotelian concepts of act and potency to the aforementioned account of the concept of being as elaborated by the intellect. The principles of act and potency, which in Aristotle and Aquinas arguably work *as the relation* of *thing* and *intellect*, now have shifted and effectively describe *only* the *inner working* of the intellect's operation. In Aquinas, the intellect in relation to sensible things is found to be related as act to potency in so far as things outside the mind are only "potentially intelligible" and the agent intellect's operation makes them "actually intelligible." Yet, the mind is in potency inasmuch as "determined forms of things are only potentially in our mind, but actually in

---

aliud de Porphyrie, dicendum quod transcendens dictum de Deo praedicatur per modum universalis, non quia sit de numero quinqué universalium, sed quia praedicatur secundum atiquem modum similem alicui modo universalis. Praedicatur enim in quid sicut genus. Unde dicit Philosophus Vl · Topicorum quod si aliquid praedicatur in quid non convertibiliter, difficile est prohibere quin sit genus, et utendum est genere. Verum est opponenti, sed non respondenti. Licet tamen sit difficile prohibere quin sit genus, non tamen est impossibile: similiter aliquid praedicatur modo simili praedicandi quem habet differentia, ut Deus est infinitus et huiusmodi. Sic igitur patet quod aliquid praedicatur per modum universalis, non tamen est universale." Cf. S. Dumont, "Scotus's Doctrine…", art. cit., p. 211.

[20] SMTH, 157.

[21] SMTH, 158.

[22] In Aquinas on the other hand, being as genus is best expressed as the *esse commune*, something that Siewerth spends a significant amount of time elaborating. In the *ens commune*, being is announced as *ratio* and as univocal, since it denotes "ad unam naturam" and "ad unum terminum," a *unity* of one analogatum and the other, insofar as the differences can be differentiated from the conceptual univication of the one analogatum and the other, while maintaining their differences. The *difference* spoken in the *ens commune*, despite its univocal character, is actual when it does not denote things no longer present ("Gegenstände"), but when it denotes true *insights*, because then the "is" of the pronouncement is qualified and *dependent* on the real presence ("Anwesen und Erscheinen") of a thing itself. In this case, the possibility of univocity falls apart when we try to unify God and creatures. Cf. SMTH, 158.

things outside the soul." Thus Aquinas can posit that it is natural for the intellect to receive knowledge from sensible things.[23]

By confusing the Aristotelian notion of the act-potency relation employed by Aquinas to illustrate extra-mental things' relation to the mind, Scotus effectively re-interprets the mental process. In this regard, Scotus' understanding has been labeled as an "Augustinian path."[24] Reason, in a certain way, produces its own object, rather than receiving it from sensibles. But if the intellect poses its own object, then is the intellect still susceptible to extra-mental sensible things at all? In other words, can the significance of the thing known be anything but a mere *occasion* for the intellect and the operation of transcendental thought?

If the intellect produces its own object, even if just partially conditioned by universality, then the condition of possibility of knowledge is dependent on an *a priori* participation in the "ideal" character of being somewhere (untraceable) in the depth of our intellect, which is concurrent with the "indeterminate character of being." The indetermination of this concept of being would then reside in its "formal" or "ideal" character that is a "virtual" constitutive ground of being, connected to a being's essence beyond its *haecceitas* in a "mysterious way," as Siewerth writes.[25] Simply said: An empty virtuality or universality is rooted in individual essence, and enters the intellect, while remaining unknown and indeterminable. This is a qualitative feature of the thing known. Should this be the primal condition of knowledge then the *definite knowledge* of a thing is fundamentally based on something *indefinite* that is prior and more significant. Additionally, this virtuality, while

---

[23] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 10, a. 6, co: "Cum enim mens nostra comparatur ad res sensibiles quae sunt extra animam, invenitur se habere ad eas in duplici habitudine. Uno modo ut actus ad potentiam: inquantum, scilicet, res quae *sunt* extra animam sunt intelligibiles in potentia. Ipsa vero mens est intelligibilis in actu; et secundum hoc ponitur in anima intellectus agens, qui faciat intelligibilia in potentia esse intelligibilia in actu. Alio modo ut potentia ad actum: prout scilicet in mente nostra formae rerum determinatae, sunt in potentia tantum, quae in rebus extra animam sunt in actu."

[24] E. Bettoni, *Duns Scotus, The basic Principles of his philosophy*, Westport, Praeger Pub., 1979, p. 66: "Duns Scotus has often been criticized for not having understood the Aristotelian-Thomistic concept of potency as something deprived of any kind of actuality. To a certain extent this is true… This apparent lack of understanding is common to the whole Augustinian school… It is precisely this contrast of views that lies the root of all the differences that distinguish Duns Scotus' metaphysics from the metaphysics of Aristotle."

[25] Cf. SMTH, 155.

initially understood to be a thing's existence, will soon be confused with its essence, a development which Siewerth detects and decries.

We can look at it this way: *If* our concept of being is truly univocal, then *what does this concept actually refer to* (in reality) *and what are the features of its referent*? How can we know them? If the univocal concept refers *always only* to something *individual* but receives its universality *from the intellect itself*, where, then, does universality or, better, the capacity-to-universality, root in the intellect? Does the intellect *create this universality*? In what is it rooted? Or does the intellect only *intuit its own universality* in the thing known? If the universality roots in "nothing" but itself, then the intellect *truly creates its own object*, which bespeaks a certain solipsistic rational *Gestalt* of the intellect. If it is referring to something universal in reality, *in its universality*, then it seems that Scotus adopts Aquinas' view of the *esse commune*. If it roots in God, then *this is precisely what is meant by an Augustinian path* of understanding, since in all knowledge of the individual, God is 'always already' present. In fact, he is the principal thing known. The knowledge of God is present in the knowledge of all else.

If we take these three options, Siewerth seems to identify Scotus' thought within the first answer. In knowing being perfectly universally and as originative, the human intellect operated from a divine point of view towards being. In other words: In relation to the thing, man takes the same position as God. Siewerth comments that therein rests the transcendental starting point of Scotus' thought, which indeed looks at creation and the cosmos from a *divine vantage point*.[26] Man puts himself in the place of God –at least implicitly– by identifying his own thought as being capable of absolute universality.

> How could it be otherwise, since Being or Truth can state the infinite like the finite, the necessary like the possible, the creator like the creature, according to its possibility.[27]

Siewerth detects therein a starting point of *detachment* from reality. Since the univocal concept of being applies to a *formal*, perfectly *virtual*, and

---

[26] Cf. L. Honnefelder, *Scientia transcendens: Die formale Bestimmung von Seiendheit und Realität in der Metaphysik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, Mainz, Meiner Verlag, 1990.

[27] SMTH, 155: "*Wie könnte es auch anders sein, da ja das Sein oder das Wahre das unendliche wie das Endliche, das Notwendige wie das mögliche, den Schöpfer wie das Geschöpf der Möglichkeit nach aussagen kann.*"

universal 'reality' of being, detachment from reality, replaced by a tendency towards mere conceptuality, has already been accomplished. By thinking the virtual universal concept of being, the mind presupposes this detachment. Being is no longer *rooted* in the "act of real things" but is rather a pure product of thought.[28] As a concept of thought that is simple, irresoluble, and univocal, it is an *intentio logica* which can be predicated in different ways and is not, in its original state, determined by singularity or universality, finality or infinity, etc.

Referring back to the compatibility of such a concept within an Aristotelian framework of act and potency, such a concept of being cannot be predicated of "act" and, in fact, does not connote any "reality", but is only an *ideal essence* ("ideell Wesendes").[29] In other words: the predication of being does not denote a direct utterance of *reality* in the strong sense of the word, but rather a state of *non-repugnancy towards existing* which is in itself a logical predication. It denotes –at best– an *esse quidditativum*, since the concept of a being is simply understood as "not false."[30]

It follows that *existence* (*existentia*) does not belong to an individual *ens* as known.[31] What is known is the individual being that includes the primary qualifier such that it does not contain a "contradiction-in-itself" and, as a result, becomes *possibile*. On the other hand, the quiddity of a thing is already known by the philosopher when he makes a pronouncement on it.[32] If a *real being* really exists that corresponds to this most universal concept of being, then the qualifications that distinguish essences from one another are reduced to mere *announcements* in the thinker. God and accidents all as univocal beings are merely "objects" of which to make pronouncements and it is the *pronouncements* which qualify them in the speaker.[33]

---

[28] Cf. SMTH, 155.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] SMTH, 156; cf. John Duns Scotus, *Quest. In Meta*, bk. VI, q. 4, n. 3: "Prima ratio ejus sic declaratur, *si est* praesupponitur de subiecto, non de actuali existentia, sed quod habet *esse* quidditativum, scilicet quod ratio ejus non est fasla in se, tale *si est* ostenditur demonstratione quia a Metaphysico de primo ente."

[31] John Duns Scotus, *Quodlibet* 7, a. 8-9: "non est per se ratio objecti, ut scibile est."

[32] SMTH, 156.

[33] Cf. T. Barth, "Die Grundlage der Metaphysik bei Duns Scotus: Das Sein der Synthese von Gemeinsamkeit und Verschiedenheit", *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, vol. 27, 1964, p. 211-228, p. 217: "*So enthält Gott in sich alle Geschöpfe als ideales Sein* virtualiter et eminenter. *Zu dem idealen Sein der erschaffenen Dinge gehört auch die körperliche Materie. Der göttliche Schöpfungsakt gibt dann den*

It is here that Siewerth detects the root of a departure from *being* and towards a rationalization and essentialization of *esse*.[34] He demonstrates this by arguing that what the human intellect apprehends when it knows *ens* is primarily the *essence* of a thing, should the *esse* be turned into a virtual condition of possibility of existence. Said differently, if *esse* is purely virtual and ideal, or a logical function denoting a *non-repugnance to existing*, then the only thing *left* for the mind to know is essence. The *esse* of an *ens* is reduced to a secondary qualifier, subordinate to essence, and ultimately redundant insofar as it tells us nothing about a thing but its logical non-contradiction. Precisely this subordination bespeaks the essentialization of metaphysics.[35]

2.2. Logical roots of Scotistic thought

In establishing metaphysics as a science, Scotus wants to avoid referring back to physics. In fact, it is the movement away from physics that he wants to emphasize.[36] However, by separating metaphysical insight from knowledge via sensation, he uproots the science of metaphysics and has to transplant it into the garden of logic. It is, then, a *logical* foundation that he sees as the safest ground for metaphysical thought.

Here once more, a univocal concept of being becomes the conditional prism for a construction of metaphysics. Siewerth remarks fervidly, that the univocal concept of being works under the assumption that the intellect can have a proper *concept* of being in the first place. Here roots a profound difference to Thomistic thought, Siewerth notes. For Thomas, "being known" is not a *concept* but rather a *conceptio*[37], that is "a judging comprehension."[38] Accordingly, when a thing is actually understood, there is a double implication: understanding implies first the "thing which is understood,"

Geschöpfen ihr konkretes und reales Sein, das von dem göttlichen Sein sich wesenhaft, d. h. wie Endliches vom Unendlichen unterscheidet."

[34] The main "culprit" of this is Avicenna, who lets Aristotelian metaphysics come "to term" in the essence. Cf. GG, 143.

[35] Incidentally, this is the very reason why Scotus denies the *real distinction* of *esse* and *essentia*. The distinction of this indeterminate concept of being and its relation to its essence is integrally *produced* (!) by the intellect. Cf. Scotus, *Rep. Par. IV Sent*. d. 43, q. 2, no. 18; *Ordinatio* II, d. 1, q. 2, no. 7; *Ordinatio* II, d. 12, q. 1, no. 16.

[36] Cf. for example: John Duns Scotus, *Quaest. super libr. metaph. Arist.*, VI, q. 1, n. 8-16.

[37] SMTH, 158; cf. *Die Abstraktion und das Sein*, 581 ff.

[38] Because "being" is understood as a univocal concept, it becomes the "most general" and at the same time "empty" ratio, which can be predicated to all "inferiora," including God, and which is essentially a "product" of reason, an "image" which still roots in things, but

and second, "the fact that it is understood."[39] The "to be recognized and abstracted" is directed towards what is *in the mind*, but understanding and recognizing is directed towards the real thing, or rather the nature that is realized in this individual thing and does *precisely not consist in a reflection* on *what is in the mind*.[40] Therefore, abstraction cannot be barred from an enabling understanding of the *real thing*. In other words: man can think of something universal and abstract, such as "mankind," but this universal always already refers back to the individual, "this man, Paul." The abstract "logical game" of universal categories is already framed and embraced by a metaphysical, intuitive recognition of truth that consists in the recognition that all abstract universal always subsists in a real existent. Without this profoundly reaching reference to truth, philosophizing would be reduced to a "logical game."[41] Being (*esse*) must always preceed and enable thought; therefore it lies outside of being fully 'formalized' due to its pure actuality. It is above genus. Abstraction –as a necessary step towards real understanding– is already embedded in and embraced by the whole ("vollendeten") recognition of being. Reason never "rests" with the concept, but rather sets out to investigate the being as it is in things. Concepts can never be unified to a substance, since concepts are always universal, i. e. "non-substantial."[42] Simply put, the beginning of our knowledge cannot consist of a concept, but rather must be the recognition of *being*. Therefore, the first content of

is already a product of thought primarily. It denotes the "possibility of all essences" rather than pure actual reality. See the explicative explanation by Siewerth in SW, 582 ff.

[39] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 85, a. 2, ad 2: "Ad secundum dicendum quod, cum dicitur intellectum in actu, duo importantur, scilicet res quae intelligitur, et hoc quod est ipsum intelligi."

[40] Cf. SW, 594.

[41] Cf. SW, 595. Also 608-609: "But if [being] is 'act' and 'pure being' and the form is 'potency', then in view of its infinity it is not possible at all to absorb and formalize it completely by the finite potency. Then, however, the being of beings protrudes into an indissoluble depth, which exceeds the forms with all modal restriction and particularity, which the being experiences, so that 'beings' are united in their root in a superformal, which, of course, is only real through the fact that it flows into finite forms and actuates them according to the measure of their receptivity. But this 'esse ipsum' comes into view when the transcendental being is thought beyond the generic concepts."

[42] Cf. SW, 586: "But it follows from these propositions that our cognition can originally never be concerned with its general concepts, because then it can move only in general, in conditions and rules, but through them never reach the real. Thus it [the real] can no longer be 'true' ('wahr') but only 'correct' ('richtig'), provided it proceeds according to the mode of formal synthesis."

our reason is not a *conceptus entis* but rather a *conceptio entis*: not a concept of being but only a conceptualization of being.[43] In true Aristotelian fashion,[44] Thomas implies that in order for metaphysics to have a proper realm, rational knowledge of a physical form is presupposed, just as *ratio* depends on *intellectus*. In order to 'reach' being, the thinker must follow the *via resolutionis*, and thereby grasp truth as the terminus of the process of reason.[45]

In contrast, for Scotus, the univocity of being is reached by means of "abstraction."[46] The openness of the thinker towards being is severed, and all the thinker has is his *concept* of being. Why did Scotus make this epistemological decision? Siewerth answers that Scotus reduces metaphysics to an *instrumentarium* of theology[47] which demands at best a concept of being "objectified, monosensical, whose *ratio* or meaning could be precisely fixed in non-speculative isolated understanding both in word and in sense-content."[48] Theology precedes metaphysics even in epistemological conditioning. Obedience before speculation. Scotus seems to have been of the conviction that this kind of concept would lead to absolute certitude and would allow for the "un-philosophical" mind to be educated in clear and distinct theological concepts.

Along this vein then, Siewerth qualifies Scotus primarily as a "logician." To illustrate this, and since Siewerth argues from a Thomistic vantage point, it may be useful to elucidate the contraposition of "dialectician" and "philosopher" in Thomas:

Aquinas curiously distinguishes the "dialectician" from the "philosopher." How so? The philosopher's consideration is more efficacious than that of the dialectician. The philosopher proceeds demonstratively in dealing with the common attributes of being, which he knows with certitude (!), since they are the result of demonstration. The dialectician, however, proceeds to treat all of the common attributes of being from probable

---

[43] Cf. SW, 587; For a detailed discussion of abstraction and separation, see for example: R. Te Velde, *Metaphysics between Experience and Transcendence*, Münster, Aschendorff, 2021, p. 60 ff.; J. Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas*, Washington DC, CUA Press, 1984, p. 69 ff.

[44] Cf. R. Te Velde, *Metaphysics between Experience and Transcendence*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

[45] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In de Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 1.

[46] Cf. Horan, 181: "Scotus holds that we abstract this [univocal concept of being] from a seemingly complex notion of being that is properly applied to creatures or God."

[47] Cf, SW 585; SMTH, 186, GG, 143.

[48] SW, 586.

premises, and thus he does not acquire scientific knowledge of them but a kind of opinion. The reason for this difference is that there are two kinds of beings: *beings of reason* and *real beings*. And while the subject of logic (beings of reason) has the same *extension* as the subject of philosophy (real being), the philosopher and the dialectician (logician) differ:

> Now the philosopher proceeds from the principles of this kind of being to prove the things that have to be considered about the common accidents of this kind of being. But the dialectician proceeds to consider them from the conceptions of reason, which are extrinsic to reality. Hence it is said that dialectics is in search of knowledge, because in searching it is proper to proceed from extrinsic principles.[49]

Once the step is taken away from being and, therefore, from metaphysics, and into the logical realm, as evident in Scotus, a plethora of consequences follow, as Siewerth accurately delineates.[50]

Siewerth sees in Scotus concurrently the fateful "skipping" ("Überspringung") of the difference in being, and the prototypical logification of being that will plague the subsequent history of philosophy and present an essential –if not *the essential*– element of the forgetfulness-of-being. By reducing the real distinction of *esse* and *essentia* to a mere mental distinction and at the same time pulling the carpet out from under the feet of Being and being (act and subsistence), metaphysics has taken the path of "error" ("Irre") and subjectivization ("Subjektivierung").[51] One influence that could have led Scotus in the direction of seeing quidditative being as the primary real being is the Avicennian-Platonic influence upon his thought. Such veering down a different way, led him to deny the real distinction, which he calls a *simpliciter falsum*.[52]

By skipping, avoiding, or simply denying the real distinction, Scotus gives rise to another problem, the problem of God's relation to created being (and the configuration of created being as act and subsistence). The real distinction allows Thomas to discern God's Being, creation's being, and the relation of the two without collapsing one into the other (pure immanence or pure transcendence). Thus, Thomas incidentally also synthesizes

---

[49] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, bk. IV, lec. 4, no. 574.
[50] GG, 143 ff.
[51] GG, 142.
[52] Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, 4, dist. 13, q. 1, nr. 38.

Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics.[53] The real distinction presents indeed the best explication of the relation of Divine Being and all other being. By introducing this "ontological difference," Thomas prepares the stage for the "radicalization" of the difference of being, a consequential effect in the history of metaphysics. This radical understanding of the difference in being will open up the possibility for the metaphysician to misapply this distinction, to misunderstand it, and therefore do violence in the innermost dimension of the constitution of being. Once the difference in being is discovered, it is not safe from metaphysical appropriation and abuse.

Siewerth accentuates the epochal significance of Scotus' denial of the real distinction. He wonders: In what does the spirit that conceptualizes beings as "permeating God and creatures" in its ideal constitution now participate? It participates in something that is even "more universal" than God himself, and equally present in God *and* creatures –if not really, then at least conceptually.[54] Thinking then *precedes* and *exceeds* being.[55]

This has another curious and perhaps unexpected result: If thought is not limited by theological doctrine (*regula fidei Catholica*) then it will lead to a purely 'imagined' (conceptualized) God, in a *ratio* that includes being and possibility in its essential determination. This is not just because thought returns to a 'Platonic' or 'Aristotelian' form, but rather because the *real distinction* opens up a new, more profound level of speculation, which intensifies the resulting doctrines of being and the correlative philosophies springing from them. Besides, the thinker moves to the foreground as the "grounder of grounds," taking the absolute position of a divine-like mind.[56] This movement is latent in Scotus, but the realm of the spiritual subjectivity of modernity has been opened, argues Siewerth.

What follows is an enumeration of the consequences of being becoming a univocal concept and the "skipping" of the real distinction by denigrating it to a mere logical function.

---

[53] Cf. C. Fabro, "Platonism, Neo-Platonism and Thomism", *New Scholasticism*, vol. 44, 1970, p. 69-100, p. 91: "The Thomist *esse* must therefore be recognized as absolutely original in the sense of a superior synthesis (as *Aufhebung*) of the Neo-Platonic form-totality and of the Aristotelian act-emergent and thus not reducible to either of the two."

[54] Cf. SMTH 159.

[55] Which will lead to the philosophies of Francois de Mayronis, Meister Eckhart, and others, as Siewerth notes.

[56] SMTH, 159.

2.3. Consequences

2.3.1. Being and thought

Once thinking being becomes thinking *of* being, a univocal concept of being reigns in metaphysics and the real distinction becomes a mental act. Siewerth sees a plethora of devastating consequences resulting from this. First, the Being of beings (das *Sein des Seienden*) becomes indistinguishable from God himself. God now determines all being (Seiendes) to its individual perfection, bestowing upon it formal individuality, while predetermining all conditions of possibility from eternity. Man places himself in the same vantage point and sees beings as God sees them. Thinking of being (Seiendes) is therefore a "divine intellection" ("göttliche Gedachtheit").[57]

Consequently, the mediating character of *being* changes. The constitutive distinctive unification of *esse* and *essentia* is now replaced by a simple *positio ad extra*. The formally composed substance (essence) is already "complete" before receiving existence, and its existence outside of her cause (God) is reduced to a mere "placement." This "placement" does not add anything "new" to the essence; it is merely an energetic ejection referring to a "formally distinct" act of will in God. This formally distinct act of the will has three further dialectical consequences for being's constitution:[58]

1. Metaphysics *can only be* conceived of as *theology*. Because the "ejection" of a being "into creation" refers back to "simply being-thought" and "being-wanted," its positivity can only be understood in terms of the divine will. The act of creation is focused primarily on the divine act of will (instead of God's *Being*). What happens to the constitution of a being when the Christian God is replaced with a non-Christian god or a simulacrum? What if the personal and loving God is removed? The fate of metaphysics ending in an impersonal "absolute spirit" seems to begin here.[59]

---

[57] Cf. GG, 144.

[58] Cf. GG, 145.

[59] Here stands the very starting point of the Seinsvergessenheit in all its intensity: "Hegel is only the executor of a fate befalling occidental thought after Thomas. Since being emerged in the thought of Aquinas with all the depth and power of its transcendentality, but was skipped in its analogy by later theological speculation… evaporated into God or the purely ideal concept, with Eckhart, Scotus, the Cusanus, Boehme and Suarez, the dialectical contradiction came into operation with ever greater power." SMTH, 353-354.

2. A *being* is reduced to *essence*. Since "being-placed" is merely a *positio ad extra*, the significance of *esse* diminishes drastically. The only robust positivity of an individual being is found in its essence, in *what it is* rather than *that it is*. *Dasein* becomes indifferent and insignificant.[60] This is corroborated by not few a Scotist. For instance, Bettoni notes in reference to his explication of the denial of the real distinction in Scotus: "Existence makes a mere possible being to be an actual being; it actualizes essence, but it does not modify it… Haecceity… constitutes the ultimate perfection of the individual essence."[61] In fact, while Scotus does not directly answer if an essence could be real without its "act of existence" [sic], according to Bettoni, he comes so close, it seems fitting to posit a positive answer: "That an essence be outside of its cause and have no reality to make it that particular essence is for me a contradiction."[62]
3. When it comes to the "outside" of God in which a being is "placed," the metaphysician is now in the embarrassing position of explanatory distress. What is "outside" of God, i. e. pure Being? Instead of creation out of the nothingness of essence's potency and the non-subsistence of act –as Thomas Aquinas proposes it– the positioning is now understood as ejection *in* a *nothingness* that is the 'outside of God.' This *nothingness* evidently exists next to God (as his 'equal'?). Siewerth remarks that it has a vague resemblance of the Platonic "chaos."[63]

Coincidentally, this *nothingness* grows to have a certain 'power' over being. The question quickly follows: why does creation not exist *in* God? Why does it need to be 'placed' outside of God at all? If essence already exists in its thought-out perfection in God, why is it necessary that it be posited 'out' into 'real life,' when God *is* perfect *being* and the *fullness of life*? In addition, the creature seems to *participate* (metaphysically, not only metaphorically) *realiter* in non-being, somehow being placed *in it*, by the

---

[60] GG, 145.

[61] E. Bettoni, *Duns Scotus, The Basic Principles of his Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[62] Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* II, d. 12, q. 1, no. 7: "Quod enim aliqua essentia sit extra cau- sam suam, et quod non habeat aliquod esse, quo sit essentia, est mihi contradictio." Cf. *Ordinatio* IV, d. 11, q. 3, n. 46; d. 13, q. 1, no. 38, II, d. 16, no. 10.

[63] GG, 145.

very fact –and in the same profound ontological dimension– that it *is*.[64] This *nothingness* becomes dialectically entangled with being. *Nothingness* develops into *something* that determines *essence*; equally, essence is thought of as the repelling resistance against a *fall into nothingness*.[65] The form (of essence) qualifies itself by its "gradually greater being against nothingness."[66] Essence becomes the "negation of the negation," a term that denotes a dynamic so dear to Hegel.[67] God himself –as the other to nothingness– is a negation of it.

2.3.2. Relation of esse *and* essentia

The relation of *esse* and *essentia* is reconfigured: essences do not arise out of *esse* but root directly in God. A 'double line of participation' is established. God, in turn, being perfect unity, becomes the immediate antithesis to the manifoldness of essences. All essences appear to be united in a single "genus," which in turn signifies that the perfection predicated of this genus seem to apply univocally to God. While Scotus emphasizes God's freedom in creation and his "un-needing" transcendence, Siewerth notes that the metaphysical chain of essences in a genus is diametrically opposed to this transcendence and freedom.[68] The chain of essence, analogous to the chain of numbers, is an Aristotelian idea, which will become the universal principle of being in Scotus, due to the exclusion of the act of being. God himself becomes a member of this series of numbers as a formally distinct essence (as infinite). It could be argued that Scotus' insistence on God's freedom is a *result* and *reaction* against the metaphysical group of essences. This has two major repercussions for the configuration of being and metaphysics:

First, essences become mere possibility. Instead of the intensive actualizing power of the act of being, now essence takes the place as the most resolute and persistent being. Against nothingness, it is essence that through its "eternal being-thought," her individual determination, her simple per-

---

[64] Cf. GG, 145.

[65] Cf. W. Hoeres, *Der Wille als reine Vollkommenheit nach Duns Scotus*, München, Verlag Anton Pustet, 1962, p. 35.

[66] GG, 146.

[67] G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, J. Findlay (trans.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973, §1328.

[68] Cf. GG, 146.

fection, and her formal "*unio continens*" is able to resist and assert herself against nothingness. Essences are actualized and energetic in themselves; in fact, God cannot even think essences in their last perfection without infusing into them some real being of his creative power. They are –even in their *ideal* state– already "predetermined" to be. The Being of being (*Sein des Seienden*) becomes "being possible" ("Möglichsein").[69] It is the Platonic ἰδέα understood as ὄντως ὄν.[70] In this predetermination, being comes close to being dialectically clamped to nothingness. "Nothingness" or "not-yet-ness" is, at first, an *inclinatio ad esse*, as the pre-existing essence 'awaits' its position in the nothingness by creation. This 'state of expectation' is in itself something positive, charged with capacity and actuality. The *actual* 'moment' of creation, then, is modulated in relation to the expectant state of essences.[71] Siewerth sees herein the temptation of adequating "Being" and "Nothingness" and to "reduce God's thought as necessary constitution of the manifoldness that is natural to him."[72]

Now it is the "non-contradiction," or rather, the 'deeming' of something as 'non-contradictory,' that becomes the last qualifier of something's existence, as if the thinker had profound ontological control over "objective" reality.[73] Thought can understand being only from an ideal or virtual vantage point, but is, in its own operation, caught in that very same virtuality. This "virtuality" is present in the think-ability of the thing-in-itself (defined by Scotus as *hoc cui non repugnant esse*[74]) and its constitution as "something thinkable" (*quodcumque conceptibile*[75]).[76]

---

[69] To say it in the words of Honnefelder: "*Die Nichtrepugnanz hat ihren Grund in der jeweiligen Inhaltlichkeit; die reale Möglichkeit folgt der –in der logischen Nichtwidersprüchlichkeit sich zeigenden– absoluten Möglichkeit*." Cf. L. Honnefelder, "Johannes Duns Scotus: Denker auf der Schwelle vom mittelalterlichen zum neuzeitlichen Denken", in *id.*, *Was ist Wirklichkeit?*, Leiden, Brill, 2016, p. 19.

[70] Cf. GG, 147.

[71] Cf. L. Honnefelder, "Johannes Duns Scotus…", art. cit., p. 18: "*Doch unser Realitätsverständnis – so die scotische Sprachanalyse – geht darüber hinaus und umfasst auch das Realmögliche. Und es ist die modale Explikation unsers Verständnisses von 'real', in der die scotische Theorie der Realität erst ihr volles Profil gewinnt.*"

[72] GG, 147.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* IV, d. 1, q. 2, n. 8 (ed Viv. 26), 108; *Ord.* I, d. 43, q. un., n. 7 (ed. Vat. 6), 354.

[75] Duns Scotus, *Quodl.*, q. 3, n. 2, 114.

[76] L. Honnefelder, "Johannes Duns Scotus…", art. cit., p. 18.

Second, metaphysics becomes 'merely' the *science of essence* and the detection of essences' gradual chain of relation to one another. Its structure is threefold:

(1) There is no more an "analogy of being" of *esse commune* and God, but rather every individual essence stands in immediate analogy to God. This *transposes* the real distinction (that by Thomas is located in *esse* and *essentia*) *into* the essence.[77] Within the Thomistic understanding of the real distinction, thought –which is essentially finite– can only "move within" this real distinction and encounter being as "act" and as "subsistence" within every being. Every analogical proposition that can be made about being moves within the pronouncement of *one* being. "Thus, 'analogy' always implies a differentiation in a medium that can no longer be transcended, which therefore also summarizes different things in one word."[78] In Scotus' design, where God and the essences are the being of beings (das *Sein des Seienden*), the formally distinct forms (i.e. essences) must be related directly to the highest form (God), just as Thomas "pronounces being as substance and act attributively and proportionally about God."[79] This means that Scotus must differentiate essences *within* their formal unity into one part that is "different" (from God) and one part that is "referable-similar" (beziehbar-Gleiches). The "relational" part of an essence, then, must in itself be something "formal," as Siewerth notes, whose unity is not further dissolvable into something that contains a difference (to God). This is the reason, argues Siewerth, that for Scotus, the qualitative features of the essences move into the fore, which, on the one hand, permeate the whole gradual staging of substances, and, on the other hand, must be found in God himself univocally. This is true for the "simple perfections," for instance, for goodness, wisdom, freedom, etc.[80]

(2) This results in an individual being primarily perceived as its essence. That is, the individual is *reduced* to its essence; its *esse* is circumvented and bypassed, it is 'bracketed'.[81] Essence loses its relation to the *actus essendi* and

---

[77] GG, 148: "*An ihnen [den Wesenheiten] muss daher jene Differenz hervortreten, die bei Thomas im Seiendsein waltet.*"

[78] GG, 148.

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] *Ibid.*, 149.

[81] It is our opinion that a case could be made that in the Scotist methodology, we find a rationalist proto-version of the *epoché* of Edmund Husserl's phenomenalism, i.e. the idea

is intelligible in and of itself. The main formal distinction as Scotus correctly deduces, is between "infinite" and "finite." As Scotus argues: "the formal reason of this perfection is not removed due to the infinite degree."[82] In this, Siewerth sees once more the temptation towards a "theological metaphysics" in which human intellection moves into an intuitive closeness to God's essence, to which it is naturally ordered anyway. "The essential form act does refer to the being of beings, but directly to God."[83]

If being can be said univocally of all essences and God's essence and if essences in themselves present a complete perfection, but are in their "existence" only possible, then the existence of God becomes necessary in order to argue for the real existence of essences. An ontological proof for the existence of God is required. In the great chain of being, a hierarchical ordering of essences, that which comes closest to God is considered more perfect. In so far as an essence is more perfect, it features higher on that hierarchy. It taken so, any essence is only a "segment" in a hierarchy of perfection in being. At its base is an infinite being which underlies it. As such, the limited essence *limits* the infinitely potential being, expressed in the univocal concept. Here Siewerth detects an unmistakable proximity to idealistic dialectics, in which being is potency, rather than act.

> From this point of view, the forms appear either as 'parts' of an infinite 'idea of God' or as determinations of 'an infinite potentiality'… Their 'participation in being' is the way in which they relate themselves negatively and determinatively to it. Being becomes their potency and thus its meaning is inverted.[84]

---

that "being" has to be "bracketed" [Einklammerung] as methodologically constrained. Obviously, Scotus' metaphysical rationalism does not take this constrain upon itself intentionally, or even consciously, but the effect remains the same: an individual being is characterized mainly by its essence –or "phenomenal appearance"– which the question about its 'being' is left suspended. Cf. E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, vol. 1, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Pub., 1983; see also Husserl's description of the need of "univocal" concepts: "All of that, now, requires that the same words and sentences preserve an unambiguous coordination with certain intuitionally apprehensible essences which make up their 'fulfilling sense'." *Ideas*, 152.

82 Cf. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, dist. 8, q. 4, no. 17.

83 GG, 149: "*Der wesenhafte Formakt geht nicht auf das Sein des Seienden, sondern unmittelbar auf Gott.*"

84 GG, 150-151.

2.3.3. Being is re-configured

The constitution of being is thus reconfigured and transformed. As Thomas distinguishes between *esse* and *essentia* within any given thing, so Scotus utilizes this distinction, but he *transposes* it *into* essence itself. Since essence is really constituted and posited as one, the 'real distinction' moves within God's *ideality* alone.[85] If being is conceived *as one whole*, then essences in their perfection participate in this being (which culminates and embraces God), as much *as they participate in nothingness*.[86] As every being also mirrors, at least to a certain degree, the divine essence as its image, albeit in a limited way, so every essence contains a relation and a division. Siewerth notes that in Scotus' constitution of being there are three elements comparable to their Thomistic counterparts:

Scotus	Thomas
Formal act, participatory in God	Being (*esse*)
Affection for nothingness	Potentiality of essence
Degree of modal finitude	Finite configuration of essential form

The new constitution of being, conceived by Scotus, leads him to deny the real distinction of *esse* and *essentia* and the introduction of a formal distinction.[87]

2.4. Transformation of the Real Distinction

Formally distinct, every essence is marked partially by unity *and* distinction. Transposing the real distinction of *esse* and *essentia* into the structure of *essentia* and only formally distinguishing it from *esse*, Scotus introduces a new constitution of being, which yields a number of effects, as Siewerth notes.[88]

---

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] GG, 151: "*Er* [*der Grad der Reihe der Wesenheiten*] *hat deswegen notwendig Anteil an Gott, dem obersten Stufungsmaß, wie am untersten, dem Nichtsein.*"

[87] Cf. GG, 151: The formal distinction has further effects for essence in specifically six simension: Its "1) positive quality (form); 2) relation to its foundation, i. e., perfection; 3) actuality that negates nothingness; 4) the object of other perfections; 5) as contraction to an individually determined degree within the general species and genus structure; 6) as *unio continens* which unites all differentiations into one."

[88] Cf. GG, 151-154.

2.4.1. The configuration of the formalitas

A being's form, the object of the formal distinction, is conceived no more as the simple principle of a self-reflecting unity which receives the *actus essendi* and unifies it in a potential essence. Rather, form is understood as absolute individuality, which receives its consistency and its unifying power out of itself as its final principle of realization. Instead of being the unifying form of a thing, its unifying character now is subsumed by the *haecceitas*, which, in turn, turns 'form' into a passive feature that receives *haecceitas* as the 'higher order' of unity. Thus conceived, the form grants merely the "logical congruence" or "logical contradiction" within a thing's essence.

The "formal distinction," as developed by Scotus, permeates all reality, from the lowest to the highest manifestation. It affects divine thought itself, the divine ideas ("ideelle Entwürfe"), the transcendentals (*passionis entis*), and individuals. Everything is so severely intrinsically individualized, that formerly correlating principles (act-potency, form-matter, etc.) cannot be thought in relation to one another (resulting in a unity), but rather in opposition to one another. They become polarized and reified. Each of these polarities becomes re-configured. For instance: matter as potency is not conceivable, rather matter itself becomes formal or actual, so that "materiality" moves to the fore as positive and necessary givenness which actuates, in turn, the already individualized substantive form.[89]

Either matter is intrinsically part of the form-act, which would negate the distinction in the first place, or matter and form are already individualized against one another, so that their unity can only be seen as accidental and occasional. This has immediate consequences for the whole unity, such as in the relation of body and soul: "The body-soul-relationship therefore becomes necessarily dialectical and acquires features that are difficult to unite."[90]

---

[89] Cf. GG, note 12.

[90] GG, 153; As matter is endowed with its own 'being,' here begins the long route via Franciso Suárez to Descartes and the latter's dual-substance composition of man. Cf. F. Suárez, *Disputationes metafisicae*, Madrid, Biblioteca Hispanica de Filosofia, vol. I, 1960, d. 13, s. 4, 2: "Ut ergo ab his quae certa videntur incipiamus, primo indubitatum esse videtur materiam quae actu est sub forma et cum illa componit substantiam corpoream, habere aliquid entitatis realis et substantialis et realiter distinctae ab entitate formae"; also:

(1) The formal distinction and understanding divine essence

The formal distinction in the divine is spoken of differently than in creatures. When applied to divine perfections ("simplicity," "omnipotence," etc.) it becomes difficult to understand on what grounds perfections can be differentiated within God, since there is no an analogical basis of comparison. Because the formal distinction concerns not only modal composition but also formal qualitative perfections, which can be assigned to the finite forms in different ways, the perfections attributed to God meet their differentiating quality in God himself.[91] In this way, formal distinctions permeate divine ideas, since God thinks of essences in a distinct way.

> Thus the conclusion arises that God himself (as he is also placed against nothingness and directly endures in the essential perfections of being) is affected by the 'distinctio formalis'.[92]

(2) Effects it has on the recognition of truth (epistemology)

The human intellect is always dependent on sense abstraction as the origin of knowledge, any philosophy that will inappropriately transcend this in some kind of formality, will fall into danger of equating human intellection to angelic intellection. Human intellection would grow above the bounds

---

d. 13, s. 5, 13, 14: "Dicitur enim materia inesse rei genitae, quia per suam entitatem manet in re genita, per se componendo illam, et secundum eam entitatem ait Aristoteles ibidem materiam esse priorem re genita, et esse ingenerabilem et incorruptibilem. Ac tandem ait materiam per se esse ens, per accidens autem non ens ratione privationis; non ergo excludit a materia omnem actualitatem entitativam, sed formalem, ad quam est in potentia. […]; materia autem est susceptiva actus formalis et esse completi; ergo respectu horum dicitur esse pura potentia, non respectu propriae entitatis." "Materia metaphysice composita ex actu et potentia, non physice […]. Si vero sit sermo de potentia metaphysica, sic verum est materiam in communi concipi ut priorem quam hanc speciem materiae, et essentiam materiae ut priorem sua existentia, non quatenus est ens actu sed absolute, et similiter naturam materiae in aliquo genere esse priorem sua subsistentia partiali". For forther studies, see: F. Crismareanu, "Suáres's Influence on Descartes: The Case of Epistle CDXVIII (AT IV 348-350)", *Philobiblon: Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities*, vol. 22, 2017, p. 205-221; T. Vaughan SJ, *First Matter in the Philosophy of Suárez*, Master's Thesis (Paper 413), Loyola University, 1943, p. 30; T. Schmaltz, "Substantial Forms as Causes: from Suárez to Descartes", in G. Manning (ed.), *Matter and Form in Early Modern Science and Philosophy*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, p. 125-150; J. Kronen, "The Problem of the Continuant: Aquinas and Suárez on Prime Matter and Substantial Generation", *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 53, 2000, p. 863-885.

[91] Cf. GG, 152.

[92] GG, 152; cf. W. Hoeres, *Der Wille als reine Vollkommenheit nach Duns Scotus*, *op. cit.*, p. 65, 71.

given by the hylomorphic nature of man and assimilate a character, Thomas only describes of the separate substances.[93] Human cognition becomes essentially angelic.[94]

a. Being formally one and perfect, only immediate cognition is appropriate for the soul. In Thomas, the ontological difference between Being and being leads him to consider that the intellect can only reach Being by judgment of beings. In Scotus, the intellect's capacity to formally distinguish in reality allows it –as a condition of the possibility of this formal distinction– to have immediate introspection into the formality of a *res*. The knower has immediate, intuitive knowledge of an essentially present thing. In a non-lapsarian state, i.e. were man not tainted by original sin, this intuitive recognition would be perfectly adequate to the intellection of man. Only because he *is* fallen, is man dependent on sense perceptions for his knowledge. Man's intellection bespeaks a universal adequacy towards all possible content of knowledge, i.e. things, because it is perfectly adequate for God's action and the beatific vision (see above).[95]

b. It follows that the *passive intellect* is already perfectly in act and does not require actualization by the active intellect. This is because the

---

[93] Cf. GG, 153.

[94] In Maritain's words: "angelism": "The sin of Descartes is a sin of *angelism*. He turned Knowledge and Thought into a hopeless perplexity, an abyss of unrest, because he conceived human Thought after the type of angelic Thought. To sum it up in three words: What he saw in man's thought was *Independence of Things*." Cf. J. Maritain, *The Three Reformers*, London, Sheed & Ward, 1928, p. 26.

[95] In the question of "divine illumination," Scotus argues against Henry of Ghent's account that uncreated exemplars received through special divine illumination are essential for cognitive certitude, because objects (known) are changeable. Scotus' strategy for refuting Henry's doctrine is the demonstration that objects known and the knower are not in fact mutable. Rather the objects of knowledge are inherently intelligible, referring back to his univocal concept of being. Scotus, in this, interprets Augustine's illumination *as* his theory of the univocity of being, in the sense that the divine light permeates created reality in a general sense, inasmuch as it causes beings to exist ins an immutable mode of being. What is known of the things is known of God. This "divine illumination," then, is a "natural feature of the mind," as Schumacher summarizes and remarks. Cf. L. Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, p. 194-198; J. Gracia, "Scotus' Conception of Metaphysics: The Study of the Transcendentals", *Franciscan Studies*, vol. 56, 1998, p. 153-168.

universally adequate knowledge already exists in the 'first act' of human intellection. Intellection does not need activation by the Being of beings, but rather perfectly recognizes individualized essences, as it is itself a perfectly individualized essence. In that sense, the human mind thinks like the angelic mind, while being subordinate to it.[96] Following this to the natural conclusion, this would also make the differentiation between *active* and *passive* intellect superfluous. Indeed –owed to Scotus or not– this is a distinction eventually abolished by modern epistemology.

c. The *active intellect* does not receive actualizing light from the *actus essendi*, but is a feature of the form (individual essence). Its role is to bring sense perceptions into a "certain luminous light" so that they can be grasped by the visionary intellect. The "insecure sway" that Scotus presents in the intellection of sensible qualities demonstrates, argues Siewerth, that he was very aware of his ambivalent teaching regarding the knowledge of sensible qualities. Since, if the objects are already formally individualized and the active vision of reason is primarily directed towards being as first known and embraces all essences already, it is not comprehensible *why* the intellect's intuition *cannot already grasp them as well*.

d. The process of *abstraction* is also transformed. Since reason's object is universal, confused generality, knowledge becomes 'analogical' and 'indeterminate.' It cannot grasp concrete quiddities, but only their confused images, and it compares their similarities.[97] Since reason is perfected form, its operation has an aprioristically direction. Whatever it grasps as simple *ratio* must also be *real* and referential to a formal element of the composition of essence. "Therefore, every predication, every determination of an object, of a substance, of a species, of a genus, of an accidence, is of equal logical and factual valence."[98] All distinctions, such as the distinction of form and matter, act and potency, and so forth, are on the same level and can be arbitrarily interchanged. The identity of possibility and reality assure

[96] Cf. GG, 154.
[97] GG, 155.
[98] GG, 156.

them an infinite objectification. What is presupposed by Scotus is that every formality corresponds to something in reality.[99] Its versatility and rationality led to the displacement of Thomas Aquinas' metaphysics of being.[100]

(3) Effects on transcendental determinations

Transcendental determinations suffer very tangible effects. Since being is primarily essence, and thought touches primarily upon form, the form *in itself* must contain some transcendental feature. By recognizing modal individualities such as one, essence, will, love, etc. the mind, grasping essences, perceives at the same time the created as well as the uncreated sphere. It 'sees' into divine ideality. "The *ratio* becomes universal spirit that transcends all reality into the abyss of a universal (rational or ideal) dimension of foundation (Begründungsdimension)."[101] The step that Hegel will need take to absolutize spirit is a small one.

Thought, with absolute determinations, indifferent to the modes of finitude and infinity, either rises beyond divine reality and starts predicating *universal non-contradiction*, or it descends down into itself, recognizing only a subjective indifferent categoriality which makes it prior, more supreme, and dominant over all individual things. "The human thought then resides ("west") in the thinking emergence of God like in the 'eternal reason for essence' in the sense of the Hegelian logic."[102] How so?

With the univocity of being, being itself becomes a "determinable potency" ("bestimmbare Potenz") which is only determined by its *way* or *mode* of being. But, if this is the only being there is, and it is understood in actuality –i. e., if the univocal concept of being corresponds to an actual *act*-being– then the modes of its determination transform *nothingness*, resulting in an absolute contradiction. Being becomes a determining, mono-sensical entity, something that transcends everything that exists and *de facto* becomes God and an all-transcending enabling ground in the sense of the "Hegelian

[99] "In Scotus's terms, each formality has some degree of mind-independent unity." Cf. G. Pini, "How is Scotus's Logic related to his metaphysics: A reply to Todd Bates", in L. Newton, *Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's Categories*, Leiden, Brill, 2008, p. 277.

[100] Cf. GG, 157.

[101] GG, 157.

[102] GG, 158.

concept of spirit" ("Hegelschen Geistesbegriff").[103] It also becomes "divested of act".[104]

If the philosopher does not want to take this route, but still insists on the univocity of being, whereby being only refers to the individual individualized essence, then being becomes identical with the plurality of the manifold forms. Consequently, the univocal concept of being becomes inadequate, a genus which needs further determination and verification through individual beings. Such a need reveals an inner contradiction[105] (universality and particularity are equally present).

> Therefore, however we turn the 'quidditative' concept of being, we are always either in contradiction because it denotes non-essential, determinable potentiality, or else we are in the consequence of absolute idealism.[106]

2.5. Summary

What does metaphysic suffer after the real distinction has been "skipped"? Siewerth summarily answers:[107] First, the real constitutive difference in being (the real distinction) becomes formal and ideal only. *All* of reality is implicated in this change. Second, human reason seems to populate the absolute dimension of being's and essence's composition. It becomes onto-theo-logical. In other words: it operates from the divine vantage point. Thirdly, all thought becomes theological and tied to revelation. Philosophy is absorbed into theological speculation. Fourth, thought becomes dialectical, unifying possibility and reality, act and potency, and so on. The principle of causality is replaced with the non-impossibility and the law of non-contradiction. Fifth, paired with the abstract and univocal unification of being, a radical and individualizing differentiation takes hold. Creation becomes identical with formal individuation. Nominalism will necessarily develop out of this. Sixth, nothingness or non-being becomes a positive element which relates to being. Seventh and lastly, the spontaneous formal *ratio* becomes the active universal power of insight. Human reason becomes angelic ("ein engelhaft ausgestatteter Geist"). The knowledge of sensible

[103]Cf. GG, 158.
[104]SMTH, 158.
[105]SMTH, 157.
[106]GG, 159.
[107]GG, 159-160.

qualities becomes secondary, diagnostic of his imperfect (fallen) state, and ultimately occasional. The "epoch" of the "forgetfulness-of-being" begins with Scotus.[108]

3. Conclusion

Four epochal transformations infected philosophy as a consequence of rethinking being and skipping the ontological difference. First, *ideality* now precedes *reality*. Second, *possibility* outranks *actuality*. Third, the *reification of essence* (essentialism). And fourth, *thought* takes precedence over *being*.[109]

Skipping the ontological difference, or, rather, its radical transformation, leads on the one hand to Kant's subject which owes its configuration thoroughly to an essentialized metaphysics first in its receptive and then spontaneous, productive, and transcendentally synthesizing formal thinking monad. On the other hand, the empiricist-nominalist tradition is based on this essentialized metaphysics: it understands the individual thing only in its individuality, which has a certain affective relation to the subject, but in which the subject is utterly impotent and incapable of determining a regulating and ordering entity in reality.[110] Famously for Siewerth, the skipping of the ontological difference finds its culmination in the absolute difference of Hegel:

> A recapitulation of the difference structures of Scotist and Suarezian thought reveals a progressive elision of all differences in the objectifying, formally simple monad, which participates in God's ideality through its modal simplest terms, i. e., through its ideas, just as, conversely, God's thought becomes ontotheologically (Heidegger) entangled with the world through the energization of the absolute 'ordo ad esse' of ideas.[111]

---

[108] SMTH, 157: "*Wenn das Akzidens ein 'intelligibile per se' ist wie auch das 'Ungeschaffene', dann ist der reine 'Erscheinungsraum' wie auch der 'apriorische Begriff' er Ursprungsort des Denkens geworden: Die Epoche der Seinsvergessenheit hat begonnen.*"

[109] Cf. J. Bentz, *Das Sein und die Geschichte des Seins*, Aachen, Patrimonium Verlag, 2019, especially pages 70-76.

[110] Cf. GG, 172-173.

[111] GG, 174: "*Ein Rückblick auf die Differenzstrukturen des scotistischen und suarezischen Denkens enthüllt eine fortschreitende Verselbigung aller Unterschiede in der objektivierenden, formal einfachen Monade, die durch ihre modalen einfachsten Begriffe, d.h. durch ihre Ideen an Gottes Idealität partizipiert, wie umgekehrt Gottes Denken durch die Energetisierung des absoluten 'ordo ad esse' der Ideen ontotheologisch (Heidegger) mit der Welt verpannt wird.*"

Hegel describes his own philosophy as "logic," thereby betraying the Scholastic origin of his thought. The difference of essence and *esse*, of Being and beings, is leveled in the thought of the subjectivity divine and human. It is pure thinking subjectivity. The intellectual solipsism that is the principle fundament of modernity comes fully into its own. The leveling that began in late medieval thought in a presumptuous theology that moved beyond its subject into the divine ground, by positing its own subject-thought, becomes the self-thinking absolute, which ultimately leads to despair, realized in Protestant theology on the one hand and in a despairing gnosis on the other.[112]

> The end of secularized Christianity is the 'triumph of despair.'[113]

The great quest of metaphysics, the intellectual conquest of being and its principles, reached at the same time the most profound impetus, as well as the densest limit in the revelation of the *ipsum esse subsistens* of Christianity. This revelation animated man to *re*think revelation and to *re*cognize his constitution and configuration to and in being (*nach*denken!). This he has accomplished in a multitude of ways through the strengths and weakness, advantages and disadvantages, of varying philosophies.

The tides turned when the philosopher was seized by the conviction that he could proper categorize *ipsum esse* and form a proper 'concept' of it. In that moment, he 'left being behind' and turned his attention to other things, i. e. freedom, particular questions, etc.

Being, and thereby God, too, then have faded out of his field of vision and attention. He was left in the conviction that he had deposited God in

---

[112]Cf. GG, 203.

[113]GG, 212. Hegel writes: "I am a Lutheran, and by philosophy equally wholly fixed in Lutheranism." And: "What was initiated by Luther as faith in feeling and the witness of the spirit, the more mature mind strives to apprehend in conception." G.W.F. Hegel, *Letters: Hegel to Theoluck*, July 3rd 1826, cited in A. Von Stockhausen, *Der Geist im Widerspruch – Von Hegel zu Luther*, Weilheim-Bierbronnen, Gustav-Siewerth-Akademie, 2003, p. 51; and G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, W. Dyde (trans.), London, G. Bell Pub., 1896, preface. For a thorough analysis of Luther's and Hegel's voluntarism and their roots in Scotist philosophy see: T. Stark, "Man as Victim of a Divine Tyrant: Luther's 'theology' of a self-contradicting God", in J. Rao, *Luther and his Progeny*, Ohio, Angelico Press, 2017, p. 25-37. For a thorough analysis of Hegel as a Gnostic thinker, see for example G. A. Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2008. See also: U. Asendorf, *Luther und Hegel: Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung einer neuen systematischen Theologie*, Wiesbaden, Steiner Verlag, 1982.

his 'safe' transcendence. As soon as God was delivered to this safe shore, man set sail again. The step towards a complete abandonment and abnegation of God and the divine drew closer and seemed to have little effect on man and his constitution. God –as *being*– became a concept dominatable by reason.[114]

But man, having abandoned the quest for being and God, finds himself and his world ever faster deconstructed. First his being, then his will, then his nature, then his self, until nothing is left but the circumstances in which he happened to be "thrown." Man, who set out to control conceptually all reality in whole abstraction, is now reduced to the most impotent, self-destructive, and abandoned poor creature. What the thinker had abandoned in that moment was the "openness" to being, by which he should have recognized *his own limitation* and thus the limitation of his thought. Blinded by the enormous power of his intellection, man ceased to resign in humility to his limitations as creature, and began instead –sometimes explicitly sometimes implicitly– divinizing himself. The long chain that began in Scotus' logification of metaphysics reached all the way into modal metaphysics –as attested by Scotists.[115] The slight shift in the beginning amounted to a monumental effect.[116]

---

[114] Cf. L. Honnefelder, *Scotus Denker an der Schwelle*, 22: "*Schlüsselfunktion hat schließlich das skizzierte Realitätsverständnis für die Ausbildung eines rational kontrollierbaren* Gottesbegriffs. *Welche konzeptuelle Bedeutung der zu diesem Zweck von Scotus entwickelte Begriff eines ‚unendlichen Seienden (*ens infinitum*) hat, macht die Wiederentdeckung des gleichen Begriffs durch den Theoretiker der modernen Mengenlehre Georg Cantor, deutlich.*"

[115] Honnefelder, *Scotus Denker an der Schwelle*, 35: "'*Nach Scotus' denkt man in Philosophie und Theologie 'anders', und das tun auch die, die ihm in den inhaltlichen Lösungen nicht folgen; man lese nur Capreolus oder Cajetan, Ockham oder Gerson. Es verwundert daher nicht, dass es diese Sicht der Philosophie ist, die mehr als alle anderen mittelalterlichen Ansätze die folgende Entwicklung der Philosophie bestimmt, wie sich dies in der theoretischen Philosophie vom spätmittel-alterlichen Scotismus über Suárez, die Schulmetaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts, Christian Wolff, Kant und Peirce bis hin zur modernen Gegenstandstheorie und Modalmetaphysik zeigt.*"; cf. L. Honnefelder, *Johannes Duns Scotus*, *op. cit.*, p. 132-148; *id.*, "Die Transzendentalphilosophie der Alten", *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress*, vol. 1, 1995, p. 393-407.

[116] Siewerth calls Scotus' rationalized metaphysics not a "crude falsification" but rather a "shift in accentuation": Cf. SW, 585; Siewerth relates this in specifying the development of the change in understanding the word "abstraction" and does not mention Scotus by name, but the implication is more than clear, since he specifically sees this shift happening in a metaphysics which denigrates metaphysics to an "instrumentarium" for theology, which he associates specifically with Scotus (See SMTH, 186) but also for decadent Scholasticism in general.

Considering all of this and in line with Siewerth's critique, it is plausible to identify Scotus as one of the initial thinkers of 'modernity'. This is perhaps most evident in the deep chasm between subject and object, between the knower and the known, which resides at the core of modernity. Hence the "project of modernity" is the attempt to return from logic, which plays with the "conceptual designs of possibilities," back to reality.[117]

> Modernity is an *event* that has transformed the relation between the cosmos, its transcendent source, and its human interpreter… It [the principle form of Western culture] has come under increasing attacks for veiling both the openness of existence and the indeterminacy of Being itself… When modern thought distinguished the real as it is in itself [object] from the real as it exists for itself [subject], it opened a gap in the very nature of the real that will never be closed again.[118]

Abbreviations

SW Sein und Wahrheit
GG Gott in der Geschichte
SMTH Das Schicksal der Metaphysik von Thomas zu Heidegger

All citations are taken from the *Gesammelte Werke*. Gustav Siewerth, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 1: *Sein und Wahrheit* 1975; Bd. 2: *Der Thomismus als Identitätssystem*, 1979; Bd. 3: *Gott in der Geschichte*, 1971; Bd. 4: *Das Schicksal der Metaphysik von Thomas zu Heidegger*, 1987, Patmos Verlag, Düsseldorf.

[117] SW, 583: "*Das Projekt der Moderne ist der 'Versuch' die 'tentative' Logik, die in begrifflichen Möglichkeitsentwürfen spielt, ins Wirkliche zu überführen (deducere)*."; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In Met*., bk. IV, lec. 4.

[118] L. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, *op. cit*., p. 250-252.