

**Thomas Aquinas on the Separability of Accidents and Dietrich of  
Freiberg's Critique**

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## Abstract

The opening chapter briefly introduces the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist and the history of its appropriation into the systematic rational discourse of philosophy, as culminating in Thomas Aquinas' account of transubstantiation with its metaphysical elaboration of the separability of accidents from their subject (a substance), so as to exist (supernaturally) without a subject.

Chapter Two expounds St. Thomas' account of the separability of accidents from their subject. It shows that Thomas presents a consistent rational articulation of his position throughout his works on the subject.

Chapter Three expounds Dietrich of Freiberg's rejection of Thomas' view, examining in detail his treatise *De accidentibus*, which is expressly dedicated to demonstrating the utter impossibility of separate accidents. Especially in light of Kurt Flasch's influential analysis of this work, which praises Dietrich for his superior level of 'methodological consciousness,' this chapter aims to be painstaking in its exposition and to comprehensively present Dietrich's own views just as we find them, before taking up the task of critically assessing Dietrich's position.

Chapter Four critically analyses the competing doctrinal positions expounded in the preceding two chapters. It analyses the various elements of Dietrich's case against Thomas and attempts to pinpoint wherein Thomas and Dietrich agree and wherein they part ways. It argues that Thomas' arguments have a strength and consistency which Dietrich's arguments clearly lack.

Chapter Five applies the argumentative findings from Chapter Four to an assessment of the analyses found in recent philosophical literature of the dispute between Thomas and Dietrich. My analysis indicates that there are some serious and persistent deficiencies in these analyses – first, those treating Thomas' position, and consequently those treating Dietrich's – and offers some diagnosis of the root causes of these deficiencies.

I conclude with remarks addressed to general doubts about the status of the question of the separability of accidents as an actual 'philosophical' question.

## Résumé

Le chapitre initial décrit brièvement la doctrine catholique de l'Eucharistie et l'histoire de l'appropriation de cette doctrine dans un cadre de discours systématiquement rationnel (c'est-à-dire, philosophique), terminant avec la doctrine de la transsubstantiation et l'élaboration métaphysique, tel que rendu par Thomas d'Aquin, de la séparabilité des accidents de leur sujet (une substance), c'est-à-dire, de la possibilité (surnaturelle) de l'existence des accidents sans aucun sujet.

Le deuxième chapitre élabore l'explication de Thomas d'Aquin de la séparabilité des accidents de leur sujet. Est montré qu'au long de sa carrière Thomas n'a jamais basculé dans son articulation rationnelle de sa position.

Au troisième chapitre est examiné le refus de la doctrine thomiste par Dietrich de Freiberg, surtout dans son traité *De accidentibus*, lequel se donne expressément à la démonstration de l'impossibilité absolue d'un accident séparé. En vue de l'analyse influent de Kurt Flasch, selon lequel Dietrich représente admirablement une 'conscience de la méthode,' ce chapitre vise à exposer soigneusement le progrès de l'argumentation du traité, tout juste comme le présente Dietrich, avant d'avancer à un analyse critique de sa position.

Dans le quatrième chapitre sont soumises à l'analyse les positions rivales, celle de Thomas et celle de Dietrich. Les éléments du critique qu'apporte Dietrich contre Thomas sont examinés et l'analyse différencie les points d'accord et de désaccord entre les deux penseurs. Est démontré que l'argumentation de Thomas a une force et une consistance bien supérieure à celui de Dietrich.

Dans le cinquième chapitre, sont appliquées les conclusions du quatrième chapitre à l'analyse de la littérature récente traitante de la dispute entre Thomas et Dietrich. Est montré que cette littérature comporte de graves méconnaissances de la position de Thomas, et aussi, en conséquence, de la critique de celle-ci apporté par Dietrich, et j'essaie d'élucider ce que sont les racines des inconséquences remarquées dans la littérature.

Je termine en offrant quelques remarques qui s'adressent à certaines doutes générales concernant le vrai statut 'philosophique' de la question de la séparabilité des accidents.

## Abbreviations

### Thomas Aquinas

<i>InBDT</i>	<i>Commentary on Boethius' De trinitate</i>
<i>InMet</i>	<i>Commentary on the Metaphysics</i>
<i>InSent</i>	<i>Commentary on the Sentences</i>
<i>Quodl.</i>	<i>Quodlibetal disputation</i>
<i>SCG</i>	<i>Summa contra gentiles</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i>

### Dietrich of Freiberg<sup>1</sup>

<i>an.</i>	<i>De animatione caeli</i>
<i>cael.</i>	<i>De corporibus caelestibus</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>De accidentibus</i>
<i>De origine</i>	<i>De origine rerum praedicamentalium</i>
<i>int.</i>	<i>De intellectu et intelligibili</i>
<i>quid.</i>	<i>De quiditatibus entium</i>
<i>vis.</i>	<i>De visione beatifica</i>

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of *DA* and *De origine*, I have followed Kurt Flasch's use of abbreviations in Flasch 2007.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1 Transubstantiation: A medieval doctrine

The prominent medievalist and pre-eminent Dietrich of Freiberg scholar Kurt Flasch, criticizing the frequent tendency in our day to eliminate all reference to the concrete in our interpretations of the history of ideas, writes: “In the high and the low Middle Age, knowledge was often a response to concrete problems of politics, of morality, and of the way people had of understanding themselves.”<sup>2</sup> Setting aside what might be controversial about the notion of ‘knowledge’ which might be taken to be implied by Flasch here – whose sympathies tend toward Nietzsche and historicism – and the apparent restriction of the scope of his claim about knowledge to ‘the low and the high Middle Age,’ the doctrine of transubstantiation is certainly – and, one would think, inevitably – one such concrete response. (What else would it be?) It is by this doctrine that Thomas Aquinas explains what objectively happens in the sacrament of the Eucharist, a sacrament which in the Catholic Church is still understood as “the source and summit of Christian life.”<sup>3</sup> The doctrine is fundamentally based on the words of Christ recited at the consecration, “this is my body,” *hoc est corpus meum* (as well as “this is the chalice of my blood,” *hic est calix sanguinis mei*, etc.). In the thought of St. Thomas this doctrine develops into an attempt to give, so far as possible, a satisfactory explication in metaphysical terms of the traditional teaching and practise of the Church in regard to the ‘real presence’ of Christ in the sacrament of the altar.

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<sup>2</sup> Flasch 2010, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the Vatican II document *Lumen gentium* (promulgated in 1964), no. 11: “totius vitae christianae fontem et culmen.” Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III.63.6 co.: “it is *the end and the consummation of all the sacraments*, as Dionysius says...” - “sit *finis et consummatio omnium sacramentorum*, ut Dionysius dicit...”

In this sacrament it is held that Christ becomes really present and that the sacrifice of the once-crucified Christ is re-presented to God the Father. According to the Catholic faith, by the institution of this sacrament Christ chose to make his presence effective to the faithful of the Church on earth in a uniquely objective and tangible way. The sacrament serves as a Christ-instituted memorial and renewal of the covenant between God and man whereby man is redeemed from sin and death through the ministrations of the Church established and empowered by Christ. Theological details could be multiplied, but will not be our focus here, our subject being the metaphysics of what is supposed, on the more or less standard account, to occur in the sacrament. The basic theological framework must not be forgotten, however, since therein is constituted the end, the *telos*, of the sacrament, and this for-the-sake-of-which is a fundamental element in the basically Aristotelian metaphysical framework which is proper to the controverted question we will be discussing.

## **2 Historical background to the controversy**

The prior controversy over the Eucharist leading up to Thomas' metaphysical formulation stretches back at least to the ninth century and the French Benedictine monk Paschasius Radbertus' very literal-sounding treatment of the Eucharistic change in his treatise *On the body and blood of the Lord*. This treatise was criticized by Ratramnus, a fellow Benedictine from Corbie (in Picardy), at the instigation of the Frankish King and Holy Roman Emperor (875-877) Charles the Bald, and then by Rabanus Maurus, another Benedictine who was abbot at Mainz. Paschasius' oddly literal-sounding view was eventually clarified and vindicated by ecclesiastical authorities, but the controversy served as an initial stimulus

towards a more technical elaboration of the relation between the visible, tangible Eucharistic species, or accidents, and the invisible presence of the body and blood of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

A more immediate occasion for the formulation of the doctrine of transubstantiation,<sup>5</sup> one to which Aquinas himself refers,<sup>6</sup> is the eleventh century attack initiated by Lanfranc – who, like his more famous protégé and successor Anselm, was both prior at Bec and later archbishop of Canterbury – against the view of Berengar of Tours, another monk.<sup>7</sup> This dispute, the first to concern all of Europe, according to Flasch, since the crumbling of the ancient world,<sup>8</sup> led to the ecclesiastical condemnation of Berengar’s view (initially in 1050). While it might appear reasonable to assume that this was ‘merely’ a theological quarrel, Flasch calls our attention to the fact that the expertise of Lanfranc and Berengar was in fact in grammar and logic, and the sticking point in the debate was the term ‘substance,’ which was drawn from the logic of the increasingly important liberal arts schools (such as the famous one at Bec, which was founded by Lanfranc).<sup>9</sup> In Flasch’s view the debate was thus a kind of epochal first, a turning point in the history of ideas, where the faith of the Church met with dialectical reason, and the challenge to determine the ‘rationality of faith’ (*ratio fidei*) emerged into a widespread public debate, albeit one refereed by the magisterial authority of the Church.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For a brief summary, see Pohle 1911.

<sup>5</sup> The term itself, *transubstantiation*, according to Pohle (1909), seems to have first been used in 1079 by one Hildebert of Tours. Flasch informs us simply that it was coined by one of the adversaries of Berengar’s doctrine (cf. Flasch 2010, p. 60).

<sup>6</sup> See *InSent* IV.12.3.2.3 expos.; *ST* III.75.1 co.; *ST* III.77.7 arg. 3 & ad 3.

<sup>7</sup> For substantive expositions of diverse scholastic treatments of the question of accidents without a subject (*sine subiecto*), starting with Berengar’s and through to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, see Vijgen 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Flasch 2010, p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> Flasch 2010, p. 53, 57.

<sup>10</sup> We should resist the possible temptation to assume that this is simply a matter of authority *against* reason. The intention, at least, was simply the authoritative adjudication of disputes involving dialectical reason – in favor, obviously, of *true* reason.

We will not review in any detail Berengar’s condemned view,<sup>11</sup> but we will note the importance of the primary notion he rejected, that of the real presence as being ‘substantial’ – i.e., ‘like a thing’ – as opposed to ‘spiritual’ – i.e., present merely ‘as a sign.’<sup>12</sup> As Aquinas describes Berengar’s position, he was the first inventor of the error of positing that the body and blood of Christ are present in the sacrament only in sign (*in signo; significative*).<sup>13</sup> In opposition to this view, Thomas cites from Berengar’s confession: “I am in accord with the holy Roman Church, and with my heart and with my mouth I profess, the bread and the wine which are put upon the altar are, after the consecration, the true body and blood of Christ, and in truth are moved about by the hands of the priest and broken, and ground by the teeth of the faithful.”<sup>14</sup> Once again without going into the details of Berengar’s actual position, we should at once note that what might appear to be the straightforward sense of this confession was something with which Thomas was no more comfortable than Berengar had been. Thus

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<sup>11</sup> For Berengar’s position as presented in the context of Dietrich’s rejection of Thomas’s view, see Flasch 1983, pp. XLI-XLIII; Flasch 2007, pp. 256-259; Flasch 2008, IV.2. For treatments focused more strictly on Berengar’s position, see Flasch 2010, pp. 49-64; Vijgen 2013, pp. 31-35.

<sup>12</sup> We should be careful here not to be misled by a false dichotomy: The Church certainly does recognize that the sacraments are signs, and unquestionably ‘spiritual’ ones; indeed they are precisely ‘efficacious signs of grace.’ But as signs they signify *and make present* the graces proper to each, and in the case of the Eucharist the Church teaches that this includes the ‘real presence’ of Christ. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 1131. Cf. also, Thomas Aquinas, e.g., *InSent* IV.1.1.1.1 co.: “a sacrament is a sign of a sacred thing” - “sacramentum est sacrae rei signum”; *ST* III.75.1 ad 3: “we do not understand that Christ is there only as in a sign, although a sacrament is in the genus of sign” – “non intelligimus quod Christus sit ibi solum sicut in signo, licet sacramentum sit in genere signi”; in general, see *ST* III, q. 60, a. 1-3.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *ST* III.75.1 co.: “...faith is of invisible things... Some, not attending to this, have posited that the body and blood of Christ do not exist in this sacrament except as if in sign. Which is to be rejected as heretical, as contrary to the word of Christ. Whence it is that Berengar, who was the first inventor of this error, was afterwards forced to renounce his error and to confess the truth of faith.” - “...fides est invisibilium... Quae quidam non attendentes, posuerunt corpus et sanguinem Christi non esse in hoc sacramento nisi sicut in signo. Quod est tanquam haereticum abiiciendum, utpote verbis Christi contrarium. Unde et Berengarius, qui primus inventor huius erroris fuerat, postea coactus est suum errorem revocare, et veritatem fidei confiteri.” Also, *De articulis Fidei*, pars 2: “[An error:] *the true body of Christ is not in this sacrament, but [it is there] only as being signified*. The originator of this error is said to have been Berengar, against which is said, *John 6:56: my flesh is truly food and my blood is truly drink*” – “[Error:] *in hoc sacramento non est verum corpus Christi, sed tantum significative*. Auctor erroris eius dicitur fuisse Berengarius, contra quem dicitur Ioan. VI, 56: *caro mea vere est cibus, et sanguis meus vere est potus*.”

<sup>14</sup> *ST* III.77.7 arg. 3: “...in confessione Berengarii dicitur, *consentio sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae, et corde et ore profiteor panem et vinum quae in altari ponuntur, post consecrationem verum corpus et sanguinem Christi esse, et in veritate manibus sacerdotum tractari, frangi et fidelium dentibus atteri*.”

in his commentary on the *Sentences*, when Thomas gives his explanation of what Berengar's confession meant, he clarifies: "he did not mean that the very body of Christ is broken, but that under the species, in which the breaking takes place, is the true body of Christ."<sup>15</sup>

Having made this clarification, the problem remains of explaining what exactly is meant by Christ being substantially but invisibly present in the sacrament 'under' the species or appearances of bread and wine, and what that implies about the metaphysical status of these sensible appearances, the accidents of bread and wine. The basic point of departure for Thomas' metaphysical explanation is found in Peter Lombard's *Sententia* (that is, *Judgments* or *Opinions*), a mid-twelfth century work which became extremely influential – though not entirely uncontroversial – serving as a kind of basic textbook for university theology students, beginning in the thirteenth century and through to the sixteenth.<sup>16</sup> In the fourth book of this work Peter gives his opinion on what we should say about the continuing existence of the accidents of the Eucharist, under which Christ is substantially present:

But if it is asked regarding the accidents that remain – namely regarding the appearances and the taste and the weight – in which subject they are founded, it seems better to me to confess that they exist without a subject, than that they are in a subject, since there is no substance there, except of the body and blood of the Lord, which are not affected by these accidents. For the body of Christ does not have such a [bready or winy] form in itself, but such [a form] as will appear [i.e., a human one] in (sound) judgment. Therefore those accidents remain by subsisting *per se*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *InSent* IV.12.3.2.3 expos.: "non intendit dicere, quod ipsum corpus Christi frangatur, sed quod sub speciebus, in quibus est fractio, verum corpus Christi sit."

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ghellinck (1911).

<sup>17</sup> *Sententiae* IV.12 c. 1: "Si autem quaeritur de accidentibus quae remanent, scilicet de speciebus et sapore et pondere, in quo subiecto fundentur, potius mihi videtur fatendum existere sine subiecto, quam esse in subiecto; quia ibi non est substantia nisi corporis et sanguinis dominici, quae non afficitur illis accidentibus. Non enim corpus Christi talem habet in se formam, sed qualis in iudicio apparebit. Remanent ergo illa accidentia per se subsistentia."

This is the basic position on the accidents of the Eucharist which Thomas will accept and elaborate upon some hundred years later, for the first time in commenting on this very passage in his commentary on Lombard's *Sentences*, and which position Dietrich of Freiberg will in turn vehemently reject.

### **3 Transubstantiation as a 'philosophical problem'**

Understanding and assessing the plausibility of transubstantiation, or more precisely – and more generally – the separability of accidents from substance, is not generally regarded as one of the basic problems of philosophy. From an historicist perspective – of the kind to which Kurt Flasch inclines – one might conjecture that the reasons for this are entirely contingent historical ones. Or one might think that there are good, properly philosophical reasons for this question being considered and treated as secondary or marginal.

On the other hand, even if it is not regarded as a basic problem, neither can transubstantiation be regarded as the most obscure topic there is in philosophy. For one reason or another – whether these happen to be contingent historical reasons or substantive philosophical ones – the doctrine of transubstantiation rarely comes up as the subject of serious discussion and analysis for its own sake. But it does come up, frequently enough, all the same, and it is often at least regarded as historically significant, a curious, but still rationally articulable – and thus rationally refutable (by David Hume, for example, or by C. S. Peirce, or, more recently, by Michael Dummett<sup>18</sup>) – position. Thus, even for those who have no sympathy for the doctrine itself – or even for Aristotelian or Thomistic metaphysics

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<sup>18</sup> The doctrine of transubstantiation is treated by Hume in his 1748 *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, by Peirce in his 1878 essay *How to Make our Ideas Clear*, and by Dummett in a 1987 essay entitled "The Intelligibility of Eucharistic Doctrine."

more generally – the doctrine of transubstantiation can still function as a significant locus for explicating the direct implications of differing metaphysical positions, and thus also for acquiring a more general appreciation of the concrete historical significance of differing positions.

That this doctrine should come up is obviously understandable in the context of philosophy in a medieval Christian setting wherein it is a prominent *locus communis*, and in regard to which, one way or another, one's metaphysical views must be situated and adapted. Using the terminology from William James' well-known essay "The Will to Believe," in this context I think it can fairly be said that the problem of adopting one or another particular stance towards transubstantiation – in particular in virtue of or in relation to one's metaphysical views – is likely to present itself as an 'option' (a decision between alternate hypotheses) that is living (transubstantiation is not likely to be dismissed as utterly implausible), forced (there are no metaphysical views which are simply indifferent with regard to transubstantiation), and momentous (what is at stake is likely to be understood as being of great significance). In the context of our own contingent, historical moment, on the other hand, the question regarding how one's metaphysical or general philosophical views relate to the doctrine of transubstantiation is more likely to present itself as an 'option' that is dead (the doctrine is dismissed as utterly implausible), avoidable (people have little interest in offering any judgment on the relation of their metaphysical views to this doctrine), and trivial (it is in any case assumed that the truth of the matter is of little significance either way).

Of course, such descriptions of differing perspectives on the problem involve generalizations in terms of essentially subjective, psychological categories, as these happen

to tend to apply in different contingent historical circumstances. Assuming that our own contingent, personal prejudices as such have no probative force, it is important to recognize that in themselves generalizations about the substance of various contingent historical perspectives – and in particular, about our own – tell us nothing about the philosophical merit or rational grounding of those positions. Clearly, then, generally dismissive attitudes towards transubstantiation in no way contribute to a substantive critique of the doctrine. To the contrary, the widespread currency of such an attitude towards some doctrine makes it more likely that people will never have devoted any serious thought to the doctrine, and thus will likely have a deficient understanding of it and ill-considered beliefs about it. This likelihood is clearly borne out, for example, in the case of David Hume’s entirely question-begging argument against transubstantiation (or rather “the *real presence*”) – that doctrine “so little worthy of a serious refutation” – in his 1748 *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (see Section X, “Of miracles”).

But even in the case of those who give every evidence of having carefully studied the seminal expositions of the doctrine – in particular, for the present context, Kurt Flasch and the commentators who have followed his lead – there is no guarantee that careful study will result in a sound understanding and a fair evaluation of the object of study, especially if the possibility of actually assenting to the truth of the doctrine in question happens to be regarded as a dead, avoidable, trivial option.

While this general observation need not imply that unless one accepts in advance that there is some antecedent plausibility in some view (i.e., that it is a living option) it will be impossible to achieve a sound understanding of that view, nonetheless if one is not willing to enter into a living consideration of some view – i.e., to be gracious enough to grant it some

plausibility – then it will be very difficult to intelligently consider that view. I offer these introductory considerations anticipating that some readers may find it difficult to enter into a living consideration of the present subject matter, and in the hope that even the most sceptical reader, who hasn't the least inclination to take Thomas' arguments for the separability of accidents seriously, will nonetheless keep in mind, first, that his own scepticism is, as a matter of principle and of rational consistency, something he ought to be prepared to regard with suspicion; second, that his *a priori* scepticism is philosophically and rationally irrelevant; and third, that even if, subjectively, one doesn't believe in or even seriously entertain the truth of the doctrine of transubstantiation and the metaphysical claims associated with it, this in no way diminishes the philosophical significance of being able to understand in a genuinely intelligent way what exactly is at stake in accepting or rejecting the doctrine.

#### **4 Content and arrangement of thesis**

Of the four chapters that follow the present introduction, the first two are principally historical and doctrinal – and I beg the reader's indulgence if he finds them overly so – while the latter two are more analytic.

I begin, in Chapter Two, by expounding St. Thomas' account of the separability of accidents from their subject, as Thomas presents this doctrine throughout the course of his career. While there are some variations in the formulas Thomas uses, we will see that Thomas presents a consistent rational articulation of his position throughout his works on the subject.

In Chapter Three I expound Dietrich's rejection of Thomas' view, examining in detail his treatise *De accidentibus*, which is expressly dedicated to demonstrating the utter

impossibility of separate accidents. According to Kurt Flasch's influential analysis of this work, Dietrich demonstrates a superior level of methodological consciousness therein. I will argue that in making this claim Flasch himself fails to achieve an adequate level of methodological consciousness, and he does not accurately present Dietrich's own position. In any case, in light of Flasch's claim in Dietrich's behalf, I have done my best to be painstaking in my exposition in this chapter and to comprehensively present Dietrich's own views, just as we find them, before entering into the overtly critical phase of my assessment.

In Chapter Four I give my own critical analysis of the competing doctrinal positions expounded in the preceding two chapters. I analyse the various elements of Dietrich's case against Thomas and attempt to pinpoint wherein Thomas and Dietrich agree and wherein they part ways. I argue that Thomas' arguments have a strength and consistency which Dietrich's arguments clearly lack.

In Chapter Five I apply my argumentative findings from Chapter Four to an assessment of the analyses found in recent philosophical literature of the dispute between Thomas and Dietrich. My analysis seeks to show that there are some serious deficiencies in these analyses and to offer some explanation of how they occurred.

I conclude by offering some remarks addressed to general doubts about the status of the question of the separability of accidents as an actual 'philosophical' question.

## Chapter 2: Aquinas' Account of the Separability of Accidents

### 1 Introduction

Thomas Aquinas addressed the question of the status of the Eucharistic accidents several times, and as we will see in this chapter, the substance of his position remained unchanged throughout his career. In this chapter I will review each of his four substantial treatments of the matter so far as they are relevant to the general problem of separate accidents and to the particular critique of that notion made by Dietrich of Freiberg.<sup>19</sup> Thomas' position on the separability of accidents must be understood in relation to his general conception of the world as created by God and as knowable, in a limited way, by created intellects.<sup>20</sup> More specifically, it relies on grasping divine causality in respect to the created cosmos (and particular creatures therein) as voluntary and as transcendent over the naturally knowable aspects of the created natural order of secondary causes. In addition, Thomas must explain

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<sup>19</sup> For a useful and detailed recent analysis of each of these four treatments, readers can also consult Jürgen Vijgen, *The Status of Eucharistic Accidents "sine subiecto"* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), pp. 173-259. I had occasion to consult Vijgen's work only after having completed the following analysis, but I find that Vijgen has produced a generally clear and sound analysis of Thomas' doctrine (as is the case for his subsequent analysis of Dietrich's critique, *ibid.*, pp. 311-323). The rare missteps I find in Vijgen's analyses of Thomas' and Dietrich's positions are reviewed herein.

<sup>20</sup> A relatively well known passage from Thomas' introduction to his *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum*, wherein Thomas is defending the legitimacy and necessity of faith, expresses a striking view of the limited nature of our knowledge: "But someone says: 'It is stupid to believe what is not seen, nor should anything be believed which is not seen.' I respond: it must be said that this objection ignores the imperfection of our understanding. For if man could perfectly know *per se* all visible and invisible things, it would be stupid to believe what we do not see; but our cognition is so weak that no philosopher has ever been able to completely investigate the nature of one fly; and so we read that one philosopher was thirty years in solitude, that he might grasp the nature of a bee." – "Sed dicit aliquis: stultum est credere quod non videtur, nec sunt credenda quae non videntur. Respondeo. Dicendum, quod hoc dubium primo tollit imperfectio intellectus nostri: nam si homo posset perfecte per se cognoscere omnia visibilia et invisibilia, stultum esset credere quae non videmus; sed cognitio nostra est adeo debilis quod nullus philosophus potuit unquam perfecte investigare naturam unius muscae: unde legitur, quod unus philosophus fuit triginta annis in solitudine, ut cognosceret naturam apis." Pasquale Porro's choice of this passage as an epigraph in his recent opus *Tommaso d'Aquino: un profilo storico-filosofico* (Rome: Carocci, 2012) can be taken as indicative of the importance of not neglecting this aspect of Thomas' thinking.

how to correctly understand and define the essential nature of accidents such that our account of them is, on the one hand, plausible in its own right, in terms of what we can naturally claim to know on the basis of sound (basically Aristotelian) metaphysical concepts and reasoning, and, on the other hand, also compatible with the possibility (and theologically established fact) of their being supernaturally separated from substance and subsisting as a kind of independent ‘thing’ in the world of substances.

## **2 Commentary on the *Sentences*, Book IV (Paris, 1256)**

Thomas’ commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, one of his earliest works, was written in the four years Thomas spent at Paris as a young bachelor in theology, or bachelor of the *Sentences* (*baccalarius Sententiarum*), before attaining the position of master of theology in the spring of 1256.<sup>21</sup> The defense of the separability of accidents found therein should perhaps be considered the most important Thomistic text in the context of the present study, insofar as it appears that Dietrich of Freiberg’s critique of Thomas’s position may well be a direct response to this text.<sup>22</sup>

Thomas, following the example of Alexander of Hales (d. 1245), divides his commentary into four books. The division reflects, in Weisheipl’s words, “the great Dionysian and Plotinian cycle of emanation and return.”<sup>23</sup> Thus the first two books discuss the eternal procession of the trinity, and from this the temporal procession of creatures, while the third

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Torrell 2008, p. 480, 485.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Maurer 1990, p. 193: “All three of these arguments [from *DA* 23 (1)-(11)] are to be found in St. Thomas’ article on the separability of accidents in the Eucharist in his commentary on the *Sentences*. The second, which Dietrich calls an argument *in contrarium*, is indeed the first of the two arguments *sed contra* of St. Thomas. It is likely, then, that Dietrich has this article in mind when he wrote the *De accidentibus*, and that it is its doctrine of accident which he criticizes there and in his *De quiditatibus entium*.”

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Weisheipl 1974, p. 70-71.

and fourth books treat of the restoration (return to God) of the temporal created order, first in and through Christ himself, through “the mission of the word in the flesh” – the incarnation and life of Christ – and then in and through “the effects of the incarnate word,”<sup>24</sup> namely the extension of Christ’s incarnational mission by means of the sacraments, and their fulfilment in the glory of the resurrection and beatific vision. It is in this fundamental context, a sort of Christ- and grace-mediated neo-Platonic return – a notion that will be crucial also for Dietrich’s basic metaphysical position – that in the fourth book Thomas addresses the sacrament of the Eucharist and the issue of the separate existence of accidents.

Some writers seem to neglect the fundamentality and ultimacy of this context. Edith Sylla, for example, writes:

Thomas’s primary goal ... was not to prove the consistency of the real presence from a purely natural point of view nor to follow the principles of natural philosophy wherever they might lead, but to explain and clarify, to *sustain*, the dogmas of Christianity in a reverent way. ...faith can be above reason, *supra rationem*.<sup>25</sup> [emphasis in original]

While not exactly false, it is hard to see what this claim about a ‘purely natural’ point of view is supposed to refer to. What does ‘purely natural’ mean here? A correct understanding of ‘nature’ – a correct point of view on it – would recognize that nature is always inherently situated within and dependent upon a super-natural context. Nature – or any natural point of view – never exists ‘purely,’ it is not pure act; it is necessarily a contingent mixture of act and potency. The ‘principles of natural philosophy’ – the various divisions of act and potency and causality and the like – inherently manifest the reliance of nature upon a first cause (pure act) which in its own being transcends nature. Our acquaintance with ‘purely

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<sup>24</sup> *InSent* IV, pr.: “in the third book was discussed the mission of the word in the flesh, while in this book [we discuss] the effects of the incarnate word” - “in tertio agebatur de missione verbi in carnem, in hoc autem libro de effectibus verbi incarnati.”

<sup>25</sup> Sylla 1975, p. 367.

natural principles' is necessarily inadequate for grasping what the first cause is (its essence) – as opposed to that it exists – or for making any conclusive determination regarding 'wherever' it is these principles might in fact lead (why such and such order of being must come to be, rather than any other). Thus it makes little sense for Sylla to speak of following such principles "wherever they might lead," while implying that there is some inconsistency in supposing that where they might lead – or at least where they might point – is precisely beyond themselves, to the dogmas of Christianity. From the Thomistic neo-Platonic Christian point of view it is not possible that natural principles could possibly lead to a result that would be really inconsistent with dogmas apprehended through (supernatural) faith.

## **2.1 Separation of matter from form**

Before examining the question of the accidents of the Eucharist and their separation from substance, we can consider Thomas' reasons for rejecting an alternate account of the Eucharistic change, one involving the separation of matter from substantial form. Regarding the question of what happens to the substance of the bread in the act of transubstantiation, Thomas holds that it is the starting point (the *terminus a quo*) of a whole-substance conversion – a conversion of both form and matter – into the body of Christ.<sup>26</sup> He rejects the suggestion that instead the bread could be resolved into its underlying prime matter, that is, into matter without any form. Thomas argues that such a resolution into prime matter is strictly impossible, even miraculously, since it would imply a contradiction: "For matter, by its essence, is being in potency; and form is its act. If, then, matter is posited to be actual

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<sup>26</sup> We could have, of course, also mentioned here the conversion of the substance of the wine into the substance of the blood of Christ, but when the relevant principles and reasoning are the same, for the sake of brevity in our exposition we will typically only refer explicitly to bread and body. Stephen Brock's "St Thomas and the Eucharistic Conversion" (2001) provides a subtle account and defense of the specificity and coherence of this kind of whole-substance conversion.

without form, matter would be posited as actually being and not being.”<sup>27</sup> This claim needn’t imply, as Christopher Byrne argues, that for Aquinas matter is “purely potential” in such a way that – contra Aristotle – it contributes nothing to the concrete mode of being of material substances.<sup>28</sup> It is sufficient to affirm – as Byrne does – the Aristotelian view, that the inherent nature of matter *qua* potency for receiving substantial forms ensures that it is inseparable, in actual existence, from form.<sup>29</sup> In any case, Thomas’ argument against the separability of matter from form presents a close parallel to the argument that Dietrich will deploy against the separability of accidents from substance. For Thomas, however, the case of accidents is not analogous to that of matter.

## 2.2 Whether God can make accidents to be without a subject

In the case of the Eucharistic accidents, Peter Lombard’s solution to the problem of their mode of existence establishes the baseline from which Thomas elaborates his position. In the *Sentences* Lombard simply states that it seems to him better to confess that the accidents of the bread and wine which remain (following the confection of the sacrament) exist without a

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<sup>27</sup> *InSent* IV.11.1.2 co.: “Materia enim per essentiam suam est ens in potentia, et forma est actus ejus. Si ergo ponatur materia sine forma esse actu, ponetur actu materia esse et non esse.” This fundamental conception of matter was much disputed at the time, but accepted by Dietrich.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Byrne 1995, p. 200-201.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Byrne 1995, p. 210. Byrne writes (p. 202): “If, in turn, one holds that to be real is to be actual, then, without any actuality of its own, prime matter has no reality of its own.” But on Aquinas’ view, prime matter does have actuality *of* its own (it is a real metaphysical part of actual material things); it just has no actuality *on* its own, i.e., by itself (i.e., apart from the proximate actualization *by* some form). Whereas Byrne insists that prime matter must not only be real, but must also have a “determinate nature” of its own (p. 224), for Aquinas (and Aristotle) this determinate nature is sufficiently accounted for in noting that prime matter is interchangeably quantized by the various forms that actualize it and that it is conserved throughout the series of substantial changes that it materially grounds. To designate this role which it plays in explaining natural change just *is* to determine its nature, and explains its intrinsic inseparability from substantial form. Byrne claims, “The attributes of prime matter as extended, mobile, and infinitely divisible are both necessary and sufficient to constitute an identifiable substratum persisting throughout the generation of the four sublunary elements” (p. 222). As we will see shortly, this view is quite close to Aquinas’. It seems, however, that reference merely to facts of (indeterminate) extension, mobility, and divisibility are in fact insufficient to constitute an identifiable persisting substratum. What is required is rather just the formal assertion of an ultimate subject which is conserved throughout the natural variations in extension, motion, and division which are implicated in natural processes of generation and destruction (as well as natural processes of accidental change).

subject, as opposed to in a subject, since the only substance there, is that of the living body and blood of Christ, which is not the kind of substance to which the accidents of bread and wine can properly pertain. So the remaining accidents must subsist *per se*.<sup>30</sup> Thomas accepts Peter's view of the matter and tries to explain in metaphysical terms how such a state of affairs is possible.

### 2.2.1 Divine causality

Thomas' first response to the question (namely, "whether God can make accidents to be without a subject") is based on the special nature of God's causal influence on things:

As it is said in the first proposition of the *Liber de causis*, the first cause has a more forceful impression (*est vehementioris impressionis*) on the thing caused by the second cause than has the second cause itself. Thus when the second cause removes its influence from the thing caused, the influence of the first cause in that caused thing can still remain; just as with the removal of rational, living remains, and if living is removed being remains. Since therefore the first cause of accidents and of all existents is God while the second cause of accidents is the substance, since accidents are caused from the principles of the substance, God will be able to conserve the accidents in being, with, nonetheless, the second cause, namely the substance, removed. And thus without any doubt it must be said that God can make accidents [to be] without a subject.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, lib. IV, dist. 12, c. 1: "Si autem quaeritur de accidentibus quae remanent, scilicet de speciebus et sapore et pondere, in quo subiecto fundentur, potius mihi videtur fatendum existere sine subiecto, quam esse in subiecto; quia ibi non est substantia nisi corporis et sanguinis dominici, quae non afficitur illis accidentibus. Non enim corpus Christi talem habet in se formam, sed qualis in iudicio apparet. Remanent ergo illa accidentia per se subsistentia."

<sup>31</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 co.: "Respondeo dicendum ad primam quaestionem, quod, sicut dicitur prima propositione libri *De causis*, 'causa prima est vehementioris impressionis supra causatum causae secundae quam ipsa causa secunda.' Unde quando causa secunda remouet influentiam suam a causato, adhuc potest remanere influentia causae primae in causatum illud; sicut remoto rationali, remanet vivum, quo remoto remanet esse. Cum ergo causa prima accidentium et omnium existentium Deus sit; causa autem secunda accidentium sit substantia, quia accidentia ex principiis substantiae causantur; poterit Deus accidentia in esse conservare, remota tamen causa secunda, scilicet substantia. Et ideo absque omni dubitatione dicendum est, quod Deus potest facere accidens

Thomas' appeal here to the *Liber de causis* will come in for criticism from Dietrich of Freiberg<sup>32</sup> – and before him from Siger of Brabant – but regardless of the legitimacy of Thomas' appeal to authority on this point, his position is quite clear: A metaphysical assessment of the absolute possibility or impossibility of some occurrence must first of all regard an assessment of its possible causes; and while substances do cause accidents, since God is the first cause, in particular the first cause of both substances and accidents, he can also – barring some further objection – immediately and alone cause both substances and accidents.<sup>33</sup> The procession of the created order of nature from God is freely caused by God,<sup>34</sup> and its supernatural return to him is freely mediated by grace. Accordingly, the necessity of the ordering of accidents to substances must be first understood as a natural, created, and limited necessity, not as an absolute one. Considered as limited in this way, the intrinsic ordering of accidents towards inherence in substance cannot simply be assumed to constitute an absolute constraint upon the actual being – or actual mode of being – of any and all accidents which could conceivably be caused to exist in nature.<sup>35</sup>

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[esse] sine subjecto.” To Thomas' “absque omni dubitatione dicendum est...” Dietrich will reply: “respondendum simpliciter absque omni distinctione, quod non” – “it must be replied unqualifiedly, apart from any distinction, that *no* [this is *not* possible]” (*DA* 19 (1)). On the basis of Thomas's expression here, Flasch suggests that Thomas had defended his position “sur un ton exactement aussi rude” – in a tone exactly as rough – as that later used by Dietrich (Flasch 2008, p. 22). As will be plain in the next chapter, this assessment is not realistic.

<sup>32</sup> See below, ch. 3, §4.4.2.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Donati 2001, p. 584: “The fundamental thought in this analysis is the so-called ‘principle of immediacy,’ according to which the first cause can also immediately and alone produce the effects which it normally brings about through the mediation of secondary causes.” – “Grundlegender Gedanke bei dieser Analyse ist das sogenannte ‘Prinzip der Unmittelbarkeit,’ nach dem die erste Ursache auch unmittelbar und allein die Wirkungen produzieren kann, die sie sonst durch die Vermittlung der sekundären Ursachen hervorbringt.” On this ‘principle of immediacy,’ cf. Bianchi 1998, esp. p. 100 and the literature introduced there.

<sup>34</sup> Cf., e.g., *ST* I.19.3.

<sup>35</sup> While I have attempted to explain the rational justification for Thomas' view here in general terms, Jörgen Vijgen sees the argument just cited (from *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1) as “but an application of a conclusion, established earlier on in the Commentary” (Vijgen 2013, p. 181). Here Vijgen is referring to *InSent* II.1.1.4, where, in answering the question “whether anything other than God causes anything,” Thomas cites the same first proposition from the *Liber de causis*. But Vijgen's interpretation is problematic. In the article in question, Thomas establishes that God is an immediately concurrent cause in all acts of secondary causality, and that all secondary causes always derive whatever causal power they have immediately from God. Vijgen bases his

Thomas also sees a link between the possibility of creation and that of transubstantiation, which he explains in his response to a preceding question, “whether bread can be converted into the body of Christ.”<sup>36</sup> Thomas begins by arguing that the power to create implies the power to transubstantiate: In every change the subject – usually matter, in the case of substantial change – is that which most remains. Therefore, a substantial change which affects (or effects) the matter of a thing – as well as its form – is more difficult and shows forth greater power, and this is the case for both creation and transubstantiation:

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claim about the direct applicability of the claims from Book II to the problem taken up in Book IV on the following crucial passage (from *InSent* II.1.1.4, as cited by Vijgen 2013, p. 180):

But of these things [e.g., human beings, lions, fire, etc.], God also [i.e., not just secondary causes] is the cause, working in them more inwardly than the other moving causes: for he is giving *esse* to the things. But the other causes are, as it were, determining that *esse*. For of no thing is it the case that it takes its whole principle of *esse* from some creature, since [its] matter is from God alone; but for any thing whatever, *esse* is more inward than those [things] by which its *esse* is determined; thus, it remains, those being removed, as is said in the *Liber de causis*, prop. 1.

[Horum tamen causa etiam Deus est, magis intime in eis operans quam aliae causae moventes: quia ipse est dans esse rebus. Causae autem aliae sunt quasi determinantes illud esse. Nullius enim rei totum esse ab aliqua creatura principium sumit, cum materia a Deo solum sit; esse autem est magis intimum cuilibet rei quam ea per quae esse determinatur; unde et remanet, illis remotis, ut in libro *De causis*, prop. 1, dicitur.]

Thomas goes on to argue that the reality of created, secondary causality thus does not exclude the constant, more inward causal operation of the creator, through which the order and effectiveness of secondary causes is always directly sustained. Vijgen, however, offers the following problematic interpretation of the passage:

Now, since the act of being (‘esse’) is more intimate to a thing than that by which ‘esse’ is determined, namely the essence, ‘esse’ remains when that by which ‘esse’ is determined, is removed.” (p. 180-181)

And claiming to apply this result to the problem of Book IV, Vijgen writes:

from this relation between God as the primary, i.e., more intimate, cause and substance as a secondary cause, it follows that it is possible that God, once the operation of the secondary cause with regard to its effects, i.e., the accidents, ceases to be, the primary cause conserves the ‘esse’ of the accidents. (p. 181)

So first, by glossing “those [things] by which its *esse* is determined” (“ea per quae esse determinatur”) as “that by which ‘esse’ is determined,” or “essence,” Vijgen appears to interpret Thomas as claiming in Book II that God can conserve *esse* apart from essence. But this would surely be a mistake: for Thomas *esse* and essence are not separable. Every created *esse* is an act(uality) that is necessarily the being-actual of some real way of participating in being, of some real potency – that is, of an essence. The notion of “subsisting *esse* itself” (*ipsum esse subsistens*) only applies to God – and in God’s case *esse* is rather identical to essence, than separated from it. Subsequently, Vijgen reads the later passage from Book IV in light of this first claim, so that God “conserves the ‘esse’ [no mention of essence] of the [separated] accidents,” the apparent implication being that this ‘esse’ is preserved *apart* from the essence(s) of the accidents. Besides the incompatibility of such an interpretation with Thomas’ understanding of *esse* and essence, it also ignores Thomas’ explicit rejection of the idea that there is no composition of *esse* and essence in separated accidents, which rejection Vijgen himself subsequently goes on to note (see Vijgen, p. 188; cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 5; below, ch. 2, §2.2.3).

<sup>36</sup> *InSent* IV.11.1.3.

And since creation and this conversion [transubstantiation] penetrate through to the essence of the matter [that is created or converted], ... it is clear that these changes make manifest a greater power than any of the others, in which is changed either the substantial form or an accidental form or the external location.<sup>37</sup>

The (historically verifiable<sup>38</sup>) rational plausibility of creation should thus contribute to establishing the plausibility of transubstantiation, and it follows, Thomas argues, that just as God can produce matter from nothing, similarly he can he convert one portion of matter into another, that is, matter that is actualized by the substantial form of bread into matter that is actualized by the substantial form of Christ (while continuing to exhibit the appearances of bread).<sup>39</sup>

While in the case of God's act of creation, however, even some philosophers, Thomas reports, were led by reason to posit such a thing, as well as to posit the direct informing influence of God and separate substances on matter,<sup>40</sup> the same is not true of transubstantiation. It would appear, then, that transubstantiation is in fact more difficult to

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.11.1.3.3 co.: "Et quia creatio et haec conversio pertingunt usque ad essentiam materiae, ut ex praedictis patet, constat has mutationes esse majoris virtutis ostensivas quibuscumque aliis, in quibus mutatur vel forma substantialis vel accidentalis, vel locus exterior."

<sup>38</sup> See next paragraph.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.11.1.3.3 co.: "But between these two [creation and transubstantiation], creation, absolutely speaking, seems to excel, since through it the essence of matter is produced; from which it follows that through this conversion [transubstantiation] it [bread] can be changed into another by its producer." – "Sed inter has duas videtur creatio, simpliciter loquendo, praecellere, quia per ipsam materiae essentia producitur; ex quo consequitur ut a producente per hanc conversionem possit in alterum transmutari."

Thomas also compares this conversion of the substance of bread to the substance of Christ's body to the natural nutritive process whereby bread, or food of any kind, is eaten and converted into the substance of a human body. In the supernatural case of transubstantiation, as noted, there is no preservation of the matter of the bread, and of course the bread's substantial conversion into human flesh does not depend on natural digestive processes integrating it into a human body, nor, accordingly, does it produce the ordinary consequences of nutrition, namely, bodily growth and maintenance (that is, Christ does not grow and is not nourished in virtue of the Eucharistic bread being converted into the substance of his body); cf. *InSent* IV.11.1.3.1.

<sup>40</sup> *InSent* IV.11.1.3.3 arg. 1: "But there is no miraculous conversion to which reason denies consent more than to this; since even certain philosophers, led by natural reason, posited creation, and also that matter is obedient to separate substances, and most of all to God, for all of its formation." – "Sed non est aliqua miraculosa conversio cui ratio magis non consentiat quam huic; quia creationem etiam quidam philosophi posuerunt ratione naturali ducti, et etiam quod materia obedit substantiis separatis, et maxime Deo, ad omnem formationem."

conceive than creation, and is found to be more repugnant to reason. In response to this claim, Thomas explains why this change is more difficult to believe in – i.e., why it might seem more implausible – than creation:

It must be said that this change comes about from an existing thing, into an existing thing, beyond the manner of other changes which also come about from existing things into existing things, from the inspection of which our intellect forms its conceptions to itself; and therefore this change seems to be contrary to the conceptions of the intellect, and because of this it is more difficult to assent to it, than to creation, which is from the altogether non-existing, a change of a kind it does not see.<sup>41</sup>

This passage is difficult, but we can offer a reasonable enough interpretation of what Thomas means.<sup>42</sup> Firstly, the intellect should naturally begin by coming to understand the ordinary changes (*mutationes*) of our immediate experience – “from an existing thing, into an existing thing” – as the succession of forms in a subject, in particular in primary matter. Secondly, the intellect can also reason to the existence of a first cause as necessarily grounding the being and operation of all other causes, all of the changeable, contingent, composite beings of our immediate experience. We recognize that the first cause is necessarily, as such, unique in being absolutely self-sufficient and in being able to produce “from something altogether non-existent” – i.e., without reliance upon any other being – the integral existence of other beings, in particular the whole material and formal being of material substances. Accordingly, we can grasp this producing of integral beings – including their very matter – from nothing as the ‘normal’ mode of first-causal agency. But

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<sup>41</sup> *InSent* IV.11.1.3.3 ad 1: “Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod mutatio ista fit ex existente in existens praeter modum aliarum mutationum, quae fiunt etiam ex existentibus in existentia, ex quarum inspectione intellectus noster sibi suas conceptiones formavit: et ideo haec conversio videtur esse contra conceptiones intellectus; et propter hoc difficilius ei assentitur quam creationi, quae est ex omnino non existenti, cujusmodi mutationem non vidit.”

<sup>42</sup> For my analysis here I draw upon Stephen Brock’s comments on a related passage from Thomas’ *Summa theologiae*; see Brock 2001, p. 564; Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III.75.8 ad 3.

transubstantiation, the conversion of the whole of a substance into another whole substance is something else again. It is a third possibility that we are not, by strictly natural reason, inclined to consider. As Brock explains:

[Transubstantiation, or ‘whole-substance conversion’] does not reflect any agent’s ‘common’ way of acting. This does not just mean that it lies outside our ordinary experience; so does creation. It means that there is no agent that ‘normally’ acts in this way. Grasping the coming to be of something out of nothing, Thomas says, is certainly not easy; but we can at least see that this pertains to the mode of producing that is appropriate for an absolutely ‘first’ cause, a cause that presupposes nothing other than itself. By contrast, a production in which something is presupposed, and yet nothing of it remains, does not pertain to the mode of producing that generally responds to *any* cause, created or divine.

Brock’s explanation is helpful, but could be more precise. Creation does perhaps lie “outside our ordinary experience,” in some sense; but in another sense it is also crucial to recognize, according to Thomas’ metaphysics, that the fact of creation is in fact foundational, integral, to all of our experience, ordinary or otherwise. This remains the case even if creation as such (like other basic metaphysical concepts) is only rarely directly thematized and contemplated as the object of our experience; indeed, it remains the case even for the fool who proposes in his heart that “there is no God” – and thus, “there is no creation” – since even this heartfelt proposal is in fact only possible in virtue of God’s creation.<sup>43</sup> For Thomas, the fact of creation can be established by metaphysical demonstration. It is in principle something we can know naturally, in virtue of a studious application of our intellectual faculties to the task of fully explaining and understanding the

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<sup>43</sup> See *ST* I.2.1 s.c. Thomas holds that God’s existence is not self-evident (*per se notum*) to us (*quoad nos*), so that a fool may genuinely fail to recognize that God exists; but that God’s existence (and status as creator) is nonetheless demonstrable by natural reason (cf. *ST* I.2.2).

more immediate and easily knowable – i.e., first of all, sensible – objects of our experience. Thus, insofar as our ‘experience,’ in accordance with our rational nature, includes an appropriate element of intellectual contemplation, there is a clear enough sense in which creation can in fact be considered an ‘ordinary,’ that is, properly natural, part of our experience, as much as any other key metaphysical concept. In contrast, the fact of transubstantiation is not at all the conclusion of any possible natural course of reasoning, nor is it foundational to our ordinary experience. To apprehend the fact of transubstantiation, an exercise of faith is necessary; that is, the will must incline the intellect to assent to what God has revealed. Since the fact of transubstantiation is not foundational for our natural experience, and not knowable by natural reason, it is “outside our ordinary experience” in a significantly more fundamental way than is creation. It does not follow, however, that natural reason is simply incapable of carrying on a properly metaphysical examination of the possibility of transubstantiation, or that philosophical investigation of this possibility need be outside our experience: there are in fact any number of contexts, including non-theological ones (probably examples from theoretical physics most readily come to mind), where we are challenged to think according to a conceptual paradigm which is markedly different from that which ordinarily structures our experience. Thus, when the normal (natural) inferences from sensations of accidents to the conception of a specific (kind of) substance fail to hold, it should be no surprise if the intellect naturally tends to resist this deviation from its habitual *modus operandi* in making inferences, even though there are genuine metaphysical reasons in favour of the possibility of such a hiatus in the natural order. That something is difficult to understand does not imply that it is simply not understandable, and the special difficulty we

feel in a given case can be eased when we are able to consider and understand why it is that some particular subject matter is especially difficult for us to conceive.

Thomas also argues that this disruption in what is familiar and naturally knowable is fitting. The reason it is a fitting characteristic of the sacrament is that it accustoms the believer to the notion that some things are above nature (*supra natura*) and must be believed by faith.<sup>44</sup> In other words, it weans the believer from, or helps to inoculate him against, any kind of fideistic rationalism. Thomas addresses a number of objections in this vein to the fittingness of separate accidents in particular: first, that such a separation contravenes the divine ordering of things, whereby it belongs to accidents to be in a subject<sup>45</sup>; and second, that it involves falsity and deception, since accidents are naturally signs of the underlying presence of their proper substance.<sup>46</sup> To the first, Thomas points out the unwarranted substantive assumption about the divine ordering of things, namely that all such ordering must follow the ‘common law’ (*legem communem*): in fact, he argues, the divine disposition of things imposes order on every single thing, including on those occasions when God acts beyond the ‘common law’ in order to communicate some privilege of grace.<sup>47</sup> The general point seems intuitive enough: the establishment of a particular order within a larger order need not vitiate the orderliness of the first or of the whole.<sup>48</sup> To the second objection,

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<sup>44</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.2 co.: “in this sacrament it is necessary that there be something above nature, through which our intellect becomes accustomed to those things which are to be believed by faith” – “in hoc sacramento oportet aliquid esse supra naturam, per quod intellectus noster assuescat ad ea quae sunt fidei credenda.”

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.2 arg. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.2 arg. 2.

<sup>47</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.2 ad 1: “quod divina dispositio quae aliquid ordinat secundum legem communem, etiam sibi aliqua reservat praeter legem communem facienda ad aliquod privilegium gratiae communicandum; nec ex hoc sequitur aliqua inordinatio, quia divina dispositio unicuique rei ordinem imponit.”

<sup>48</sup> A very similar analysis applies also to the ‘defects’ that appear within the ordinary course of nature; cf. *SCG* III.1: “But others, corruptible existences [i.e., *not* celestial bodies], can suffer a defect in their natural being, which nevertheless is made good by another effect: for, by the corruption of one, another is generated. And similarly, in their proper actions, they are deficient as regards the natural order, which defect, nevertheless, is compensated by some good arising from it. From which is it apparent that also those things which seem to deviate from the order which primarily governs the course of things do not escape the power of the first

Thomas grants that an intellect unaided by faith would err regarding the substance that is present under the Eucharistic species; however, the person aided by faith – for whom the sacrament is destined – is not deceived, since the senses which perceive the accidents truly perceive them,<sup>49</sup> and it is the intellect, not the senses, which judges regarding the nature, or essence, or quiddity (*quod quid est*), of the underlying substance; and it is possible for the intellect that is aided by faith to judge truly in this regard that the substance there is Christ's, not that of bread.<sup>50</sup>

### 2.2.2 The re-definition of accidents

The first set of objections that Thomas raises against the separation of accidents focuses on the being or essence of accidents and their definition, both of which would seem to exclude their separation from a subject. First, he presents an argument in terms of being: as the Philosopher says, the being of an accident is in-being (*accidentis esse est inesse*); so since even God cannot separate a thing's being (its existence) from it,<sup>51</sup> an accident that does not exist by in-being must not be; so an accident that existed without a substance (to be in) would necessarily both be and not be.

Second, Thomas presents the argument in terms of the supposed definition of an accident:

Whoever separates a definition from a thing which it defines posits two contradictories to be true at the same time: since this very thing which is a man is a rational mortal animal, and so

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governor.” – “Alia vero, corruptibilia existentia, naturalis esse pati possunt defectum, qui tamen per alterius profectum suppletur: nam, uno corrupto, aliud generatur. Et similiter in actionibus propriis a naturali ordine deficiunt, qui tamen defectus per aliquod bonum inde proveniens compensatur. Ex quo apparet quod nec illa quae ab ordine primi regiminis exorbitare videntur, potestatem primi regentis evadunt.”

<sup>49</sup> Clearly this point was missed by David Hume (see above, ch. 1), who draws on the argument of Dr. Tillotson. In Tillotson's popular treatise (first published in 1684), Tillotson offers the following argument (which, subsequently, Hume endorses): “So *Transubstantiation*, if it be true at all, it is all truth, and nothing else is true; for it cannot be true unless our Senses, and the Senses of all Mankind be deceived about their proper Objects; and if this be true and certain, then nothing else can be so; for if we be not certain of what we see, we can be certain of nothing.”

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.2 ad 2.

<sup>51</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 arg. 1: “non potest [Deus] separare esse rei ab ente.”

if it be posited that a man is and that a rational mortal animal is not, then it is posited that a man is and is not. But the definition of an accident is that which inheres in substance (*quod inest substantiae*); accordingly also in the definition of each of the accidents it is necessary that we posit a substance. Therefore, since God cannot make contradictories to be true at the same time, neither will he be able to bring it about that an accident should be without a substance.<sup>52</sup>

The third objection Thomas mentions is similar to the last. The argument begins by noting that the definition and the *definitum* are necessarily found together in a thing. ‘Not being in a subject’ or ‘existing *per se*’ defines substance, so if this definition applies to some item, that item must be a substance. If an accident is posited as ‘not being in a subject,’ but also as not being a substance (since an accident cannot be a substance), then there are two alternatives: either there is a middle term which somehow bridges between contradictories (i.e., ‘not being in a subject’ and ‘being in a subject’), which is impossible; or we are separating definition from *definitum* (‘not being in a subject’ from substance), which is to imply that contradictory propositions are true at the same time.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 arg. 2: “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.” In his case against the separability of accidents Dietrich makes use of the same example – rational and animal in relation to man – in order to illustrate the absurdity of separating the definition of a thing from a thing it defines.

<sup>53</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 arg. 3: “Further, God cannot make it that a definition should inhere in something and that the *definitum* should not inhere in the same thing, nor that there should be a middle term between affirmation and negation. But if we posit accidents as being without substance, one of the alternatives mentioned must follow. Therefore, God cannot do this. Proof of the middle: *Not being in a subject, but existing per se*, is the definition of a substance, and is opposed contradictorily to that which is *being in a subject*. But if we posit some accident as *not being in a subject*, then either we posit that something is intermediate between being in a subject and not so being, or we posit that something is a *not being in a subject*, and is not a substance, since if it is a substance, it is not an accident. Therefore if we posit that an accident exists without a subject, one of two alternatives follows: either that between contradictories there is a middle; or that a definition is separated from its *definitum*, which again implies that contradictories are true at the same time.” -- “Praeterea, Deus non potest facere quod definitio insit alicui, et definitum non insit eidem, nec quod inter affirmationem et negationem sit medium. Sed si ponamus accidentia esse sine substantia, oportet alterum dictorum sequi. Ergo Deus non potest hoc facere. Probatio mediae. Non esse enim in subjecto, sed per se existere, est definitio substantiae, et

The core of Dietrich of Freiberg's argument against Thomas' position will consist of a defence of just this kind of essential-definitional contradiction argument.

In response to the first objection, Thomas explains that being-in does not identify the being of the accident absolutely; rather being-in only picks out the mode of being (*modus essendi*)<sup>54</sup> which pertains to the accident with reference to the proximate cause of its being<sup>55</sup> – that is, insofar as, in the natural order, its proximate cause is a substance in which it inheres. Accordingly, if we abstract from the accident's natural ordination to its proximate cause, its ordering to (the causality of) the first cause remains, and accordingly the accident's actual mode of being is no longer being-in (a substance), but rather simply being from another (*ab alio esse*):

And since with the removal of the accident's ordering towards a proximate cause there can still remain its ordering towards the first cause, according to which the mode of its being is not being-in (*inesse*) but being from another (*ab alio esse*), for this reason God can bring it about that there be an accident, and that it not be-in; and it is nonetheless not the case that the

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opponitur contradictorie ei quod est esse in subjecto. Sed si ponamus aliquod accidens non esse in subjecto; vel ponemus quod aliquid sit medium inter esse in subjecto et non esse, vel ponemus quod aliquid sit non ens in subjecto, et non sit substantia: quia si est substantia, non est accidens. Ergo si ponamus accidens esse ~~simul~~ [sine] subjecto, sequitur alterum duorum: vel quod inter contradictoria sit medium; vel quod definitio separetur a definito, quod iterum implicat contradictoria esse simul vera.”

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *De veritate* 1.1 co.: “for there are diverse grades of being-ness [of ‘entity’], according to which are accepted diverse modes of being, and in connection with these modes are accepted the diverse genera of things: for substance does not add onto being some difference which would indicate some nature superadded to being, but by the name of substance is expressed a certain special mode of being, namely being *per se*; and the same applies in the other genera” – “sunt enim diversi gradus entitatis, secundum quos accipiuntur diversi modi essendi et iuxta hos modos accipiuntur diversa rerum genera: substantia enim non addit super ens aliquam differentiam quae designet aliquam naturam superadditam enti sed nomine substantiae exprimitur specialis quidam modus essendi, scilicet per se ens, et ita est in aliis generibus.” This notion of ‘modes of being’ is also crucial in Giles of Rome’s defense of the separability of accidents from their subjects; cf. Aegidius Romanus, *Theoremata de corpore Christi*, prop. 41; cf. Donati 2001, pp. 588-590.

<sup>55</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 1: “...inesse non dicit esse accidentis absolute, sed magis modum essendi qui sibi competit ex ordine ad causam proximam sui esse.”

being (*esse*) of the accident is removed from the accident, but [rather] its mode of being (*modus essendi*).<sup>56</sup>

For Thomas, then, an accident's nature is indissolubly linked to the natural (and *prima facie* normative) mode of being of real accidents, which are proximately caused by substances.<sup>57</sup> But the question about the actual mode of being of particular accidents, that is, about the absolutely possible ways in which accidents can be actualized as real beings in nature – though not necessarily *according to nature*, which would imply *in a substance* – is not thereby exhaustively determined. In other words, Thomas' claim is that the necessary conditions for being *in nature* are less restrictive than the necessary conditions for being *natural*. This is because the natural mode of being of an accident can constitute a genuine norm for our natural apprehension of it, without foreclosing an independent consideration of the accident's very being in respect of its ultimate source (God). Accordingly, for Thomas, that which is in the world need not exist wholly in accordance with the natural order of things which, naturally, governs the world. The (positive) order established for the return to God is not the same as – although it builds upon – the (positive) order established in the procession from God. Thomas spells out more closely what he takes to be the looser, but still

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<sup>56</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 1: “Et quia remoto ordine accidentis ad causam proximam, adhuc potest remanere ordo ipsius ad causam primam, secundum quem modus ipsius essendi non est inesse, sed ab alio esse; ideo potest Deus facere quod sit accidens, et non insit: nec tamen esse accidentis ab accidente removebitur, sed modus essendi.”

<sup>57</sup> Interpreting the passage quoted above from *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 1, Vijgen goes so far as to say that “considered in an absolute sense, the being of an accident is just being and therefore *indifferent* to being in or not being in” (Vijgen 2013, p. 182, emphasis added). Since being is always proportioned to essence, however, it is not clear what it could mean to consider accidental being – or any kind of being, however it is considered – as ‘just being’: a consideration of ‘just being’ could not be specifically a consideration of ‘the being of an accident.’ Also, Vijgen’s claim that the being (‘just being’) of an accident is “*indifferent* to being in or not being in” is not found in the text, and seems quite incompatible with Thomas’ careful quasi-definitions of substance and accident (cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 2, discussed immediately below). According to Fabrizio Amerini, in contrast to Aquinas, “the majority of theologians and philosophers in the second half of the thirteenth century regard accidents as *absolute beings*”; for these thinkers, “it is necessary to take the case of the Eucharist seriously and, on this basis, to remove inherence totally from an accident’s essence,” so that “the Eucharist shows that accidents are absolute beings to which actual inherence pertains contingently, potential inherence necessarily” (Amerini 2006, p. 96). Vijgen’s claim about the “absolute” consideration of the “indifferent” being of an accident seems more in line with this opposing view than with Thomas’ own.

necessary, conditions for being-in-the-world, as opposed to being in accordance with the natural order of things, when he addresses the issue of individuation and the role of dimensive quantity (see next section).

In response to the second objection – the claim that the definition of an accident is ‘being in a substance’ (*quod inest substantiae*) – Thomas clarifies the status of the supposed definitions of substance and accident.<sup>58</sup>

In general, ‘being’ or ‘existing’ cannot serve as a genus, because ‘being’ as such does not delimit for us ‘what’ anything is, and so cannot constitute a proper part of a definition or quiddity (i.e., the ‘what’-ness of a thing). A quiddity must be specific, that is, selective: it must pick out a common essential nature which is shared by all and only those things belonging to a given genus.<sup>59</sup> Being (*esse*), by contrast, designates the singular acts of existence by which the singulars contained in a genus are existentially distinct from one another. Accordingly, Thomas argues, ‘existing’ (as in the expression ‘existing *per se*’) cannot specify a proper genus of a quiddity, and so cannot be used to express the proper definition of a substance.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Dietrich will make his own definitional clarifications, with the aim of establishing the absolute inseparability of accidents from substances (see Chapter 3).

<sup>59</sup> This point arose earlier in the Sentences commentary, *InSent* I.8.4.2, where Thomas addresses the question *whether God is in the category of substance*. Thomas responds with a qualified *no*: He argues that whatever is in a genus must be *determined* to that genus – that is, it must be ‘terminated’ or limited in a particular way, whereas the divine being (*esse divinum*) contains within itself the ‘nobilities’ of every possible genus of being, so that it cannot be characterized by a ‘determinate’ kind of perfection, since its perfection is unlimited. The name ‘substance’ also typically names the *quiddity* of a thing, which is *different* from its being, whereas in God there can be no such difference, since God is not created and has his being *through his essence* rather than as received. Thomas notes that one might object that everything which is, is either a substance or an accident, and insofar as ‘substance’ is referred to what there is of perfection in substances – such as ‘not being in another’ – then, Thomas grants, it will be true to predicate the term ‘substance’ of God, as long as it is understood that the term is not predicated univocally of God and creatures, but only analogically. In any case, ‘not in a subject’ does not imply ‘substance’: *InSent* I.8.4.2 ad 2: “Being, however, does not express a quiddity, but only the act of being, since it is that very principle; and therefore ‘it is not in a subject; therefore it is in the genus of substance’ does not follow [it is a *non sequitur*]” - “Ens autem non dicit quidditatem, sed solum actum essendi, cum sit principium ipsum; et ideo non sequitur: est non in subjecto: ergo est in genere substantiae.”

<sup>60</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 2: “as Avicenna proves in his *Metaph.*, existing *per se* (*per se existere*) is not the definition of substance: since by this its quiddity is not demonstrated, but its *esse*; and its quiddity is not its

In order to avoid the inclusion of being as such in their definitions and the conflation of being and quiddity, Thomas offers a new definition, or quasi-definition, of substance and accident:

‘Existing through itself’ (*per se existere*) is not the definition of substance; since by this its quiddity is not demonstrated, but its being; and its quiddity is not its being; otherwise it could not be a genus, since being cannot be common in the mode of a genus,<sup>61</sup> since the singulars contained in a genus differ according to being. But the definition, or quasi-definition, of substance is ‘thing having a quiddity to which is acquired, or is owed, being, as not in another.’ And similarly ‘being in a subject’ is not the definition of an accident, but rather ‘thing to which is owed being in another’; and this [definition] is never separated from any accident, nor can it be separated, since being in another is always owed to that thing which is an accident according to the nature of its quiddity.<sup>62</sup>

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*esse*; otherwise it could not be a genus: since *esse* cannot be common in the mode of a genus, since the singulars contained in a genus differ according to *esse*.” – “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.”

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *De veritate* 1.1 co.: “But to being (*ens*), nothing, as it were, extraneous can be added, as in the way in which a difference is added to a genus, or an accident to a subject, since any nature whatsoever is essentially being; whence also the Philosopher proves in book III of the *Metaphysics* that being cannot be a genus; but according to this, some [determinations] are said to add onto being, insofar as they express a mode of being itself which is not expressed by the name ‘being.’” – “Sed enti non possunt addi aliqua quasi extranea per modum quo differentia additur generi, vel accidens subiecto, quia quaelibet natura est essentialiter ens; unde probat etiam philosophus in III *Metaphysicae*, quod ens non potest esse genus; sed secundum hoc aliqua dicuntur addere super ens in quantum expriment modum ipsius entis qui nomine entis non exprimitur.” Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* III 3, 998b21-26 (trans. Ross): “But it is not possible that either unity or being should be a single genus of things; for the differentiae of any genus must each of them both have being and be one, but it is not possible for the genus taken apart from its species (any more than for the species of the genus) to be predicated of its proper differentiae; so that if unity or being is a genus, no differentia will either have being or be one.” Thomas states this point neatly in *ST* I.3.5: “But the Philosopher shows, in Book III of the *Metaphysics*, that being (*ens*) cannot be the genus of anything, for every genus has differences which are outside the essence of the genus; but no difference can be found that is outside of being, since non-being cannot be a difference.” – “Ostendit autem philosophus in III *Metaphys.*, quod ens non potest esse genus alicuius, omne enim genus habet differentias quae sunt extra essentiam generis; nulla autem differentia posset inveniri, quae esset extra ens; quia non ens non potest esse differentia.”

<sup>62</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 2: “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 subiecto non est definitio accidentis, sed e contrario res cui debetur esse in alio; et hoc

While a substance naturally does ‘exist *per se*’ and accidents naturally are ‘beings in a subject’ so that these ascriptions do apply to the ordinary constitution of natural things, they only express general ways of being, and do not properly pick out any real quiddity (i.e., specify *what* any real thing is), and so it would be inappropriate to insist that such ‘definitions’ can be directly applied to constrain our understanding of what can possibly count as a real instantiation of a substance or accident. In particular, in consideration of divine omnipotence, Thomas concludes that accidents can exist apart from their natural in-being:

But it can be that that which is [merely] owed to something according to the nature of its quiddity should not belong to it in virtue of the agency of divine power. And thus it is clear that to make an accident to be without a substance is not to separate definition from *definitum*.<sup>63</sup>

Thomas’ response thus rests on two points: First, the ‘definitions’ of substance and accident are not definitions in the same sense as that in which ‘mortal rational animal’ is the definition of man – they are rather quasi-definitions. Second, the more correct quasi-definition of accidents does not imply that their being (existence) is identical to either their essence (quiddity, definition) or their mode of being (namely, in-being). Since the definition of a thing tells us what it is (its quiddity), Thomas’ claim about the merely quasi-definability of substance *qua* substance would seem to be corollary to the fact that we cannot properly define any real substance, say, a man or a horse or any real thing, simply by categorizing it as ‘a thing that exists *per se*.’ When we define man as ‘mortal rational animal’ and substance

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nunquam separatur ab aliquo accidente, nec separari potest: quia illi rei quae est accidens, secundum rationem suae quidditatis semper debetur esse in alio.”

<sup>63</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 2: “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.”

as ‘not being in a subject’ – or whatever definition we might offer – clearly the two definitions involve attempts to define things that are at quite different levels of abstraction (*man* refers to a specific kind of primary substance, whereas *substance* is a generic category, a most-general genus (*genus generalissima*) of being, applicable to every existing kind of substance<sup>64</sup>). Accordingly, whereas the definition of man is a conception with an immediate foundation in our experience of actual reality and a correspondingly concrete content (a proper quiddity), the quasi-definitions of substance and accident must be formulated with an awareness of the fact that these conceptions are abstracted from – and must apply to – a much more diffuse and universal experiential foundation. Since such ‘definitions’ are less immediately derived from any particular data of sense experience and are more universal, they are more properly metaphysical, pertaining to the properties of being as such, and thus it makes sense that they should have a less direct experiential import: they should be adaptable and applicable not just to the various substances and accidents we have experienced, but also to any that we might experience, any that are possible.<sup>65</sup>

To the third objection, Thomas’ reply follows from the preceding: ‘Being in a subject’ is indeed removed from the accidents of the Eucharist, and replaced with ‘not being in a subject,’ so there is no question of a middle term between contradictories. But since ‘being

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. *InSent* I.2.1.3 co: “ratio, prout hic sumitur, nihil aliud est quam id quod apprehendit intellectus de significatione alicujus nominis: et hoc in his quae habent definitionem, est ipsa rei definitio... Sed quaedam dicuntur habere rationem sic dictam, quae non definiuntur, sicut quantitas et qualitas et hujusmodi, quae non definiuntur, quia sunt genera generalissima.” – “*ratio*, as it is taken here, is none other than that which the intellect apprehends of the signification of some name: and in those things which have a definition, this is the very definition of the thing... But certain things are said to have a *ratio* in the way stated, which are not defined, just as quantity and quality and the like, which are not defined, since they are most general genera.”

<sup>65</sup> As against the suspicion that Thomas’ way of describing accidents here is an *ad hoc* device contrived only to accommodate his doctrine of the Eucharist, Wippel points out that Thomas would have had no need to modify the simple definition of substance, as well as that of accident, if his concern had been simply to make conceptual room for the possibility of transubstantiation. See Wippel 2000, p. 228 ff.

in a subject' is not the true definition of an accident, it is also not the case that a definition is thereby separated from its *definitum*.<sup>66</sup>

### 2.2.3 The constitution and individuation of accidents

Having discussed the nature of divine causality in respect of accidents and the nature and definition of accidents themselves, Thomas finally explains just how it is that supernaturally separated accidents can exist, as *not in a subject*, but nonetheless *in nature*. The basic problem with claiming that the Eucharistic accidents are not in a subject is that they certainly seem to be: accidents like whiteness or dryness, for example, are verifiably present, but these would appear, as clearly as in any other case, to be the whiteness or the dryness of some underlying subject which undergoes accidental changes – a subject which blackens when exposed to flame, for example, or dissolves when wetted.

Thomas rejects three candidates which had been proposed as the subject of such changes: he argues that the subject of the accidents can neither be the substance of the bread itself, nor its substantial form, nor can it be air.

Regarding the first candidate, substance, in the previous section (IV.11.1.1) Thomas had argued that the substance of the bread cannot serve as subject, principally for the theological reason that the words of consecration and form of worship observed indicate the presence of one substance only, that of Christ. Among other arguments he also claims that it would be impossible for the substance of bread to remain since there must be some real change effected in the consecration, and thus something to really distinguish the before and the after of the change. And if there is no change of the substance of the bread, then the change must be in the substance of Christ, and in virtue of local motion (as opposed to substantial

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 3.

conversion). But such an account is absurd, since a single body cannot move to more than one location at a given time, as would be required when the body of Christ was consecrated at the same time in diverse places.<sup>67</sup>

Regarding air, Thomas argues that we would notice the movement of air if it moved into the place formerly occupied by the substance of bread at the moment of consecration; but this doesn't occur. Thomas adds other arguments, but he notes, in any case, that air is simply not the kind of substance which can take on the accidents of bread, such as whiteness or having a definite shape.

Regarding substantial form as a possible subject, Thomas first notes that there would be no less difficulty in separating a substantial material form from matter than there is in separating accidents from substance. Further, he argues that “quantity has no relation to form except by reason of matter”<sup>68</sup> – which is why immaterial forms (purely intellectual beings) lack quantitative dimensions, or quantity having a position (*situm*).<sup>69</sup> “Therefore,” Thomas concludes, “since the other accidents [color, density, etc.] are referred to substance through the mediation of quantity [which is a function of matter], a form existing without matter [and thus without quantity, without dimensions] will not be able to be the subject of sensible accidents.”<sup>70</sup>

This analysis of form, matter, quantity, and the other accidents sets up Thomas' solution to the problem of explaining the subject of the Eucharistic accidents. He begins by

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.11.1.1.1 co.

<sup>68</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 co.: “...quantitas non respicit formam nisi ratione materiae.”

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.44.2.2.2 co.: “dimensive quantity is quantity having a position” – “quantitas dimensiva est quantitas habens situm.” ‘Position’ (*situm*), in addition to an extrinsic place ‘where’ (*ubi*), denotes an intrinsic (spatial) ordering of parts; cf. *InPhys* III.5 n.15; *InMet* V.9.

<sup>70</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 co.: “et ideo, cum alia accidentia mediante quantitate referantur ad substantiam, non poterit forma existens sine materia, accidentium sensibilibus subjectum esse.”

explaining the general nature of corporeal substances in regard to matter, quantity, and the other accidents:

But it should be understood that corporeal substance is the subject of accidents in virtue of its matter, in which it primarily inheres to be subject to another. But the first disposition of matter is quantity, since it is following upon quantity that we observe the division and non-division of matter, and so unity and multiplicity, which are the first consequences of being (*ens*);<sup>71</sup> and because of this these [modes of quantity] are dispositions of the whole of matter, not of this or that bit only. And so all the other accidents are founded in substance through the mediation of quantity, and quantity is naturally prior to them; and therefore it [quantity] does not include sensible matter in its intelligible nature (*in ratione sua*), although it does include intelligible matter, as stated in *Metaph.* VII.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Thus the *formal* individuation of bodies (their numerical distinction) is brought about through the division of matter by dimensive (continuous) quantity. Cf. *InBDT* 4.2 ad 6: “Number, *formally* speaking, is prior to continuous quantity [i.e., location and time], but *materially*, continuous quantity is prior, since number results from division of the continuous, as stated in *Physics* III. And in this way the division of matter according to dimensions causes diversity according to number.” – “Ad sextum dicendum, quod numerus formaliter loquendo est prius quam quantitas continua; set materialiter quantitas continua est prior, cum numerus ex diuisione continui relinquatur, ut dicitur in III *Phisicorum*. Et secundum hanc uiam causat diuersitatem secundum numerum diuisio materie secundum dimensiones.” It can be noted here, as Kevin White puts it, that “Aquinas’s understanding of the cause of individuation is notoriously difficult to present in a comprehensive and coherent manner” (White 1995, p. 543). Joseph Owens distinguishes (and one might say *contrasts*) the “viewpoint of being” (or reality or “actual causation”) from the “viewpoint of notion” (projections within the domain of human consideration), and seems to claim that in Aquinas’ view dimensive quantity acts as principle of individuation only or primarily from the latter perspective, while “already individuated existence” is the primary principle of individuation in the real order (cf. Owens 1988, pp. 284-285, 309). Wipfel discusses these claims made by Owens and responds (rightly, in my view): “I have not found [Thomas] explicitly referring to existence or the act of being as the principle of individuation for corporeal substances. Moreover, it seems to me that Thomas’s appeal to designated matter or to matter as subject to dimensions in accounting for the individuation of corporeal entities is intended to apply to the real order or the order of being, not merely or even primarily to the order of concepts. Hence I do not think one should refer to the act of being or to existence as the principle of individuation in corporeal entities” (Wipfel 2000, p. 375). Edward Feser (Feser 2014, pp. 198-200) gives a clear and brief synthetic presentation of Thomas’ understanding of the respective ways in which matter and dimensive quantity function as (real) principles of individuation.

<sup>72</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 co.: “Sciendum autem, quod substantia corporalis habet quod sit subjectum accidentium ex materia sua, cui primo inest subijci alteri. Prima autem dispositio materiae est quantitas; quia secundum ipsam attenditur divisio ejus et indivisio, et ita unitas et multitudo, quae sunt prima consequentia ens; et propter hoc sunt dispositiones totius materiae, non hujus aut illius tantum. Unde omnia alia accidentia mediante quantitate in substantia fundantur, et quantitas est prior eis naturaliter; et ideo non claudit materiam sensibilem in ratione sua, quamvis claudat materiam intelligibilem, ut dicitur in 7 *Metaph.*”

In connection with the priority among accidents of *dimensive quantity*, Thomas notes in his *Metaphysics* commentary the corresponding priority among the senses of *touch*, which is the sense which is most basic when

Quantity, in particular spatial quantity, does not include sensible matter because although quantity can be sensed or imagined, as when we see or imagine a circular or spherical object, it can also be conceived by the intellect, as when we grasp geometrical truths. The former depends on sensible matter, which is accessible to our corporeal faculties; the latter – since it is intelligible – depends on a kind of matter – that is, a potency, spatial constructability – which is accessible to our intellectual faculties.<sup>73</sup> On the basis of this priority which must be assigned to dimensive quantity (i.e., spatial extension) in regard to the existence and the observability and conceivability of the corporeal world, Thomas notes that it is even possible to mistake dimensive quantity for the very substance of the sensible world:

Whence from this some were deceived so as to believe dimensions to be the substance of sensible things, since with the removal of qualities, they saw nothing sensible remaining except quantity – which nonetheless, according to its being, depends on substance, just as the other accidents do.<sup>74</sup>

Thomas is thus clear that it is a mistake to think that quantity does not depend on substance, and in particular on matter; but quantity, a kind of act, is not the *same* as matter, which is potency, i.e., something lacking actual being.<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, Thomas holds that quantity,

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it comes to apprehending individual beings *qua* occupants of a dimensive quantity of space; cf. *InMet* I.1: “But although all animals naturally have senses, nonetheless not all have all of the senses, but only the perfect do. But all have the sense of touch. For it is, in a certain way, the foundation of all the other senses. But not all have the sense of sight, since while the sense of sight is more perfect than all the others in knowing, touch is more necessary [i.e., for *being*, for *life*].” – “Quamvis autem omnia animalia sensum habeant naturaliter, non tamen omnia habent omnes sensus, sed solum perfecta. Omnia vero habent sensum tactus. Ipse enim est quodammodo fundamentum omnium aliorum sensuum. Non autem habent omnia sensum visus, quia sensus visus est omnibus aliis perfectior in cognoscendo, sed tactus magis necessarius.”

<sup>73</sup> On *materia intelligibilis* vs. *materia sensibilis*, cf. *De veritate* 2.6 ad 1; *InMet* VII.11; *InBDT* 5.3 co 4 & ad 4.

<sup>74</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 co.: “Unde ex hoc quidam decepti fuerunt, ut crederent dimensiones esse substantiam rerum sensibilium; quia remotis qualitatibus nihil sensibile remanere videbant nisi quantitatem, quae tamen secundum esse suum dependet a substantia, sicut et alia accidentia.”

<sup>75</sup> Thus a purely *quantitative* analysis of reality is possible, but does not amount to an analysis of the nature of *matter*, or of *substance* (of that which is primarily real). In the same vein, in his *De ente et essentia*, c. 2, (written in the same period as the *Sentences* commentary, during Thomas’ first Paris sojourn), Thomas distinguishes between two senses of body: “Therefore this name which is *body* can be taken in a number of ways. For body taken in the genus of *substance* is so-called from the fact that it has such a nature that in it can

unlike matter,<sup>76</sup> can be independently, immediately produced by an act of divine power, that is, apart from the natural existence of some delimited portion of prime matter whose natural state of potency disposes it to be actualized in such dimensions:

But by the divine power it is conferred on the dimensions that belonged to the bread that they subsist without a subject in this sacrament, which is the first property of substance; and consequently it is given to them that they sustain the other accidents, just as they also sustained them when the substance was under them; and thus the other accidents are in the dimensions as in a subject, but those very dimensions are not in a subject.<sup>77</sup>

Thomas addresses a number of objections relating to this subject-of-individuation problem. He starts with three arguments that attempt to prove that accidents must be in a subject. The first objection (arg. 1) shows that the accident of whiteness in the Eucharistic species must be in a subject and argues that the same should be true of quantity and the other accidents, since all are equally accidents.<sup>78</sup> But by Thomas' account, there is an orderliness to the substance's real causation of accidents which goes beyond their quasi-definitional

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be designated three dimensions; while those very three designated dimensions are the body which is in the genus of *quantity*." - "Hoc igitur nomen quod est corpus multipliciter accipi potest. Corpus enim secundum quod est in genere substantie dicitur ex eo quod habet talem naturam ut in eo possint designari tres dimensiones; ipse enim tres dimensiones designate sunt corpus, quod est in genere quantitatis."

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *ST* I.66.1 ad 3: "an accident, since it is a form, is a certain act [i.e., principle of actual being]; but matter, according to that which it is, is being in potency. For this reason, actual being is more repugnant to matter without form than to an accident without a subject." - "accidens, cum sit forma, est actus quidam, materia autem secundum id quod est, est ens in potentia. Unde magis repugnat esse in actu materiae sine forma, quam accidenti sine subiecto."

<sup>77</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 co.: "Virtute autem divina confertur dimensionibus quae fuerunt panis, ut sine subiecto subsistant in hoc sacramento, quod est *prima proprietas substantiae*; et per consequens datur eis ut sustineant alia accidentia, sicut et sustinebant quando substantia eis suberat; et sic alia accidentia sunt in dimensionibus sicut in subiecto, ipsae vero dimensiones non sunt in subiecto."

<sup>78</sup> *InSent*. IV 12.1.1.3 arg. 1: "For being in a substance pertains equally to all accidents. But whiteness is not here without a subject; which is clear from the fact that it is divided accidentally, which can only be the case for something existing in a subject. Therefore neither is it the case that quantity or any accident is here without a subject." - "Esse enim in substantia aequaliter convenit omnibus accidentibus. Sed albedo non est hic sine subiecto: quod patet ex hoc quod dividitur per accidens, quod non competit nisi existenti in subiecto. Ergo nec quantitas aut aliquod accidens est hic sine subiecto."

equality.<sup>79</sup> Just as the essential principles of a substance are its matter and form, so the accidents which it produces primarily, quantity and quality, are proportioned, respectively, to these principles: just as matter is the subject in which substantial form inheres so that matter is the “first subject that is not in another,” so quantity is the subject in which quality inheres – for example, as color inheres in surface; accordingly, quantity is essentially closer to being a ‘not being in another’ (*non esse in alio*) than quality, and they are not equal in this respect.<sup>80</sup>

The second objection (arg. 2) Thomas raises to his position is rather obscure:

That which the sense perceives in this sacrament is there in truth; otherwise there would be a fiction (counterfeit) in this sacrament. But the sense perceives not only quantity (*quantitatem*) or whiteness (*albedinem*) there, but also a quantized-thing (*quantum*) and a [particular] white (*album*). Therefore there is no accident there without a subject.<sup>81</sup>

The argument seems to be that quantity (or ‘how-much-ness’) and whiteness are universals and cannot, as such, be perceived by the senses. Since the senses do perceive the accidents, they must be there properly constituted as a concrete object for the senses, ‘here and now’ in

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<sup>79</sup> It should be noted that while we can characterize all accidents by reference to a common mode of being, relative to substance, each one of the nine categories of accidents is also distinguished by its own proper mode of being; cf. *InMet* V.9: “being [*ens*] is contracted to diverse genera according to diverse mode of being predicated, which follows upon diverse mode of being; for, ‘in as many ways as being [*ens*] is said,’ that is, in as many ways as something admits predicates, ‘in that many ways being [*esse*] is signified,’ that is, in so many ways is something signified to be [*esse*].” – “ens contrahatur ad diversa genera secundum diversum modum praedicandi, qui consequitur diversum modum essendi; quia ‘quoties ens dicitur,’ idest quot modis aliquid praedicatur, ‘toties esse significatur,’ idest tot modis significatur aliquid esse.” For an account of Thomas’ derivation of each of Aristotle’s ten predicaments, or categories, see Wippel 2000, pp. 208-228.

<sup>80</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 1: “The first accidents following from substance are quantity and quality; and these two are proportioned to the two essential principles of substance, namely form and matter...; but quality is on the side of form. And since matter is the first subject which is not in another, but form is in another, namely matter, for this reason quantity approximates more closely to that which is *not being in another* than does quality, and consequently more closely also than the other accidents.” – “Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod prima accidentia consequentia substantiam sunt quantitas et qualitas; et haec duo proportionantur duobus principiis essentialibus substantiae, scilicet formae et materiae...; sed qualitas ex parte formae. Et quia materia est subjectum primum quod non est in alio, forma autem est in alio, scilicet materia; ideo magis appropinquat ad hoc quod est non esse in alio, quantitas quam qualitas, et per consequens quam alia accidentia.”

<sup>81</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 arg. 2: “Praeterea, illud quod sensus percipit in hoc sacramento, est ibi secundum veritatem; alias esset fictio in hoc sacramento. Sed sensus non tantum percipit ibi quantitatem aut albedinem, sed etiam quantum et album. Ergo non est ibi accidens sine subjecto.”

a concrete subject (since they must be individuated, which seemingly requires that they be in a subject). The third objection (arg. 3) puts this last point more directly:

Further, an accident is not individuated except from a subject, just as form is not, except from matter. But the accidents are there individuated; otherwise they would not be sensible. Therefore they are not without a subject.<sup>82</sup>

Thomas makes a detailed reply to these two objections (arg. 2 & 3). His reply to argument 2 is, like the argument itself, less than straightforward:

It must be said that dimensive quantity, according to its intelligible nature (*rationem*), does not depend on sensible matter, even if it does depend on it according to its being. Therefore in forming predicates and subjects it assumes the mode of substance and of accident; whence we call a line both quantity and quantized-particular, and largeness and large-particular; and therefore, since dimensions are there [, albeit] without a subject, the sense sees not only quantity [*quantitatem*], but a quantized-thing [*quantum*].<sup>83</sup>

His argument seems to be that even if dimensive quantity actually depends on sensible matter, nonetheless, according to its intelligible nature (*suam rationem*) – that is, according to our apprehension of it – it does not. (Matter as such can only be understood by intellectual reasoning, and we can conceive of space apart from matter.) It follows that when we form propositions from subjects and predicates, where the subject is a substance and the predicate is an accident (e.g., Socrates is white), quantitative entities can assume the mode of substance or accident. Thus, in the case of a line, for example, we call it a quantity (an ‘accidental’ predicate – perhaps, e.g., the plan of a house might accidentally entail any

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<sup>82</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 arg. 3: “Praeterea, accidens non individuatur nisi ex subjecto, sicut nec forma nisi ex materia. Sed accidentia sunt ibi individuata; alias non essent sensibilia. Ergo non sunt sine subjecto.”

<sup>83</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 2: “Ad secundum dicendum, quod quantitas dimensiva secundum suam rationem non dependet a materia sensibili, quamvis dependeat secundum suum esse; ideo in praedicando et subjiciendo accipit modum substantiae et accidentis; unde lineam dicimus et quantitatem et quantam, et magnitudinem et magnam; et ideo cum sint ibi dimensiones sine substantia, non tantum videt sensus quantitatem, sed etiam quantum.”

number of lines) as well as a quantized-thing (a ‘substantial’ subject – e.g., a particular linear dimension of the house having a given length).<sup>84</sup> Thus in the case of the Eucharist, where dimensions are present without a subject, we see the dimensions as both a quantity (which would normally be predicated of some subject-thing) and a quantized-thing (since the dimensions remain as the real subject of the other accidents). And for the other accidents, again, they are present in a subject, since the separated dimensions serve as subject for them.<sup>85</sup>

In his reply to the third objection (arg. 3), that is, to the objection that an accident cannot be individuated apart from the principle of its individuation – namely its material, substantial subject – Thomas distinguishes two principles required to constitute the intelligible character of an individual as such: first, “that it be an actual being (*ens actu*), whether in itself [in the case of substances] or in another [in the (normal) case of accidents]”; and second, “that it be divided from the others which do or can belong to the same species and exist undivided in itself.”<sup>86</sup> In normal circumstances, Thomas says, the primary principle, actual being, depends on matter (a substantial form combines with matter to form a being that is *per se* one; or, for accidental being, an accidental form combines with a substance in virtue of its matter to form a being that is accidentally one). And the secondary principle of individuation, division from conspecifics (and undividedness from itself), is a result of dimension, “since it is in virtue of

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<sup>84</sup> We might say that an architect is primarily concerned with the dimensions of the house in the mode of accidents, as subordinated to the overall design of the house, whereas a house-painter is mainly interested in the dimensions (i.e., the surface areas) themselves, in the mode of a substance, as a ‘thing’ to which he must apply a quantity of paint.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 2: “But regarding the other accidents, it is clear that there is something white there, since whiteness is there in a subject.”

<sup>86</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 3: “[1] quod sit ens actu vel in se vel in alio; et [2] quod sit divisum ab aliis quae sunt vel possunt esse in eadem specie, in se indivisum existens.”

this that matter is divided.”<sup>87</sup> Thomas notes that for immaterial things, since they lack dimensions, there can be no such division from conspecifics (so that each angel can only be distinguished formally from the others and each individual angel is thus the unique member of its species). In the case of the Eucharist, however, *ex hypothesi* dimensive quantity receives actual being independently from the matter of the original material substance, and Thomas explains what follows from this in regard to individuation:

If, therefore, quantity without matter had actual being, then it would have individuation *per se*, since it would have *per se* that division according to which matter is divided; and thus one part would differ from another not by species, but by number, according to the order that is found in the location of parts; and similarly one line would differ from another by number, provided it was received in a diverse place. Since, therefore, in this sacrament we posit the dimensions to subsist *per se*, it follows that they are individuated from themselves, and through them the other accidents which are founded in them.<sup>88</sup>

### ***Simplicity and nobility***

Thomas raises another pair of objections that are worth mentioning, since we will find them echoed in Dietrich’s critique. First (arg. 4), it seems that since the Eucharistic accidents are not in a subject, they have no material part and must be immaterial forms; but this implies, in accordance with what ‘the philosophers’ have shown, that they are intellects in act. Second (arg. 5), angels are immaterial but still composed of *quo est* and *quod est* (being

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<sup>87</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 3: “et secundarium principium individuationis est *dimensio*, quia ex ipsa habet materia quod dividatur.” For an account of Thomas’ view of *prime matter* as principle of *distinction* between entities, and *determinate dimensions* as principle of *individuation*, see Brower 2012, p. 97-98.

<sup>88</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 3: “Si ergo quantitas sine materia haberet esse actu, per se haberet individuationem, quia per se haberet divisionem illam secundum quam dividitur materia; et sic una pars differret ab alia non specie, sed numero, secundum ordinem qui attenditur in situ partium; et similiter una linea ab alia differret numero, dummodo acciperetur in diverso situ. Quia ergo in hoc sacramento ponimus dimensiones per se subsistere, constat quod ex seipsis individuantur, et per ea alia accidentia quae in eis fundantur.” Thomas presents a very similar argument in his Christmas 1256 *quodlibetal* disputation; cf. *Quodl.* VII.4.3.

and essence); but it seems this is not true for the separate accidents, so they will be simpler, and accordingly nobler – closer to the divine simplicity – than the angels.

Thomas has no difficulty in dispatching these objections: In response to the fourth objection he simply points out that an intellect in act is not just separate from matter, but from the individuating conditions of matter; and obviously, as we have just discussed, the Eucharistic accidents are not separated from such conditions.<sup>89</sup> In response to the fifth objection, he rejects the premise that there is no composition of being and essence in the Eucharistic accidents. To the contrary, the accidents have proper acts of being and proper essences and these are distinct from each other, just as is the case for the angels. In addition they are characterized by a composition in terms of parts of quantity, so in fact they are plainly less simple than the angels.

### ***External action***

A final issue to mention, which Dietrich also raises, relates to the specific modes of action of substances and accidents. Thomas goes through a list of twenty different objections relating to this issue under the heading *whether the accidents which remain in this sacrament*

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<sup>89</sup> Thomas also pointed out earlier, in discussing the twofold matter of the sacrament (i.e., bread and wine), that it is necessary to distinguish the simplicity of an *imperfect* thing from the simplicity of a *perfect* thing, since only the latter kind of simplicity, not just simplicity as such, implies *nobility* (such as that which would entail *intellectual* being); cf. *InSent* IV.11.2.1.1 ad 1: “Simplicity *per se* is not the cause of nobility, rather perfection is; thus where perfect goodness is found in one simple thing, the simple is nobler than the composite; but when, to the contrary, the simple is imperfect, but the composite perfect, then the composite is nobler than the simple, just as man is nobler than earth.” - “Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod simplicitas per se non est causa nobilitatis; sed perfectio; unde ubi perfecta bonitas in uno simplici invenitur, simplex est nobilior quam compositum; quando autem e contrario simplex est imperfectum, compositum vero perfectum, tunc compositum est nobilior quam simplex, sicut homo est nobilior terra.” In the later *Summa theologiae* Thomas argues against the separate subsistence of *substantial* form on the ground that such a form would necessarily be an intelligible form and an intellect in act; *ST* III.75.6 co.: “But if [the substantial form] were to remain separated from matter, it would thereby be an actual intelligible form, and also an intellect, for such are all forms separated from matter.” - “Si autem remaneret a materia separata, iam esset forma intelligibilis actu, et etiam intellectus, nam omnes formae a materia separatae sunt tales.”

*can alter something that is extrinsic.*<sup>90</sup> To begin with, it is clear from experience that the Eucharistic accidents or species do act upon extrinsic things – that is, they can be implicated as agent or patient in various natural processes: nutrition, combustion, putrefaction, etc. The objections related to such facts of experience are based upon certain presuppositions regarding the nature of physical action and interaction which would seem to undermine the coherence of such processes occurring apart from the substance of the bread or wine. The principle objections for our purposes are, to begin with, that physical action requires a material communication and contact and similarity (qc. 1, arg. 1 & 2 & 3) between the agent and the patient of the action, each of which would be allegedly be lacking to accidents which are not in matter (i.e., in a material substance). Further, in the special cases of substantial generation and corruption, first, simple immaterial forms would, like Platonic forms, seem to be causally inert and could not generate composite material substances (qc. 2, arg. 1); and second, it would seem to be impossible for something that is less noble (accidents) to generate something more noble (a substance) (qc. 2, arg. 2).

In response to these objections Thomas gives us a more precise characterization of the principles of physical action and how these are realized in the case of the Eucharistic accidents. He acknowledges the principle that the thing which acts is neither the matter nor the form, but the composite; at the same time, however, act is a function of form rather than matter, so the form is rightly called the principle of action. With regard to accidental forms, just as he argued earlier,<sup>91</sup> dimensive quantity is on the side of matter, while quality is the first manifestation of form. It follows that quality is a principle of action *per se*, while quantity acts only in virtue of quality, that is, as its immediate subject (i.e., its ‘matter’). But

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<sup>90</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.2: *Utrum accidentia, quae remanent in hoc sacramento, possint immutare aliquid extrinsecum.*

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 co.

if this is the case, then it seems clear that so long as God causes the separated quantity of the bread to be (in the world), then that quantity can continue to function in a material mode with respect to the *per se* principle of external action, quality, which is thus enabled to act (in the world) just as it did before.<sup>92</sup>

Regarding the particular issue of the generation of substances from accidents, the analysis is similar. Thomas explains as follows:

In natural actions, substantial forms are not the immediate principle of action, but they act through the mediation of active and passive qualities, as through their proper instruments, just as it is said in *De anima* II that natural heat is that by which the soul acts; and therefore qualities [such as heat] not only act in their own capacity, but also in virtue of substantial form [e.g., the soul]. For this reason their action terminates not only at accidental form, but also at substantial form; and because of this, generation is the term of alteration. But those [accidents] of this [separated] kind receive their instrumental power from the very thing by which they are caused from essential principles [i.e., from God]. Whence, just as with the removal of the substances the same being (*esse*) according to species remains with the accidents through divine power, likewise the same power (*virtus*) remains with them, just as before; and therefore, just as before they were able to effect a change of substantial form, likewise also now.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, while it might appear that separate accidents could not act through themselves, that is, apart from the integrating, organizing, directing principle of their activity, namely their

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.2.1 co.

<sup>93</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.2.2 co.: “Ad secundam quaestionem dicendum, quod in actionibus naturalibus formae substantiales non sunt immediatum [et proximum (Moos 1947)] actionis principium, sed agunt mediantibus qualitatibus activis et passivis, sicut propriis instrumentis; ut dicitur in 2 *de anima*, quod calor naturalis est quo anima agit; et ideo qualitates non solum agunt in virtute propria, sed etiam in virtute formae substantialis. Unde actio earum non solum terminatur ad formam accidentalem, sed etiam ad formam substantialem; et propter hoc generatio est terminus alterationis. Hujusmodi autem virtutem instrumentalem recipiunt eo ipso quo a principiis essentialibus causantur. Unde sicut remotis substantiis remanet accidentibus idem esse secundum speciem virtute divina, ita etiam remanet eis eadem virtus quae et prius; et ideo, sicut ante poterant immutare ad formam substantialem, ita et nunc.”

substantial form, in fact the primary causal powers of God are capable of directly sustaining both the existence of the accidents, apart from their ordinary subject, and their formally active character (in this case, relative to generation and corruption), apart from the substantial form which is the natural immediate (secondary) causal principle of this active character.

### **3 *Quodlibet* IX, q. 3 (Paris, 1257)**

Not long after completing his *Sentences* commentary, during his first regency as a young master at the University of Paris (1256-59), Thomas again addressed the question whether the accidents of the sacrament of the altar remain without a subject, this time on the occasion of one of his *quodlibetal* disputations.<sup>94</sup> His treatment is much briefer, but the substance of his position remains unchanged.

#### **3.1 The causal ordering of the universe**

Thomas' response again begins with an explanation of the causal power belonging to the first cause and its transcendence in relation to the causal power of secondary causes. In regard to the ordering of causes, whereas in the *Sentences* commentary he spoke of the order of causality 'according to the common law' (*secundum legem communem*), here he designates this ordering as 'according to the order of nature' (*secundum naturae ordinem*). God is the universal and primary cause (the creator) of nature, that is, of every being, including both substances and accidents, and according to the order of nature the production of accidents is mediated by and dependent on the principles of substances (i.e., this form in

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<sup>94</sup> For a summary of as-yet-inconclusive attempts to date Thomas' *Quodlibets*, see Torrell 2008, p. 304-306.

this matter). Nevertheless, there is a distinction between the natural order (or the ‘common law’ of nature), which is a perfectly real aspect of the creation which proceeds from God, and the order of absolute possibility which follows from the transcendent power of the Creator, and which includes the power to accomplish the miraculous. Accordingly, “it is not excluded that God, as the first cause, can preserve the accidents in being, the substance being removed.”<sup>95</sup> And it is thus, Thomas concludes, that the Eucharistic accidents are miraculously held in being in the sacrament of the altar, that is, without a subject.

### 3.1.1 Complementary orders

Thomas raises five objections against the Eucharistic accidents existing without a subject. Three of these (arg. 3, 4, & 5) object to the disruption of the causal ordering of things which seems to be entailed by such an occurrence. The first (arg. 3) concerns the causal powers of the separated accidents, the second (arg. 4) concerns the scandal to the sensibilities of the faithful occasioned by these causal powers, and the third (arg. 5) makes a general appeal to the incompatibility of separate accidents with the divine ordering of things. Thomas sets these arguments out as follows:

[Arg. 3:] Substance cannot be generated from accidents. But we see that worms and ashes are generated from these species, which are clearly not generated from the body of Christ.

Therefore the accidents are not there without a subject. [Arg. 4:] But you say that they are generated miraculously. But to the contrary: miracles are ordered towards the building up of faith. But this is not ordered towards the building up of faith, but rather towards scandal, that worms should be generated thence. Therefore this is not done miraculously. [Arg. 5:]

Further, in the sacrament of truth nothing should be disorderly. But it is contrary to the order

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<sup>95</sup> *Quodl.* IX, q. 3, co.: “per hoc non excluditur quin Deus quasi causa prima possit accidentia in esse conseruare, substancia remota.”

which God has imposed on things that accidents be without a subject. Therefore the accidents are not there without a subject.<sup>96</sup>

Thomas gives a rather detailed reply to the first objection (arg. 3). He offers two possible solutions to explain the causal powers of the accidents: one is that the substance of the bread could, in a sense, ‘return,’ though not intact (as bread), but perhaps by means of a re-creation of its matter, from which worms or ashes or nutrition would be generated.<sup>97</sup> The plainer solution, in Thomas’ view, is the second:

When by divine power it is given to these accidents to subsist *per se*, at the same time it is given to them that they act, and that from them is accomplished whatever would be accomplished from the substance of the bread, or whatever it would do, if it remained; and by this power it nourishes, and worms or ashes are generated thence.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, while accidents normally rely on matter for their existence and substantial form to integrate and direct their operational powers, in the case of the Eucharist God produces these effects in the accidents directly.

As to the scandal (arg. 4) and disorder (arg. 5) allegedly entailed by his doctrine, regarding scandal Thomas first notes that “this miracle is ordered towards faith, lest faith

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<sup>96</sup> *Quodl.* IX, q. 3 arg. 3: “[arg. 3] Praeterea. Ex accidentibus non potest generari substantia; set uidemus ex illis speciebus generari vermes et cineres, que constat non generari ex corpore Christi; ergo accidentia non sunt ibi sine subiecto. [arg. 4] Set dices quod generantur miraculose. Set contra: miracula ordinantur ad fidei edificationem, set hoc non ordinatur ad edificationem fidei, set magis ad scandalum, quod uermes exinde generentur; ergo non fit miraculose. [arg. 5] Preterea. In sacramento ueritatis nichil debet esse inordinatum; set contra ordinem quem Deus rebus imposuit est accidens esse sine subiecto; ergo non sunt ibi accidentia sine subiecto.”

<sup>97</sup> *Quodl.* IX.3 ad. 3: “If this is the opinion to be maintained [that the substance of the bread returns], by ‘substance of the bread’ should be understood ‘matter of the bread’; not that that which was before returns, but that with the destruction of the species matter is provided there by God, whether by creation, or by whatever other means which would make it possible for bodies of this kind (ashes and worms) to be generated.” – “si debet ista opinio sustineri, intelligenda est per substantiam panis materia panis, non quod redeat que prius erat, set quod destructis speciebus aliqua materia a Deo ibi prouideatur, uel per creationem uel quocunque alio modo, ex qua possint huiusmodi corpora generari.”

<sup>98</sup> *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 3: “...dicatur quod illis accidentibus, cum datum est per se subsistere diuina uirtute, simul datum est ut agant et ex eis fiat quicquid fieret ex substantia panis uel quicquid ageret, si maneret; et hac uirtute nutriunt, et uermes vel cineres exinde generantur.”

should lose its merit, if the mystery of the sacrament is comprehended [or ‘taken away’ – *deprehendatur*].”<sup>99</sup> That is, since the merit of faith lies in the will’s cooperation with divine grace in assenting to that which does not appear,<sup>100</sup> if the mystery of the sacrament was naturally comprehensible – and so not miraculous – assenting to it would presumably not involve any meritorious cooperation with divine grace. Regarding the charge of un-divine disorderliness, Thomas again rejects the suggestion that the orderliness of the established order of nature – the common law – requires the exclusion of the establishment and operation of any other order: “There is nothing to prevent something from being ordered according to a consideration of the common order, the contrary of which, also, is ordered, in light of some particular cause.”<sup>101</sup>

### **3.2 Being and definition of accidents**

Thomas also addresses two objections (arg. 1 & 2) relating to the problem of the being and definition of accidents and substance and the apparent contradiction involved in speaking of an accident without a subject. In the first he notes that since the being of an accident (*accidentis esse*) is in-being (*inesse*), it seems that *being in a subject* belongs to the definition of an accident; so, since God cannot make contradictories to be true at the same time, he cannot remove from an accident that which belongs to it by definition, namely, its *being in a subject*.

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<sup>99</sup> *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 4: “hoc miraculum ordinatur ad fidem, ne fides scilicet meritum perdat, si sacramenti misterium deprehendatur.”

<sup>100</sup> Cf. *ST* II-II.2.9; *ST* II-II.4.1.

<sup>101</sup> *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 5: “nichil prohibet aliquid esse ordinatum considerato communi ordine, cuius contrarium etiam ordinatum est pro aliqua causa speciali.”

In response to this argument, Thomas again clarifies the status of the problematic definition of an accident. This time he explains, following Aristotle, that the definition in question is a definition by addition (*per additionem*)<sup>102</sup>:

When it is said ‘the being of an accident is in-being,’ or however it should be that the subject is posited in the definition of an accident, it is understood to be a definition by addition, as *Metaphysics* VII has it (and a definition is called ‘by addition’ when in the definition is posited something that is beyond [thus ‘additional to’] the essence of the thing defined, as when nose (*nasus*) is put in the definition of pug [i.e., of snub-nosed (*simi*)]); but this is because of the natural dependence of the accident on the substance.<sup>103</sup>

But the dependence of accident on substance is only natural, so “notwithstanding this, God can conserve accidents without a subject,” and there is no implication that contradictories are true at the same time, “since the subject does not belong to the essence of the accident.”<sup>104</sup>

The second objection (arg. 2) is similar, but picks up on the definition of substance:

Of whatever a definition is predicated, so is the *diffinitum*. [For example, ‘Socrates is a rational animal’ and ‘Socrates is a man.’] But ‘being *per se*’ is the definition or description of a substance. If, therefore, in the sacrament of the altar, accidents are *per se*, not in a subject, it follows that they are substances, which is absurd.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> This kind of definition by addition can be linked to the kind of *being* of accidents, *super-added being* (*esse superadditum* - cf. *Quodl.* IX.2.2). Accidental being is really distinct from, additional to, substantial being.

<sup>103</sup> *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 1: “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, cum dicitur: ‘accidentis esse est inesse,’ vel qualitercunque ponatur subiectum in diffinitione accidentis, intelligitur esse diffinitio per additionem, ut habetur in VII *Metaphysice* (et dicitur diffinitio per additionem quando in diffinitione ponitur aliquid quod est extra essenciam diffiniti, sicut nasus ponitur in diffinitione simi); hoc autem est propter naturalem dependenciam accidentis a subiecto.”

<sup>104</sup> *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 1: “Set hac non impediende, Deus potest accidentia sine subiecto conseruare, nec tamen sequitur contradictoria simul esse uera, quia subiectum non est de essencia accidentis.” As we will see, Dietrich relies heavily on *Metaphysics* VII for his counter-argument and he will appeal to this same example of ‘nose’ and ‘snub’ in order to substantiate the opposite conclusion with regard to the intelligibility of separating accidents from their subjects.

<sup>105</sup> *Quodl.* IX.3 arg. 2: “Preterea. *De quocunq; predicatur diffinitio, et diffinitum*; set ‘ens per se’ est diffinitio vel descriptio substancie; si ergo in sacramento altaris accidentia sunt per se, non in subiecto, sequitur quod sint substancie, quod est absurdum.”

Thomas again rejects the rough definitions of substance and accident, namely, substance is ‘what exists *per se*’ (*quod per se est*), while an accident is ‘what exists in another’ (*quod est in alio*). Instead, he claims, these ‘definitions’ are circumlocutions for the true descriptions of substance and accident: “a substance is a thing to whose nature is owed existence not-in-another; while an accident is a thing to whose nature is owed existence in another.”<sup>106</sup>

Thomas concludes that the nature of the accident – which is referred to by this description, and to which it is indeed owed (or due, or destined) to be in a subject – is not altered if it should miraculously exist not in a subject.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, it seems clear that the miracle is miraculous precisely in that the accident’s actual mode of existence is not in accordance with that which is naturally due to it.

## **4 *Summa contra gentiles* IV, 62-65 (Orvieto, 1264-65)**

### **4.1 Two orders**

Like Thomas’s first major theological synthesis, his commentary on the *Sentences*, the four books of his *Summa contra gentiles*<sup>108</sup> are written to reflect the general structure of emanation and return, Books I and II treating of God and the emanation of all things from God, while the final two Books treat of the return of all things to God, Book III dealing with

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<sup>106</sup> *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 2: “‘Substantia est res cuius nature debetur esse non in alio’; ‘Accidens uero est res cuius nature debetur esse in alio.’” Again, recalling Thomas’ earlier analysis in the *Sentences* commentary, *being not-in-another* and *being in another* designate the *natural modes of being* of substance and accident respectively.

<sup>107</sup> *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 2: “From which it is clear that even though an accident is miraculously not in another, nonetheless it does not fall under the definition of a substance; for it is not thus owed to its nature to not be in another; nor does it pass outside the intelligible notion of an accident, since its nature still remains such that it is owed to it to be in another.” - “Vnde patet quod, quamuis accidens miraculose sit non in alio, non tamen pertingit ad diffinitionem substantie; non enim per hoc eius nature sit debitum esse non in alio; nec egreditur rationem accidentis, quia adhuc natura eius remanet talis ut ei debeatur esse in alio.”

<sup>108</sup> This work was probably begun in Paris in 1259, during the third and final year of Thomas’ first regency as master in Paris, continued in Naples, and completed with the writing of Book IV in Orvieto in 1264-65 (cf. Weisheipl 1974, p. 359-360; Torrell 2008, p.486).

this return insofar as it can be grasped through reason, and Book IV dealing with those truths which entirely surpass the natural grasp of human reason,<sup>109</sup> as is the case for the conversion of the substance of bread into the substance of Christ. We can again see implied here the two complementary orders which are so fundamental for Thomas' understanding. This *Summa* 'against the gentiles,' however, unlike the *Sentences* commentary, is a more specifically apologetical or polemical work. (One tradition has it that it was written at the request of St. Raymond of Peñafort against the views of Moslems, Jews, and heretical Christians of Spain and North Africa.<sup>110</sup>) Accordingly, in his discussion of the Eucharist, Thomas is careful to acknowledge the many difficulties which make it hard to accept the words of Christ and of the Church on this subject.<sup>111</sup> In responding to these difficulties, he is careful to point out the epistemic limitations of our position in inquiring into this matter: "The divine power operates in this sacrament in a way that is more uplifted and more set apart than can be investigated by man."<sup>112</sup> At the same time he explains that it is nonetheless necessary to try to elucidate the matter in such a way that it will not appear to unbelievers as being simply impossible.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. Weisheipl 1974, pp. 132-133.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Weisheipl 1974, p. 359. For a review of the controversy over the precise intention and nature of this work, see Torrell 2008, pp. 153-156.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *SCG* IV.62. In introducing the problem he cites the words of certain disciples of Jesus recorded in John's gospel in response to Jesus' claim that those wishing to have life within them must eat his flesh and drink his blood: "These are hard words? Who can hear them?" – "Durus est hic sermo. Quis potest eum audire?" (*SCG* IV.62.1. Cf. *John* 6:60.)

<sup>112</sup> *SCG* IV.63: "Licet autem divina virtus sublimius et secretius in hoc sacramento operetur quam ab homine perquiri possit..." And of course, in regard to the divine power, as Thomas makes clear in a related work from the same period as the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, *De rationibus fidei contra Saracenos, Graecos et Armenos ad Cantorem Antiochiae* (dated shortly after 1265 by Torrell (2008, p. 512)), in explaining transubstantiation he presumes on the part of his readers at least a recognition of the omnipotence of God, even if not a prior agreement on what that omnipotence entails in respect of the Eucharist: "But if someone does not confess the omnipotence of God, against such a one we have not undertaken to dispute in the present work, but against the Saracens and others who confess the omnipotence of God." – "Si quis vero Dei omnipotentiam non confitetur, contra talem in praesenti opera disputationem non assumpsimus, sed contra Saracenos et alios qui Dei omnipotentiam confitentur." (*De rationibus fidei*, c. 8)

<sup>113</sup> *SCG* IV.63: "nonetheless, lest the doctrine of the Church regarding this sacrament should appear impossible to unbelievers, we must direct our efforts to excluding all impossibility." – "ne tamen doctrina Ecclesiae circa

## 4.2 Divine conversion of substance and conservation of accidents

As to the particular arguments in this work which concern our problem, they summarize much of the same material as the previous texts. Regarding the change that occurs in the sacrament, Thomas notes that natural changes presuppose matter as the subject in which such changes take place; but the change that takes place in the Eucharist is not a natural change, but one produced directly by God, and the divine power does not presuppose matter, but rather produces it (and conserves it in being), so God is able to convert a whole individual substance (including its matter) into another whole individual substance.<sup>114</sup> In order to say that this changed into that, however, there must be a common subject linking the before and the after. In natural cases of generation and corruption the common subject is the primary matter which takes on different substantial forms, and in accidental change the common subject is the substance which assumes different accidental dispositions. But the supernatural mode of substantial conversion, Thomas explains, is just the converse of the latter:

What occurs, then, in this conversion is contrary to the usual occurrence in natural [accidental] changes, in which the substance remains as the subject of the change, while the accidents are varied; but here it is the converse: the accidents remain and the substance is changed.<sup>115</sup>

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hoc sacramentum infidelibus impossibilis videatur, conandum est ad hoc quod omnis impossibilitas excludatur.”

<sup>114</sup> *SCG* IV.63: “by the divine power, which does not presuppose matter, but produces it, also this matter is converted into that, and consequently this individual into that: for the principle of individuation is matter, just as form is the principle of the species” - “virtute divina, quae materiam non praesupponit, sed eam producit, et haec materia convertitur in illam, et per consequens hoc individuum in illud: individuationis enim principium materia est, sicut forma est principium speciei.”

<sup>115</sup> *SCG* IV.63: “Accidit igitur in hac conversione contrarium ei quod in naturalibus mutationibus accidere solet, in quibus substantia manet ut mutationis subiectum, accidentia vero variantur: hic autem e converso accidens manet, et substantia transit.”

The substantial conversion of bread to the body of Christ, Thomas explains, is thus not a ‘change’ (*motus*) in the natural philosopher’s sense (a succession of substantial forms in matter or accidental forms in substance), but rather a ‘substantial succession’ (*substantialis successio*), a succession of one substance from another, just as creation is the succession of being from non-being.<sup>116</sup> This succession is given its continuity and coherence by means of the dimensions of the bread: when the substance of the bread is converted into the substance of the body of Christ, the substance of the body of Christ is assigned (*sortitur*) – is made present in – the same place – a place delimited by its quantitative dimensions and location and position in relation to its surroundings – that was previously allotted to the bread.<sup>117</sup>

In chapter 65, which is devoted to problems regarding the accidents remaining after the substantial conversion, Thomas again explains that the only subject of the remaining accidents is the dimensive quantity of the bread (not Christ and not air) and recalls the inherent capacity of the divine causality to be effective independently from the assistance of secondary causes, whether God produces or conserves things in being.<sup>118</sup> So, just as God is

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. *SCG* IV.63.10.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. *SCG* IV.63.12. For further discussion of the subject-of-conversion question, see Brock 2001, pp. 537-540. It is possible to see the seeds of Thomas’ proposal about place functioning as a kind of subject of change in Aristotle’s discussion of place as separable in the *Physics*. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* IV 2, 209b22-30 (tr. Hardie and Gaye): “But it is at any rate not difficult to see that place cannot be either [matter or form]. The form and the matter are not separate from the thing, whereas *the place can be separated*. As we pointed out, where air was, water in turn comes to be, the one replacing the other; and similarly with other bodies. Hence the place of a thing is neither a part nor a state of it, but *is separable from it*. For place is supposed to be something like a vessel – the vessel being a transportable place. But the vessel is no part of the thing.” *Physics* IV 4, 210b33-211a4: “What then after all is place? ... (1) Place is what contains that of which it is the place. (2) Place is no part of the thing. (3) The immediate place of a thing is neither less nor greater than the thing. (4) *Place can be left behind by the thing and is separable...*” [emphases added]

<sup>118</sup> *SCG* IV.65 n. 3: “Idem enim est iudicandum de productione rerum, et conservatione earum in esse.” While David Oderberg defends the possible *conservation* of accidents apart from their substance, he also argues – in apparent tension with the principle mentioned here – that “since everything requires a principle of individuation, what God could *not* do, in my view, is create accidents that never were and never will be possessed by any substance, because accidents are individuated precisely by the substances that have them.” (Oderberg 2007, p. 156) Later Oderberg presents an interesting – and perhaps compelling – related argument regarding the separability of human souls from bodies (cf. *ibid*, p. 257); but given Aquinas’ account of the *sui generis* role of dimensive quantity in individuation, the former argument, against the possible divine production (vs. conservation) of separate accidents, does not seem to me to be compelling.

able to produce things miraculously, like the body of Jesus in Mary's womb without male seed, or health in a feverish person without the operation of nature, likewise He can conserve in being the accidents of the sacrament.<sup>119</sup>

### 4.3 The ordering of the accidents

Regarding the special nature of quantity in relation to the other accidents, Thomas gives some further elucidation of his earlier claims on the subject. First, he argues that dimensive quantities can be separated (i.e., from material substance) in thought (*secundum intellectum*), so that the Platonists went so far as to posit that they subsisted *per se*; but, he concludes, God can clearly accomplish more in reality (*plus potest in operando*) than the intellect is able to apprehend.<sup>120</sup> The implication seems to be that if the intellect can conceive something – as it can in the case of separate dimensions – then God has the power to make the object of this conception real.<sup>121</sup>

Building on the separate conceivability of dimensive quantity, Thomas continues by arguing that dimensive quantities have the special property of being self-individuating (*secundum se individuantur*). This is because the notion of dimensive quantity includes the notion of position, that is, of the ordering of parts in a whole (*ordo partium in toto*); and this implies individuation ('in a whole' implies 'in a unity'). He illustrates the point by contrasting dimensive quantity (composed of lines) with another accident, whiteness:

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<sup>119</sup> Cf. *SCG* IV.65.3.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. *SCG* IV.65.4.

<sup>121</sup> Of course, if there were a question of something self-contradictory, this would not be merely 'more' than what the intellect can grasp, since the intellect would positively speak *against* such a thing – but in *SCG* Thomas doesn't mention any objections based on the definitions of substance and accident and the supposedly self-contradictory nature of an accident that is not in a subject.

Many whitenesses cannot be apprehended except according as they exist in diverse subjects; but many lines can be apprehended, even if they are considered according to themselves: for the diverse location, in which the line inheres *per se*, is sufficient for a plurality of lines.<sup>122</sup>

In other words, the dimensions of the bread are delimited and individuated by certain lines (and surfaces) that are conceivable in themselves, apart from a consideration of the material substance occupying them. The individuation – not merely the qualitative distinction – of various instances of whiteness, however, simply follows from the individuation of their subjects, in virtue of dimensional division. Thus if we consider a white circle, we can multiply the number of individual circles directly, by constructing more circles (and, obviously, ‘putting’ them somewhere, whether conceptually or in reality); but we can multiply the instances of whiteness not by adding more whiteness, but only by multiplying the number of dimensional divisions which are the subject of whiteness – so, perhaps, by again constructing more (white) circles, or by breaking one white circle into a number of individual segments. And not just accidents like whiteness, but also material substances (and matter) would be indivisible apart from dimensive quantity, so that without dimensions there would be no conceivable way to multiply and individually enumerate them.<sup>123</sup> Accordingly,

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<sup>122</sup> SCG IV.65 n. 5: “non possunt apprehendi multae albedines nisi secundum quod sunt in diversis subiectis; possunt autem apprehendi multae lineae, etiam si secundum se considerentur: diversus enim situs, qui per se lineae inest, ad pluralitatem linearum sufficiens est.” We might put Thomas’ point here by saying that the conceivability of *intelligible matter* is not intrinsically differentiated from the conceivability of *sensible matter* (on this distinction cf. above, *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 2 ). That is to say, if we grant that a *perfect sphere*, for example, is found only in intelligible matter, that does not imply that there is any intrinsic incompatibility between such a sphere and sensible matter, but only that we in fact don’t find perfectly perfect spheres in the sensible world. Likewise, while we may not find sensible space delimited *per se*, but only delimited by the substances found in it, the delimiting of (real) space is nonetheless conceivable in itself, independently of the existence of a substance occupying that space.

<sup>123</sup> Perhaps it might be argued that they could still be absolutely individuated according to their individual forms or haecceities (as opposed to their common generic form), but such a possibility would be irrelevant to Thomas’ point about our ordinary mode of directly individuating material things by means of sensory intuition, as in the case of the accidents of bread and wine.

Thomas argues that the ‘first root’ (*prima radix*) of this kind of multiplication is from dimension, so that dimensions are the ‘root of individuation’ (*individuationis radix*).<sup>124</sup>

Since none of the other accidents is self-individuating, they cannot subsist without a subject; but they can subsist with (self-subsistent) dimensive quantity as their subject. More specifically, Thomas argues, we should suppose that in the Eucharist dimensive quantity subsists without a subject; that qualities are founded in dimensive quantity; and that the other accidents – he mentions actions, passions, and relations – follow from these quantified qualities.<sup>125</sup>

### **5 *Summa theologiae* III (Naples, 1272-Dec 1273)**

In question 77 of the third part of his *Summa theologiae*, written very near the end of his life,<sup>126</sup> Thomas gives another extended treatment of the separated Eucharistic accidents, again in a text with an overall structure designed to reflect the fundamental nature of the world as an ordered procession from God – by creation – followed by an ordered ‘return’ to God – by grace.<sup>127</sup> Thomas again covers the three general issues that he addressed in his *Sentences* commentary: the causal power of the first cause, the essence and definition of accidents, and the particular mode of existence of the various separate accidents.

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. *SCG* IV.65.6 & 7.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. *SCG* IV.63.9: “In this way, then, the accidents of bread, after the conversion mentioned, should be supposed to remain such that only dimensive quantity subsists without a subject, and in it qualities are founded as in a subject, and consequently the actions, passions, and relations.” – “Sic igitur accidentia panis, post conversionem praedictam, remanere ponendum est ut sola quantitas dimensiva sine subiecto subsistat, et in ipsa qualitates fundentur sicut in subiecto, et per consequens actiones, passiones et relationes.”

<sup>126</sup> See Torrell 2008, p. 214.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas summarizes the parts of the *Summa theologiae* thus: *ST* I-II pr.: “After having discussed the exemplar, namely God, and those things which proceed from the divine power in accordance with his will [Part I], it remains for us to consider his image, that is, man, according as he also is the source of his own works [part II]”; *ST* III pr.: “after the consideration of the ultimate end of human life and of virtues and of vices [Part II] follows a consideration of the saviour of all... First, of the very saviour; second, of his sacraments, by which we pursue salvation; third, of the end, immortal life... [Part III].”

## 5.1 The power of God

The first of these issues is again the nature of divine causality. In response to the claim that the removal of the prior (i.e., substance) entails the removal of the posterior (i.e., accident), Thomas again appeals to the *Liber de causis* (just as he did in the *Sentences* commentary and in *Quodlibet* IX.3): “as it says in the *Liber de causis*, an effect depends more on the first cause than on the second cause. And for this reason, by the power of God, which is the first cause of all things, it can be brought about that the posterior things remain, the prior being removed.”<sup>128</sup> Quoting Chrysostom, Thomas explains in the immediately preceding article (I.75.4) that the spiritual power of God – as effective, in this case, in the order of grace – is exempt from the natural necessities, or laws, found in earthly experience.

And regarding the passage from *John* VI, “the words which I have spoken to you” – that is regarding this sacrament – “are spirit and life,” Chrysostom says: “that is, they are spiritual, having nothing carnal, nor any natural implication, but they are withdrawn from every such earthly necessity, and from the laws which are here laid down.”<sup>129</sup>

As we have seen, Thomas does not want to suggest that an account of the sacrament is exempt from any consideration of metaphysical necessity. While he holds that faith is not subject to reason, he also accepts that it is not against reason, but above it<sup>130</sup> – that is, it supplies us with propositions the truth of which could not be discovered by reason alone; and as should be obvious from all of the arguments he offers in defense of the rationality of propositions held by faith, he does not reduce ‘against reason’ to an empty, purely formal

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<sup>128</sup> *ST* III.75.5 ad 1: “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, sicut dicitur in *libro de causis*, effectus plus dependet a causa prima quam a causa secunda. Et ideo virtute Dei, qui est causa prima omnium, fieri potest ut remaneant posteriora, sublatis prioribus.”

<sup>129</sup> *ST* III.75.4 co.: “Et super illud Ioan. VI, ‘verba quae ego locutus sum vobis,’ scilicet de hoc sacramento, ‘spiritus et vita sunt,’ dicit Chrysostomus, ‘idest, spiritualia sunt, nihil habentia carnale neque consequentiam naturalem, sed eruta sunt ab omni tali necessitate quae in terra, et a legibus quae hic positae sunt.’”

<sup>130</sup> Cf. *ST* III.75.5 arg. 3: “fides non sit subiecta rationi, non tamen est contra rationem, sed supra ipsam.”

notion in the field of theological discourse. Rather, in regard to the operation of divine omnipotence in the sacrament, he argues from the fundamental metaphysical principle that every agent acts according as it is in act – operations are proportioned to essences. Thus, on the one hand, created agents are in act in virtue of a determinate form. Accordingly, they are changed and effect change in virtue of formal change, so that all change according to natural laws is a change of form – substantial or accidental – in a subject – material or substantial. God, on the other hand, is not in act in virtue of some particular determinate – finite – form, but is rather infinite act. Accordingly God’s action extends to the whole being of a thing, so that he has the power to effect a change of the whole nature of a given being – that is, not just a change of the formal elements determining the particular modes of actual beingness of a subject, but a change of the whole substance.<sup>131</sup> Thus, he maintains that God’s operation in the Eucharist is possible in virtue of the same divine prerogative which is understood to be at work in other miracles:

The accidents in this sacrament remain without a subject. And this can be brought about by the divine power. For since an effect depends more on the first cause than on the second cause, God, who is the first cause of substance and accident, can through his infinite power conserve in being an accident, the substance of which – through which substance it was being conserved in being as through its proper cause – has been withdrawn, just as God can

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<sup>131</sup> Accordingly the divine knowledge, will, and power extends also to individual things, since the whole nature of a thing includes its individual act of being (*esse*). Cf. *ST I.105.1 ad 2*: “That argument would work [namely, that a single agent can produce multiple effects only through the mediation of multiple particular causes (see arg. 2)], if God acted from the necessity of nature. But since he acts by his will and intellect, which knows the particular and not only the universal natures of all forms, it follows that he can determinately imprint this or that form on matter.” – “ratio illa procederet, si Deus ageret, ex necessitate naturae. Sed quia agit per voluntatem et intellectum, qui cognoscit rationes proprias omnium formarum, et non solum universales; inde est quod potest determinate hanc vel illam formam materiae imprimere.”

also produce other effects of natural causes without the natural causes – just as He formed a human body in the womb of the virgin without male seed.<sup>132</sup>

He adds that such an exercise of a special privilege of grace, which is contrary to the common law of nature, is analogous to what happens in human affairs, when “certain things [such as, presumably, the exercise of various legislative and executive powers] are conceded to certain individuals on the basis of a special privilege, beyond the common law.”<sup>133</sup>

## 5.2 Definition

Regarding the supposed definition of accidents, which entails being in a subject, and which cannot be separated from them, Thomas again explains that being is not a genus and cannot constitute part of the essential determination or definition of either substances or accidents. Accordingly,

the definition of a substance is not a being *per se* without a subject, nor is the definition of an accident a being in a subject; rather, to the quiddity or essence of a substance it is fitting (*competit*) to have being not in a subject; and to the quiddity or essence of an accident it is fitting to have being in a subject.<sup>134</sup>

Again we see that the quiddities – what they are – or essences of substances and accidents must be distinguished from their generic (natural) modes of being. In the sacrament the accidents thus are what they are (quiddity- or essence-wise), but they do not have their being

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<sup>132</sup> *ST* III.77.1 co.: “accidentia in hoc sacramento manent sine subiecto. Quod quidem virtute divina fieri potest. Cum enim effectus magis dependeat a causa prima quam a causa secunda, potest Deus, qui est prima causa substantiae et accidentis, per suam infinitam virtutem conservare in esse accidens subtracta substantia, per quam conservabatur in esse sicut per propriam causam, sicut etiam alios effectus naturalium causarum potest producere sine naturalibus causis; sicut corpus humanum formavit in utero virginis sine virili semine.” Thomas also mentions giving sight to the blind and raising the dead (see *ST* III.77.1 ad 1). Dietrich also will endorse the latter possibility (see *DA* 7(2)), while rejecting the possibility of a miraculous maintenance of the Eucharistic accidents.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. *ST* III.77.1 ad 1.

<sup>134</sup> *ST* III.77.1 ad 2: “Non ergo definitio substantiae est ens per se sine subiecto, nec definitio accidentis ens in subiecto sed quidditati seu essentiae substantiae competit habere esse non in subiecto; quidditati autem sive essentiae accidentis competit habere esse in subiecto.”

(i.e., separate existence, apart from a substantial subject) in virtue of their own essence (*ex vi suae essentiae*) – that is, consequent upon what they are – but rather from the divine power sustaining them, a possibility which a just consideration of their definition does not exclude, and which does not imply that in such a case they would properly fall under the definition of a substance.<sup>135</sup>

### 5.3 The mode of being of separate accidents

Regarding the individuation of the accidents, Thomas begins by responding to the objection that accidents without a subject will be universals, not sensible individuals, since accidents are individuated by their subjects. He explains that the accidents of bread and wine acquired individual being from their respective substances, but that after the departure of the substances, God sustains their sensible, individuated being.<sup>136</sup>

Regarding the simplicity of the separate accidents, Thomas allows that prior to the substantial conversion the accidents of bread and wine don't simply have being (i.e., an independent subsistence); rather through them the substance has a kind of being. After the consecration, however, they are not purely simple (simpler than angels); to the contrary, they are then composed of their own being (*esse*) – conserved by God in the manner described – together with their essence (*quod est*), according to which they had positively determined their subject in its accidental being; and they have an additional composition in terms of quantitative parts.<sup>137</sup>

Thomas also goes through a number of arguments defending the idea that in the sacrament dimensive quantity serves as subject for the other accidents. We can limit

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<sup>135</sup> Cf. *ST* III.77.1 ad 2.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. *ST* III.77.1 arg. 3 & ad 3.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. *ST* III.77.1 ad 4.

ourselves to reviewing just one, which is reflected in one of Dietrich's objections: To the objection that no form can be the subject of another form – in this case no accident can inform another accidental form – he explains that this is true only insofar as no accidental form exists *per se*; but in this case, *ex hypothesi*, through divine power dimensive quantity does exist *per se*.<sup>138</sup>

Thomas also devotes six articles to problems relating to the external operations of the Eucharistic accidents. He again addresses the general question about their power to effect change in external bodies, then particular questions regarding whether they can be corrupted, whether anything can be generated from them, whether they can nourish, whether they can be broken, and whether a liquid can be mixed with the species of the wine.<sup>139</sup> For our purposes it should be sufficient to note that in general Thomas relies on the principle that action (*agere*) follows from being (*esse*)<sup>140</sup>; so, just as God miraculously sustains the being of the accidents apart from their subjects, likewise he sustains and gives formal efficacy to their powers of acting.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. *ST* III.77.2 ad 1.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. *ST* III.77.3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. *ST* III.77.3 co.: “since each thing acts insofar as it is an actual being, it follows that just as each thing bears itself towards *being*, likewise it bears itself towards *acting*” – “quia unumquodque agit in quantum est ens actu, consequens est quod unumquodque, sicut se habet ad esse, ita se habet ad agere.”

<sup>141</sup> See, e.g., *ST* III.75.6 ad 3: “Of the operations of the bread, some follow from it by reason of the accidents, for example, affecting the sense. And such operations are found in the species of bread after the consecration because of the very accidents, which remain. But some operations follow upon the bread either in virtue of its matter, as in the case of its being converted into something; or in virtue of its substantial form, as in the case of the operation following from its species, say, that it strengthens a man's heart. And such operations are found in this sacrament not because of the form or matter which remain, but because they are miraculously conferred upon those accidents.” – “Ad tertium dicendum quod operationum panis quaedam consequuntur ipsum ratione accidentium, sicut immutare sensum. Et tales operationes inveniuntur in speciebus panis post consecrationem, propter ipsa accidentia, quae remanent. Quaedam autem operationes consequuntur panem vel ratione materiae, sicut quod convertitur in aliquid; vel ratione formae substantialis, sicut est operatio consequens speciem eius, puta quod confirmat cor hominis. Et tales operationes inveniuntur in hoc sacramento, non propter formam vel materiam quae remaneat, sed quia miraculose conferuntur ipsis accidentibus...”

## 6 Conclusions

Having reviewed Thomas' various texts on the accidents of the Eucharist, we can see that his position and argumentation are very consistent. We can sum up our examination of Thomas' position by reviewing five principle points. The first two relate to the context in which Thomas places his discussion of the issue.

### 6.1 Twofold ordering of reality under the divine omnipotence

The first point concerns the overall metaphysical context. In all of Thomas' major syntheses, from the *Sentences* commentary to the *Summa contra gentiles*, and finally to his *Summa theologiae*, Thomas is very clear in placing his explanation of the doctrine of transubstantiation within the general context of the twofold movement of emanation and return. The Eucharist is a sacrament, it falls within the order of grace, and its purpose is to effect man's return to God. Some such duality of proceeding from and returning to the origin is a basic and pervasive feature of philosophical thought, whether it is understood as emanation and return, nature vs. grace, natural vs. voluntary providence or God's general will vs. his particular will; and in at least an analogous sense it is surely also a basic feature of explanations of any kind of natural process, including a sound (Aristotelian) understanding of intellectual-psychological development: intellectual processes are not just another species of natural change, even if natural processes are their necessary precursor. We begin, through sense experience, with some basic level of more or less 'natural' cognition of things, which then calls for and is completed by a more properly comprehensive, universal understanding of those things and their causes. And while the transcendental categories

‘being’ and ‘truth’ apply to both, there is a need for a methodological distinction between the ways in which these are grasped in each order.

Ruedi Imbach describes the situation by saying, “it is necessary to interpret God as a free being, a being who can suspend the order that he has himself instituted in accordance with understanding (*selon l’intelligence*).”<sup>142</sup> Imbach says that Thomas explains this very concisely in *Summa contra gentiles* III.99: “Something acting through will can produce, without any intermediary, any effect whatsoever that does not exceed its power.”<sup>143</sup> Imbach then wonders if Thomas’ commitment to the possibility of miracles doesn’t threaten his conception of the order of the world.

One can wonder, however, whether this divine possibility of producing miracles doesn’t threaten the Thomistic conception of the order of the world. Are we not in the presence of two competing conceptions of God which result in two different conceptions of the world: on one side, God as principle of order, God as absolute intellect; on the other, God as absolute liberty?<sup>144</sup>

Essentially Imbach wonders if Spinoza might not be right to say that miracles are contradictory, since the intelligible order of the world – with its eternal laws, eternally established by God – is what reveals God to us, while a miracle is something which is unintelligible, which contradicts the divinely established order, and which thus, rather than revealing to us anything of the existence or nature of God, should incline us towards

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<sup>142</sup> Cf. Imbach 1998, p. 121.

<sup>143</sup> *SCG* III.99: “Agens per voluntatem statim sine medio potest producere quemcumque effectum qui suam non excedat virtutem.”

<sup>144</sup> Imbach 1998, p. 121: “On peut cependant se demander si cette possibilité divine de produire des miracles ne menace pas la conception thomasiennne de l’ordre du monde. Ne sommes-nous pas en présence de deux conceptions de Dieu concurrentes qui entraînent deux conceptions du monde différentes : d’un côté Dieu comme principe de l’ordre, Dieu comme intellect absolu, de l’autre Dieu comme liberté absolue?” Cf. Imbach 1986, p. 368.

atheism.<sup>145</sup> Or at least we might be inclined to entertain arguments (like one mentioned by John Buridan<sup>146</sup>) that we know nothing about the will of God, so it is possible that our cognitive faculties, which operate in complete dependence on God's (good) will, are – certainly for inscrutable reasons – fundamentally unreliable.

Imbach raises the Spinozistic critique of Thomas' view in order to compare it to Dietrich's critique, which we will discuss in the following chapter. The comparison is intriguing and worth considering (see below ch. 5, §4), but it seems that Imbach's characterization of Thomas' view, on which he bases his critique, is not entirely accurate. In Thomas' view, God does not so much suspend the order that he has instituted, as superpose one order over another. But the special order of grace is ordered towards the fulfillment of the order of nature; both orders are understood and willed by God and are the result of the creative overflowing of the divine goodness, the fundamental self-communicative character of the divine being which is also communicated to and characterizes all created beings.<sup>147</sup> To insist that the miraculous separation of the Eucharist accidents from their substance constitutes a suspension of *the* order instituted by God is like insisting that quantum mechanical effects constitute a suspension of Newtonian mechanics. One might argue that that is the case, but that would hardly appear to be the obviously correct way to understand the relationship between the two sets of laws.

## 6.2 No contradiction between faith and reason

The second point flows from the first: while for Thomas natural human reason is certainly capable of understanding nature, of receiving knowledge according to its own natural mode

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<sup>145</sup> Cf. Imbach 1998, pp. 116-117.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. John Buridan, *Quaestiones in Met.* II.1 (tr. Klima): "since you know nothing about the will of God, you cannot be certain about anything." (Quoted in Klima 2007, p. 143.)

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Clarke 1993, p. 6 ff.

of receiving, when it comes to explaining something like the Eucharist, which belongs to the order of grace, Thomas is very clear that the objective is not to prove the actuality of what takes place, but rather simply to explain how – given the nature of reality insofar as we can (and should) naturally understand it – it is possible. In other words, his objective is to remove the objection that, given what we should admit to be true on the basis of the natural use of reason, the revealed mode of being of the sacrament – which is grasped supernaturally, through faith – should be properly conceived as being simply impossible in the real world.<sup>148</sup> (In the next chapter we examine Dietrich of Freiberg’s attempt to demonstrate that what Thomas claims about the Eucharistic accidents *is* simply impossible.)

The latter three points regard Thomas’ doctrinal position more narrowly: first, on the character of the divine omnipotence, in particular its causal power; second, his redefinition or refinement of the definition, or quasi-definition, of an accident; and third, on the ontological priority of dimensive quantity in grounding the real world subsistence of the other accidents apart from a substance.<sup>149</sup>

### **6.3 Divine omnipotence**

On the first, Thomas extends the notion found in the *Liber de causis* of the *primacy* of the causality of the first cause even in causing the effects of secondary causes to his own doctrine of the non-necessity of the secondary cause in the production of its ordinary effect. Since the occurrence of this kind of thing in the Eucharistic separation of accidents from their substance is not some random, unpredictable interruption of the order of nature, but is

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<sup>148</sup> Imbach comments that this is “un impératif méthodique dont on ne saurait surestimer la portée et l’importance” (namely : “le théologien doit s’efforcer d’expliquer ce mystère de telle sorte que toute impossibilité soit exclue”) (1998, p. 118).

<sup>149</sup> For summaries based on these three points see Flasch 2008, pp. 269-270; Imbach 1993, p. 177 ff.; Imbach 1998, pp. 118-120.

rather part of the divinely instituted superposition of the order of grace, by which man returns to his divine origin, the operation of God's causality in this manner cannot be said to be disordered or deceitful. While there is, to be sure, the 'common law,' the 'order of nature,' or the 'common order,' this common law and order of nature is established *ex nihilo* by God the creator and is no impediment to his absolute power as exercised in the order of grace. Further, as Barry F. Brown notes in his monograph on Thomas' doctrine of accidental being, Thomas' position on the miraculous conservation of the Eucharistic accidents is consistent with Thomas' general doctrine of accidental being, which he embraces also in more properly philosophical contexts, not just theologically-motivated ones.<sup>150</sup>

#### **6.4 Redefinition of accident**

On the second point, Thomas insists that what passes loosely speaking as the proper definition of an accident in fact describes the ordinary mode of its being (*modus essendi*). Thomas' argument here appeals to Aristotle's notion of a definition by addition and certainly appears to be non-theologically dependent. For Thomas it is clear that only the essence or nature of a thing can properly be defined, not its very existence (*esse*), although in understanding the essences of substances and accidents, which pertain to natural material beings, we do refer to their natural modes of being; and these natural modes, as such, surely do pertain to them *per se* – essentially, not accidentally – notwithstanding the non-*absolute* character of this natural modality as regards the actual existence of accidents.

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<sup>150</sup> Cf. Brown 1985, p. 114: "...his treatment of this problem is completely consistent with the same philosophical doctrine of accidental being and the same general doctrine of primary and secondary causality as he maintains throughout his works. No special exception has been made to accommodate a theological problem; no appeal to miraculous power is made as if reason, at this point, had failed."

## 6.5 Quantity in the role of subject

On the third point regarding the priority, in relation to the other (separated) accidents, of dimensive quantity, Thomas simply explains the basic conditions making possible any kind of individuated material existence and shows how these conditions must be fulfilled in the case in question, where the material substance itself is no longer present. Thus, provided that God directly causes the existence of a subsistent dimensive quantity, then this quantity will be apt to serve as a principle of individuation both for itself and for the other miraculously conserved accidents of bread and wine. Thus, separate accidents still have an intelligible, well-defined ontological structure, and Thomas holds, accordingly, that there is no problem in accounting for or accepting as true the individual sense impressions we receive of the Eucharistic hosts: we can give a perfectly intelligible grounding of their individual, sensible existence.

So much will suffice then for our initial exposition of Thomas's position, a position which, in spite of the views of several commentators to the contrary (which we will analyze in chapter 5), I see no reason to view as anything other than a credible attempt to provide a metaphysical account of how beings in the world are constituted and, given the theological data of transubstantiation, what must occur, in metaphysical terms, in the sacrament of the altar.

Next we will examine Dietrich's account of the *per se* being of accidents and substances and his criticism of Thomas' view in which he explicitly addresses and rejects each of Thomas' technical metaphysical explanations in defense of the possible separate subsistence of accidents.

## Chapter 3: Dietrich's Critique of the Separability of Accidents

### 1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide a detailed presentation and discussion of Dietrich's lengthiest account of the nature of accidents, that of the *De accidentibus*, the principal purpose of which is to show the absolute impossibility of accidents subsisting separately from a subject. There are discussions of the nature of accidents in a good number of Dietrich's other works,<sup>151</sup> but *De accidentibus* is by far the most important in regard to our subject. It is likely one of Dietrich's earlier extant works, ca. 1296/97, and with the exception of Dietrich's important work *De origine rerum praedicamentalium*, probably written roughly ten years earlier, it likely belongs to the same general time period as most of the other relevant works. Dietrich wrote relatively short treatises – he has not left us any kind of *Summa* as Thomas has – and in general, according to Markus Führer, “one of the characteristics of Dietrich as a thinker is the systematic way in which he not only orders his thoughts but his treatises as well.”<sup>152</sup> This seems a fair characterization of the *De accidentibus*. In fact, according to Kurt Flasch, the *De accidentibus* contains Dietrich's ‘new metaphysics’ in a nutshell (*in nuce*),<sup>153</sup> and in praise of Dietrich's argumentation he has emphasized Dietrich's

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<sup>151</sup> These include *De origine rerum praedicamentalium*, *De animatione caeli*, *De visione beatifica*, *De quiditatibus entium*, *De ente et essentia*, *De magis et minus*, *De natura contrariorum*, *De corporibus caelestibus*. The treatise *De quiditatibus entium* (=quid.) stands out among these as relevant to our theme. Presumably written shortly after the treatise on accidents, there Dietrich concludes his treatise on quiddities with a discussion of the inseparability of accidents which recapitulates, in briefer fashion, some of the arguments from the *De accidentibus*. See *quid.* 9-13. He concludes by referring to his earlier, fuller treatment in the *De accidentibus*; cf. *quid.* 13(4) (III 118): “These things which we have investigated here have been gone through more diffusely in our treatise *on the inseparability of accidents from substance*.” – “Ea autem, quae hic quaesita sunt, diffusius pertractata sunt in nostro tractatu de inseparabilitate accidentium a substantia.”

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Führer 2012.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Flasch 2008, p. 14.

superior consciousness of method (*Methodenbewußtsein*).<sup>154</sup> According to Flasch, “What Dietrich...brought to the fore was the consciousness of first constituting the object of scientific discourse through the adherence to methodological requirements.”<sup>155</sup> Accordingly, it seems appropriate to examine Dietrich’s treatise systematically, in accordance with the treatise’s own design, and while it will be necessary to make some references to Dietrich’s other works in order to unpack the metaphysical doctrines underlying certain claims, on the whole my account of Dietrich’s position will be framed simply by following the systematic structure and argumentation of the *De accidentibus*.

The *De accidentibus* is the third member of a trilogy of treatises that was almost certainly written in 1296/97 while Dietrich was a master teaching at Paris.<sup>156</sup> Flasch characterizes it as “a short, elegant bout of fencing, not without a shot of irony,”<sup>157</sup> the third act of an offensive against the growing influence of Aquinas in Paris and in the Dominican order. The treatises bear the common title *On three difficult questions (De tribus difficilibus quaestionibus)* and share a common introduction.<sup>158</sup> They are thematically quite diverse: the first addresses the ‘ensoulment’ of celestial bodies (*De animatione caeli (=an.)*), the second the nature of the beatific vision (*De visione beatifica (=vis.)*), and the third the inseparability of accidents from their subjects (*De accidentibus (=DA)*). There is, however, a common theme which runs throughout all three: a push to determine the *per se* or essential natures of things, and correspondingly a restriction of the range of accidental (*per accidens*) modifications or

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<sup>154</sup> Flasch presents Dietrich’s methodological consciousness as contrasting with Thomas’ allegedly *ad hoc* approach. Cf. Flasch 1983, p. XXVII, XL; 2007, p. 254.

<sup>155</sup> Flasch 1983, p. XXVII: “Was Dietrich ... beibrachte, war das Bewußtsein, durch das Festhalten methodischer Bedingungen das Objekt wissenschaftlicher Rede erst zu konstituieren.”

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Flasch 2008, p. 19.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Flasch 2007, p. 253.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *Opera Omnia* III, p. 9.

modes of being which things in the universe – including accidents – can conceivably take on.

Thus, in the first treatise Dietrich argues that the *per se existence* of the universe, and thus its *per se* unity, implies its completeness (*integritas*) in being and its unity through continuity in the ordering of its parts.<sup>159</sup> Therefore it is reasonable to posit, between the highest mode of causal procession and the lowest, the existence of an intermediate mode. Accordingly, between the perfect, simple emanation of separate intelligences (if these exist<sup>160</sup>), on the one hand, and the causal processes involved in the natural changes affecting things that are generable and corruptible, on the other, it is reasonable to posit the existence of moving but incorruptible heavenly bodies that are joined to or informed by intellects, each of which, *qua* intellect, pre-contains (*praehabet*) its effect by being identical in essence to it, though in a higher mode and as a function of a different being (*secundum aliud esse*). We should thus posit an *essential* union of intellect and celestial body (analogous to – though different from – the manner in which the souls of corruptible beings inform their corruptible bodies),<sup>161</sup> so that such a being constitutes a kind of essential bridge which participates in both the higher and the lower modes of causality.<sup>162</sup> If there are such intellectual principles immediately informing and moving the heavenly bodies and, thus constituted, acting as the essential (stable) causes of the processes of generation and corruption, they must be what they are – namely intellects – through their essences (*per essentiam*). If this intellectual nature did not belong to them essentially, it wouldn't make sense for them to serve as the (stable) ground (the essential causality) underlying processes of change in generable and corruptible things.

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<sup>159</sup> Whatever *is*, is *one*; unity follows from being. Cf. *an.* 2(2) (III 13); 10(1) (III 21).

<sup>160</sup> Cf. *an.* 7(5) (III 18).

<sup>161</sup> Cf. *an.* 7-9 (III 17-20).

<sup>162</sup> Cf. *an.* 11 (III 22-23).

It follows that they cannot be accidentally affected; God cannot assign their activity through extrinsic, accidental commands (as would seem to be the case for angels, as they are described in revelation), and accordingly the intellects moving the heavenly bodies and grounding the essential nature of contingent processes of change must be constituted as they are by essence, that is, not by accidental assignment.<sup>163</sup> It is in a similar vein, in the *De accidentibus*, that Dietrich will argue that accidents (quantity, quality, and the rest) are by essence the instruments of natural change in substances. Accordingly, to suppress this constitutive relation to substance, as if it were an accidental assignment, would be to destroy the accident's very essence – and of course the notion of a thing subsisting apart from its own essence is nonsense.

The second of the three difficult questions, the centrepiece of the trilogy of treatises, is a lengthy disquisition on intellect. Here the theme of the essential ordering of things again appears. Dietrich argues that the beatific vision cannot be accomplished through the possible intellect, but only through the agent intellect. The universe exists according to an orderly disposition of beings: there is highest, middle, and lowest, and between the two extremes – highest and lowest: God and prime matter – each intermediate being has an orderly ranking in relation to the beings above and below it. The agent intellect, Dietrich argues, is that which is highest and noblest in man and is thus that by which human nature most approaches the divine nature. Accordingly, just as the procession of the universe goes from higher to middle to lower, each member in the procession having an essential affinity to the next in virtue of what is lowest in the higher and highest in the lower, so its return to God maintains the same order, and thus the beatific vision must be accomplished through that which

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<sup>163</sup> Giving this argument a modern twist, we might say that the intelligible laws and forces governing the natural universe are essential to the universe, not incidental or extrinsic or merely instrumental to its being and operation.

through itself (*per se*), according to its own essence, is highest in man and most in conformity with God, namely (in Dietrich's view) the agent intellect. When it comes to the treatise on accidents, Dietrich will again insist on the strict determination and maintenance of the essential ordering of things, this time that of accidents towards their subjects.

In Dietrich's general introduction to the three difficult questions, he informs his readers of another common thread: he had been forced, he says, by certain 'popular discourses,' by 'those speaking in the common way' (*communiter loquentes*), to refrain from writing, but the insistence of those wanting to know his views finally compelled him to write, in opposition to the common views.<sup>164</sup> There is thus also a common thread of polemic in the three questions, a polemic which increases in vehemence with each treatise.<sup>165</sup> While each treatise addresses a quite distinct subject matter, the polemical inclination of each is grounded in the same general methodological approach to metaphysics, as described above. But the extraordinarily contemptuous rhetorical tone that appears in the treatise on accidents seems to indicate that Dietrich regards the error in regard to accidents as more foolish and its consequences more pernicious than in the other cases. (Also, it seems likely enough that Dietrich was involved in certain personal conflicts with his allegedly 'televangelist'-type interlocutors (i.e., the 'popular discourses' – *communiter loquentes*), although it is impossible to determine what might have been the particular influence of such conflicts on his attitudes towards the various issues.) In any case, the basic substantive reason for his tone in the *De*

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<sup>164</sup> Flasch suggests two fora for such conflict, the first within the Dominican order, where Dietrich was unhappy about the growing tendency to elevate St. Thomas to the position of authoritative doctor of the order; the second at the University of Paris, where recent discussions by Godfrey of Fontaines and Henry of Ghent had given the issue academic currency. Cf. Flasch 2008, pp. 25-26. See also König-Pralong 2008 for some remarks on the relevant context for this remark.

<sup>165</sup> Flasch (1983, p. XXVI) notes three levels in Dietrich's polemical severity in *De tribus difficilibus quaestionibus*: in *De animatione caeli* Dietrich's argument is calm and focused on substance (*ruhig und sachlich vorgetragen*), in *De visione beatifica* he elevates to a tone of contemptuousness and disparagement (*Verächtlichmachung*), and in *De accidentibus* he denounces his opponents and their view with implacable harshness (*unversöhnliche Härte*).

*accidentibus* seems to consist in his strong commitment to a particular conception of a particular kind of rational project – namely, a scientific Aristotelian metaphysics – together with his belief that the Thomistic (mis-) interpretation of the essential natures of accidents and substances would radically corrupt that project. Generally speaking, this special concern for the status of substance – and, in strict relation to it, accidents – is readily understandable in light of the emphasis on substance as the principle subject of metaphysics in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, especially book VII (the consideration of which is given great weight in Dietrich’s treatise). To see why Dietrich believes we must absolutely reject Thomas’ case for the separability of accidents we will proceed to examine his treatise on accidents. To begin with a brief outline, the treatise proceeds thus:

‘Accident’ is one of those basic metaphysical terms which are said in many ways (Aristotle’s *pollachôs legetai*). Accordingly Dietrich first distinguishes the different senses of the term ‘accident’ and explains the metaphysical status of each kind. He argues for the inseparability of accidents which are strictly properties of their subjects (in one of two possible senses) and addresses a cavilling objection. Next, drawing upon the authority of St. Augustine, he interjects a general methodological warning with regard to abusing scripture in support of erroneous theories that contradict the conclusions of reason. Then he moves into the heart of his argumentation: he explains the essential nature and function of accidents of nature, which are properly found in complete natural substances, and provides a rigorous review and clarification of the essential determinations of substance and of accident. He verifies and clarifies his position in terms drawn from Aristotle and raises the particular question of separability vis-à-vis the absolute power of God, before offering more specific

refutations for each of Thomas' three principal arguments in support of separability and concluding the treatise.

## 2 Properties

### 2.1 Properties and principles

Dietrich first introduces the subject of his treatise, namely, the question about the separability of accidents.<sup>166</sup> Then, in good Aristotelian fashion, he begins by noting the different ways in which the key term 'accident' is used.<sup>167</sup> He distinguishes three kinds of 'accidents': natural properties, formal properties (*per se passiones*), and natural accidents.<sup>168</sup>

Properties, natural and formal, are proper to their subjects: they belong to their subjects necessarily, and their being and their inhering (i.e., in-being) follow *per se* from the existence of their subjects. It follows that they are not the result of anything external to their subjects; instead they must derive from (are reducible to) the principles of their subjects.<sup>169</sup>

Accordingly, natural properties are reducible to the natural principles that are constitutive of real individual things. We could say they are connatural to the essence of the thing. For example, from the natural principles of a man – his human body and soul – is produced the property of risibility (the ability to laugh). Or the natural principles of a horse, its equine body and soul, give rise to the property of hinnibility (the ability to whinny or neigh). Each

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<sup>166</sup> *DA* 1 (III 55).

<sup>167</sup> See *DA* 2 (III 55).

<sup>168</sup> Dietrich refers to the third kind of accident listed here in a number of ways: he calls them *accidents of nature* (e.g., *DA* 4(1) (III 58)), *natural beings that are accidents* (*DA* 4(4) (III 58)), *natural accidents* (e.g., *DA* 4(4) (III 58)), and, most expansively, *accidents of nature distinguished per se through the nine genera of categories other than the genus of substance* (*DA* 7(1) (III 62)). He also says that it is these which are "truly and properly accidents" (*DA* 5(1) (III 59)).

<sup>169</sup> Cf. *DA* 2(3) (III 55).

of these properties implies some real positive nature in a thing, which is produced as a function of the natural generation of the thing itself.<sup>170</sup>

Formal properties, on the other hand, are derived from (reducible to) the formal principles constituting things, which principles are constituted by reason, whether speculative or practical, through the intellectual act of understanding. Such properties do not imply any positive nature in things. Formal principles are the parts of the form (*partes formae*) making up the formal definition of a thing, according to its genus and specific difference. For example, a triangle, by definition, is a three-angled (difference) plane figure (genus), and its formal property of having three angles that are equal to two right angles derives from these formal principles. Or again, any given number, by its formal definition, is just a particular measure of multiplicity; and any given number also has the formal property of being even or odd. Or again, man is formally defined as a rational animal, and he has the formal property of being the son of his father<sup>171</sup> (not to mention of his mother).

The cause of natural properties, Dietrich tells us, must thus be located in the natural principles constituting natural things, whereas the origin or source of formal properties is found in the formal principles of the species.<sup>172</sup> For both kinds of property, Dietrich concludes, the entire intelligible character (*ratio*) of their beingness (*entitatis*) and nature is to be found in their being the properties of certain beings.<sup>173</sup> Accordingly, this intelligible character must form part of their definition. It will thus be common to every property that its

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<sup>170</sup> Cf. *DA* 3(2) (III 56): “properties of this kind can also be said to exist from the thing generating them as if from their essential mover, in the same order of causal dependence by which its subject depends on the thing generating it” - “huiusmodi propria possunt etiam dici esse a generante tamquam a motore essentiali eo ordine causalis dependentiae, quo sua subiecta a generante dependent.”

<sup>171</sup> Cf. *DA* 3(3)-(4) (III 56-57).

<sup>172</sup> Dietrich’s differentiation in causal terminology – ‘cause’ vs. ‘origin’ – reflects his specific emphasis on the difference between the modes of causality obtaining in natural things and in intellectual things. Dietrich details his view of this distinction especially in *De origine rerum praedicamentalium*.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. *DA* 3(5) (III 57): “...tota ratio entitatis et naturae eorum, si quam habent, attenditur in hoc, quod sunt alicuius entis proprietates vel per se passiones.”

subject enters its definition.<sup>174</sup> Their mode of definition is thus ‘by addition’ (*ex additione*) – addition, that is, of their subject.<sup>175</sup>

## 2.2 Natural properties vs. natural accidents

But how are (natural) accidents to be distinguished from properties? To begin with properties, as we have seen, according to Dietrich a natural property implies some real positive nature inhering in its subject, whereas a formal property does not, since its whole intelligible nature consists in some privation or relation, and such properties are determinate modes of things only from the fact that reason produces them.<sup>176</sup> Each, however, belongs to its subject *per se*, so that it is part and parcel of its subject.

Natural accidents are like natural properties: they imply a real positive nature. But unlike either natural or formal properties, they belong to their subject ‘by accident’ (*per accidens*), and their purpose is supposed to be dynamic: to make their subject – a substance – to be something better (*aliquid melius*).<sup>177</sup>

Dietrich points out that in respect of their mode of definition, it might appear that natural accidents are no different from properties: the definition in each case is by addition. Accordingly, since natural accidents are defined ‘by addition’ with reference to substances, it might appear that they are just a species of natural property: properties of substance.<sup>178</sup>

Dietrich holds, however, that their respective subjects do not enter the definitions of properties and accidents in the same way: the subject of a property enters its definition as a

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<sup>174</sup> Cf. *DA* 3(5) (III 57).

<sup>175</sup> Cf. *DA* 4(1) (III 58) (here Dietrich uses the term *ex additamentis*, a hapax for him). Thomas too, in explaining the separability of accidents, had noted that accidents are defined *per additionem* (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 1). Both medieval authors are referring to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (VII. 5, 1031a1-3).

<sup>176</sup> Cf. *DA* 3(4) (III 57): “Haec autem omnia...sunt modi determinati circa res agente ratione...”

<sup>177</sup> *DA* 2(2) (III 55); cf. *De natura et proprietate continuorum* 3(6) (III 258).

<sup>178</sup> Cf. *DA* 4(1) (III 58).

function of that subject's principles; but the subject of a natural accident enters its definition as a function of the very subsisting substance, which, as such, is the subject and is truly a being through itself. Nonetheless, he also adds that a natural accident would acquire the character of a property, that is, if its occurrence were to be derived from (reduced to) the principles of its subject, so that from these principles it would have its definition stating what its subject is and why such an accident occurs. This would be the case, he says, "if someone were to draw upon the principles of a celestial substance and conclude that the heaven was spherical or luminous."<sup>179</sup>

So it seems that the same attribute – here, for example, a particular shape or quality – might be understood as either a property or an accident, depending on whether or not it is properly understood as belonging to its subject *per se* and in virtue of the subject's constitutive principles. Thus we might think of the sphericity or luminosity of celestial substances as natural accidents; but at the same time we may also lack a clear understanding of the constitutive principles of such substances, and it thus seems that it may just be our limited knowledge of such principles that results in our inability to reduce the attributes of sphericity and luminosity to these principles, and if so, then when we classify the sphericity or luminosity of celestial substances as natural accidents (rather than properties), that is, as functions of these substances as such (rather than of their principles), it seems to be unclear what positive grounds we have for doing so.

Dietrich's comment about the natural accidents of heavenly substances thus raises some methodological issues worth commenting on. It seems that Dietrich does not clearly state

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<sup>179</sup> *DA* 4(4) (III 58): "Si autem aliquid istorum reduceretur in principia subiecti et ex his haberent suam definitionem dicentem *quid est subiectum et propter quid talis accidentis*, ex hoc iam accederet ad rationem et naturam proprietatum, ut si quis ex principiis substantiae caelestis eliceret et concluderet caelum esse sphaericum vel luminosum et similia."

any general criterion which would allow us to judge whether or not some actual attribute is a natural property or a natural accident, that is, whether it in fact derives from the natural principles of a substance, or from a substance as such. Rather, it seems that he leaves open the question whether the classification as property or as accident (at least in some cases) must be understood as based strictly on the metaphysical status of the thing itself, or whether such a classification may be an ascription that reflects rather the status of our knowledge. (It seems that his comment about the ‘accidents’ of heavenly substances could be interpreted in the latter sense.) Presumably a substantive criterion for making this distinction would need to involve a general account allowing us to distinguish in a principled way between those things which count as making a substance to be, as Dietrich puts it, ‘something better’ (*aliquid melius*) – as opposed to those which are simply entailed by its being the kind of thing it is – since Dietrich wants to say that this ‘making better’ is a distinguishing mark of accidents of nature.<sup>180</sup> In other words, it would seem to involve determining whether an attribute constitutes an instrument of a thing’s advancement towards the end which constitutes its final cause, and hence requires also that we know or be able to determine what that end is. But so far as I can see Dietrich does not provide any such criterion and so while he offers a clear enough abstract distinction between natural properties and natural accidents, this abstract distinction does not imply that we should be able to have clear insight into the constitutive basis of particular attributes. Rather, without an substantive criterion for positively determining the constitutive bases by which a thing is classified as either an

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<sup>180</sup> Cf. *DA* 2(2) (III 55): “that is properly called an accident, which implies some real nature in a substance, by which the substance is *something better* and by which in some way it bears itself towards motion and change, as, for example, quantities and qualities, which are certain things implying some positive nature in a substance” – “dicitur accidens proprie, quod importat aliquam realem naturam in substantia, qua substantia est aliquid melius et qua aliquo modo se habet ad motum et transmutationem, ut sunt quantitates et qualitates, quae sunt aliquae res positivam aliquam naturam importantes in substantia.”

accident or a property, it seems that Dietrich's 'methodology' perhaps consists in a kind of classification by default: if we don't have clear insight into the principles of an attribute, we regard it as an accident, rather than a property (i.e., as reducible to the substance as such, rather than to its principles). In relation to Flasch's claim about Dietrich "first constituting the object of scientific discourse through the adherence to methodological requirements,"<sup>181</sup> we should note that such a 'methodology' for classifying attributes would clearly seem to fall short of a scientific demonstration of the classifications thus made. In other words, it appears that Dietrich's 'scientific methodology' clearly does not guarantee that we have any kind of direct, positive insight into the constitutive causal foundations of particular observable attributes. One might still suppose that attributes must be grounded either in the principles of the subject or in the subject (*qua* substance) itself – i.e., to the exclusion of any other possibilities – but the supposed exhaustiveness of this disjunction would then have to be grounded, by appealing to more general reasons, concerned with the 'absolutely possible' – i.e., not just 'possible in relation to this particular conceptual dichotomy' – modes of (subjective and efficient and final) causality; it cannot be established as a consequence of it being possible to directly, demonstratively ground one or the other ascription – natural property or natural accident – in any given case of an actual attribute with a 'real positive nature.'

### **2.3 Inseparability of properties**

Dietrich's distinction between natural properties and natural accidents is thus clear enough in the abstract, conceptually; but he doesn't provide a concrete method for applying the distinction. Instead he moves on to an initial resolution of the question about separability,

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<sup>181</sup> Flasch 1983, p. XXVII. Cf. above, §1.

that is, separability in regard to properties. His argument in regard to the separability of properties provides the schema for his later argument regarding (true) accidents of nature.

Dietrich begins with some remarks about formal properties in particular. He claims that for the most part their intelligible character (*ratio*) consists in privation (e.g., equal or unequal<sup>182</sup>), while sometimes they involve relations (e.g., between father and son). But a privation is just a negation in a subject, and a relation is inherently between related subjects, so such formal properties are inconceivable apart from their subjects.

With regard to what is common to both formal and natural properties, both are elicited from the principles of their subject, the formal properties by the agency of reason and the natural ones by the agency of nature.<sup>183</sup> In either case, the principles in question are the principles of the being and of the definition (*essendi et definiendi*) both of the subject – the concrete thing – and of its properties.<sup>184</sup> It follows, Dietrich says, that the definition of each property and of its subject is ‘the same,’ in that the same definition states what the subject is (*quid est subiecti*), and the why of the property (*propter quid passionis*).<sup>185</sup> A number of absurd consequences would follow if properties were to subsist apart from any subject: First, a thing would be separated from the principles from which it has an essence and definition. Consequently, the thing defined (*definitum*) and the corresponding definition would be separated. Accordingly, the thing would be separated from its own quiddity, or form (which is given by the definition). Thus the thing would fall into an equivocation in respect of its essence, so that it would no longer belong to the same species of property, nor even to the

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<sup>182</sup> Presumably *equality* consists in a lack of quantitative difference and *inequality* involves a lack of equality.

<sup>183</sup> *DA* 5(5) (III 60): “...ex principiis subectorum suorum eliciuntur agente hoc natura vel ratione...”

<sup>184</sup> *DA* 5(5) (III 60): “...eadem sunt ipsorum [propriorum] et suorum subiectorum principia essendi et definiendi.”

<sup>185</sup> *DA* 5(5) (III 60): “...sequitur eandem esse definitionem uniuscuiusque ipsorum et sui proprii subiecti dicentem *quid est* subiecti et *propter quid* dictae passionis.” We might put this by saying that the ‘quid’ in each case has the same referent. The subject is (simply) what it is, and the passion is (essentially) because of what the subject is.

same genus (i.e., an accidental one), but rather to the genus of substance, since it would possess the characteristic distinguishing substances from all accidents and properties, namely, existing *per se* according to the nature of its own quiddity.<sup>186</sup> Therefore, to speak of a property being separated from its subject manifestly implies a contradiction, and if this is the case then it follows that such a separation is absolutely impossible, since even by the omnipotent power of God it is not possible to bring into being something which is contradictory in itself.<sup>187</sup>

## 2.4 Definition by ‘aptitude’

Before moving on to establish the same thesis for accidents of nature, Dietrich addresses a possible objection to the foregoing argument, which also foreshadows an objection that he will address regarding the inseparability of accidents of nature: It might be objected that the definitions of properties are given with reference only to the natural aptitude of their subjects for receiving them and to their natural aptitude (or possibility<sup>188</sup>) for being received by and inhering in these subjects; but such a definition does not imply the necessity of actual inherence.

First, in the case of formal properties, Dietrich argues, the crudeness and falsity of this argument are obvious: the formal principles of a triangle, for example, – its being a plane figure and having three angles (or sides) – are constitutive equally of its essence as a subject (a triangle), and of the formal properties belonging to that subject. Thus the actuality of the

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<sup>186</sup> *DA* 5(6) (III 60): “per se esse secundum rationem suae quiditatis.”

<sup>187</sup> In the late 13<sup>th</sup> century it was safe to take this last principle for granted. Flasch credits St. Anselm, in the eleventh century, for his important role in winning a general recognition of the ‘constitutional’ limitation of the divine omnipotence, thus denying God any ability to will what is self-contradictory. Cf. Flasch 2008, p. 13.

<sup>188</sup> In *De natura et proprietate continuorum* 3(6) (III 258), where Dietrich is discussing the definition of time, whether it consists in motion that is *numbered* (*numerata*) in terms of before and after, or merely *numerable* (*numerabile*), he makes a similar point to the one he will make here: he argues that time cannot be a matter of merely *numerable* motion, since a mere *aptitude* (*aptitudo*), or *possibility* (*possibilitas*) does not make anything to be actual.

principles entails the actuality of the subject no more and no less than it entails the actuality of the subject's *per se* effects, or formal properties.<sup>189</sup>

Dietrichs adds that it is true that definitions – i.e., the formal principles of a thing – are sometimes given as a function of an aptitude (*secundum aptitudinem*), that is, “when the substantial forms or their proper names are not [directly] known.”<sup>190</sup> In this case, however, the aptitude – or perhaps capacity would be a better term – refers to a substance's proper operation – such as sensing for an animal or reasoning for a man – through which the definitum's substantial form or specific difference is (indirectly) revealed.

And similarly, Dietrich says, certain properties are designated from an aptitude rather than from an act. Thus a man is risible because he has an aptitude (or capacity) for laughter. The point, however, is that although he is not always actually laughing, he does always have the aptitude for laughter; and since such an aptitude always inheres in the subject to which it is proper, Dietrich concludes that therefore it can be traced back to the same (natural) principles which constitute the actuality of its subject – namely, the substance of which it is a property.<sup>191</sup>

We can see that Dietrich's reasoning in this second case – natural properties – is quite different from in the first – formal properties: While the formal principles and the formal properties are brought forth by reason (reason is the active cause of both), the necessity of

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<sup>189</sup> This point about formal properties doesn't seem to be *directly* relevant to the case against separability of real, positive accidents, but it is *indirectly* relevant insofar as Dietrich will appeal to an analogy between the two cases in order to argue for the inseparability of the latter.

<sup>190</sup> *DA* 6(3) (III 61): “quando formae substantiales seu earum propria nomina sunt ignota.” St. Thomas shares this view: we sometimes state the unknown *essence* of a thing in terms of a particular power that it manifests. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *QDV* 10.1 co.: “Since the essences of things are unknown to us, but their powers are made known to us through their acts, we often make use of the names of powers or potencies in order to signify essences.” - “Quia vero rerum essentiae sunt nobis ignotae, virtutes autem earum innotescunt nobis per actus, utimur frequenter nominibus virtutum vel potentiarum ad essentias significandas.”

<sup>191</sup> *DA* 6(4) (III 61): “et quia huiusmodi aptitudines semper actu insunt his, quorum sunt propria, ideo reducuntur in principia secundum actum, quae eadem sunt principia substantiae secundum actum.”

tracing natural properties back to natural principles is rather grounded simply in the fact that such a property (here, an aptitude) always inheres in its proper subject. In the latter case, then, we should note that if the fact is called into question – as in the case of transubstantiation – then it will not be possible to argue from the conclusion – that the principles of the subject are also the principles of the property – back to the fact – that the property (or aptitude) always, necessarily inheres in its proper subject.

Dietrich will also apply this argument against ‘definition by aptitude’ to the context of accidents of nature (see below, §4.4.1), but before launching his discussion of such accidents – ‘accidents’ in the proper sense – he pauses for a methodological parenthesis.

### 3 Methodological issues

Dietrich’s seventh chapter is a *praemunitio* (a preparation – literally, an advance fortification), a vaguely methodological advance warning to make his reader receptive to what is to follow. In the opening chapter of *De accidentibus* Dietrich claimed that the ‘spokesmen for the common doctrine’ (*communiter loquentes*) win the day not by the efficacy, but by the great number of their arguments.<sup>192</sup> In the closing chapter he makes a different, more precise claim: that their procedure of inquiry is defective, since they first try to defend their views with reasons drawn from the natures of things; then if they are effectively challenged they fall back on an *argumentum ad miraculum*.<sup>193</sup> As far as St.

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<sup>192</sup> Cf. *DA* 1(2) (III 55).

<sup>193</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(22) (III 90): “On one side they fortify their intention through reasons drawn from nature and from the properties of things; but if for the other side it is argued still more efficaciously, they recur to a miracle, saying, that is, that that which they defend in their position is accomplished miraculously, by a supernatural power.” - “Ad unam enim partem muniunt suam intentionem per rationes a natura et proprietatibus rerum sumptas; si autem pro alia parte etiam efficacius arguatur, recurrunt ad miraculum, scilicet dicentes, quod miraculose, virtute supernaturali, fiat hoc, quod in sua positione defendunt.”

Thomas' position goes, it seems clear that this final defect does not apply: the assertion that the separation of accidents is accomplished miraculously is fundamental to Thomas' position from the beginning, and it never serves as an *ad hoc* device for saving his position, after it has been rationally undermined.<sup>194</sup>

In any case, we can note that generally speaking, in the three treatises comprising *On three difficult questions*, Dietrich seems to want to proceed strictly by the use of philosophical reasoning. This is not to say that he doesn't seek to confirm his position by citation of recognized authorities, but just that he effectively – though not in principle – excludes any consideration of the possibility of miracles from his rational construction of the ordering of the universe.

He is quite clear about this in *De animatione caeli* (the first in this trio of treatises). To begin with, he identifies two ways of considering the rational constitution of the universe – through divine creation and through human intellection – and indicates the presumption of a basic harmony between the two:

But I am speaking [i.e. in *De animatione caeli*] of the universe *insofar as we inquire rationally* [by way of reason – *rationabiliter*] about its constitution in being<sup>195</sup>: For it is constituted rationally, or according to reason, now on the part of God, as Augustine says in the *Liber sententiarum Prosperi* ch. 171: in the works of God, we do not know nothing, since we know that God does not act without reason (*sine ratione*); now on the part of our

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<sup>194</sup> It is puzzling to see Flasch comment approvingly on Dietrich's superior 'consciousness of method' (*Methodenbewußtsein*) in connection with this criticism (see Flasch 1983, p. XL; cf. p. XXVII; 2007, p. 254), a quality which he finds lacking among *die Thomisten*. It might well be that he approves of Dietrich's *adherence to a particular method*, but that is clearly not the same as a *consciousness of method* as such.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Flasch 1983, p. XXVII: "Here the discussion is about the universe in its rational structure." - "Hier ist...vom Universum in seiner rationalen Struktur die Rede."

investigation, namely by reasoning (*ratione*) drawn from the nature (*ratione*) and property of things, according to what their nature (*natura*) requires...<sup>196</sup> [emphasis added]

From the perspective Dietrich describes here, there are two ‘logically’ or ‘intentionally’ parallel, but ontically distinct, rational constitutions of the universe: primarily, God creates the whole universe in a reasonable way, conferring real being upon it; and secondarily, various creatures (above all created *intellects*) – in accordance with their proper essential operations, conferred upon them by the creator – produce the *same* universe of real beings, though “according to a higher and more noble act of being,”<sup>197</sup> constituting the whole universe in what Dietrich calls ‘conceptional’ being, again, in a reasonable way, commensurate with whatever light of reason is proper to a being of a given nature.<sup>198</sup> Clearly enough, within this framework, the production of scientific (including metaphysical) treatises – such as *De animatione caeli* and *De accidentibus* – is directed towards giving expression to a constitutive part of the ‘conceptional’ constitution of the universe. As for the ‘reasonable way’ in which we inquire about the universe’s constitution in being, Dietrich elaborates on this ‘way’ by invoking the principle, drawn from Augustine, that whatever ought to be posited by right reason, we must confess to have been done by God.<sup>199</sup> Now it

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<sup>196</sup> *an.* 5(3) (III 16-17): “Loquor autem de universo, secundum quod de eius constitutione in esse rationabiliter conicimus: Rationabiliter enim seu secundum rationem constitutum est, *tum ex parte Dei*, sicut dicit Augustinus in *Libro sententiarum* Prosperi c. 171: In Dei operibus non nihil novimus, cum scimus Deum non sine ratione facere, *tum ex parte nostrae investigationis*, videlicet ratione sumpta ex ratione et proprietate rerum, secundum quod natura earum exigit...” We can note that Dietrich’s language here is closely reflected in his statement in the last chapter of *De accidentibus*, where he says that his opponents begin well, fortifying their position “through reasons drawn from the nature and properties of things” (*per rationes a natura et proprietatibus rerum sumptas*) – that is, before ending badly, with their appeal *ad miraculum*.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. *an.* 8(3) (III 19): “secundum aliud esse altius et nobilius.”

<sup>198</sup> See, e.g., *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis*, cc. 1-13 (II 303-312), for Dietrich’s account of the ordered connections between the four kinds of real being and the parallel four kinds of conceptional being.

<sup>199</sup> See, e.g., *an.* 1(2) (III 13): “Quidquid recta ratione ponendum est, Deum fecisse fatendum est.” Cf. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* III.5.13. This principle is important to Dietrich; he cites it in several places: *an.* 1(2) (III 13); *int.* II 20(2) (I 160); *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis* 28(10) (II 329); *Quaestio: Utrum potentiae sensitivae habeant aliquod principium activum intrinsecus, quod faciat eas in actu sentiendi in homine vel animali* (4) (III 359).

seems clear that this principle implies that we have some prior notion of what ought to be posited by right reason, and that this prior notion informs and/or circumscribes our conception of what we must confess to have been done (or not done) by God. Without this kind of principle (or one logically entailing it, such as “the created universe is naturally intelligible to human beings”), the two ‘rational’ constitutions of the universe – i.e., through creation and through our rational inquiry – could be taken to be not just ontically distinct but logically or ‘intentionally’ independent. The principle thus aims to ground, methodologically, a concordance in the dual constitution of the one universe, i.e., the genuineness of the presentation of real being (what we confess to have been done by God) in conceptual being (what ought to be posited by right reason).

We should also note, however, that experience shows that particular suppositions regarding what it is that (actually) ought to be posited by right reason are liable to be contentious. And in fact, given the possibility of (supernatural) revelation, which outstrips the (natural) limits of our rational inquiry, it would seem that the converse principle must also be admitted, that is: whatever we must confess to have been done by God, ought to be posited by right reason. And indeed, this converse principle seems to be implied by – and to explain the necessity of – the *caveat* which Dietrich immediately adds to his statement about the dual rational constitution of the universe, namely: “...in all things leaving unimpaired the omnipotence of the Creator.”<sup>200</sup> He continues:

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<sup>200</sup> It is also implied in *an.* 1(3) (III 13), the paragraph immediately following his initial citation of Augustine (see preceding footnote), which gives a criterion for *what we must confess to have been done by God*: “Therefore, regarding the matter before us, that which most stands fast by reason, [and] is consonant with authority, [and] *in which also the power and omnipotence of God most shines forth to us*, this is rather to be held; since in accordance with Augustine, *De trinitate* II, ch. 2, for searching for God, for knowing him and for loving him, these are proposed for us: the scriptures, which he inspired, and the creatures, which he created.” (emphasis added)

For Augustine's teaching is to expound thus [i.e., rationally] even holy scripture, where scripture speaks of natural things, that is, that the nature of things should always be saved, *so far as is possible*, as is clear also in the book *On the wondrous things of sacred scripture* (*De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*), where the author of that book keeps to this mode in treating the wondrous things of sacred scripture.<sup>201</sup> [emphasis added]

...*so far as is possible*: We can see then that Dietrich clearly enough implies here that, in light of scripture (i.e., revelation), it may not always be possible to 'save the nature of things,'<sup>202</sup> and the reason for this also seems to be evident enough, if we consider, as just mentioned, the reversibility of the Augustinian principle governing our rational suppositions. Later in *De animatione* Dietrich argues for the impossibility of the supposition of a merely extrinsic, supernatural – i.e., not connatural – 'assignment' of angels to be the movers of the heavens – so that the movement of the heavens would not be natural, nor from themselves (from their own, intrinsic actualizing, animating principles), nor a primary motion. But the impossibility of such a supposition, he says, is grounded in the mode of his inquiry, which is 'according to nature': "[These positions (which posit angels as the accidental movers of the heavens, rather than intellects *per essentiam* as their essential movers)] are inadmissible according to nature (*secundum naturam*). For that is the mode in which we are speaking here."<sup>203</sup> In other words, Dietrich implies that the inadmissibility of the propositions in

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In *an.* 30(1) (III 37), Dietrich expands on the relation between authority and reason. He waxes enthusiastic about the priority, as regards *the thing itself*, of reason over authority – although, temporally speaking, we are first led by authority – while noting that reason is more efficacious when it is in harmony with authority.

<sup>201</sup> *an.* 5(3) (III 30-31): "Sic enim docet Augustinus etiam sanctam scripturam exponere, ubi loquitur scriptura de rebus naturalibus, ut videlicet semper salva sit natura rerum, quantum possibile est, ut patet etiam in libro *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*, ubi auctor libri illius tenet modum istum in tractando mirabilia sacrae scripturae."

<sup>202</sup> It goes without saying that St. Augustine is not the spiritual or intellectual father of a David Strauss.

<sup>203</sup> *an.* 27(3) (III 36): "quae sunt inconvenientia secundum naturam. Eo enim modo loquimur hic." Flasch comments on this passage (1983, p. XXVII): "Without wanting to diminish the rights of revealed theology, he kept his discussion methodologically separated from it. He demanded, in a clear alignment with Albert, that the question about the ensoulment of the heavenly bodies be answered *secundum naturam*."

question is not simply grounded in the absolute nature of reality. And he implies that speaking “according to nature” – i.e., to the exclusion of revealed data and of possible complications introduced by an explicit consideration of divine omnipotence and the miraculous – is not the only possible way of speaking.

In the *De accidentibus* (the third of the three treatises), however, while we do find a similar tendency to accentuate the methodological priority of ‘what ought to be posited by right reason,’ Dietrich’s position is significantly different from that found in *De animatione*. In *De animatione* Dietrich granted that the mode of necessity proper to his conclusions should be understood as commensurate to his mode of speaking (and reasoning); but we find no such qualification in *De accidentibus*.

The heart of chapter 7 of *De accidentibus* is a rather long citation from near the end of book I of St. Augustine’s *Super Genesim* in which Augustine points out that there are many natural phenomena<sup>204</sup> which those without faith can reason about perfectly well and accordingly on which they can come to hold particular views on the basis of the most certain reasoning or experience.<sup>205</sup> Augustine emphasizes in the strongest terms the pernicious consequences wrought by those Christians who argue against such well-established conclusions, as if in doing so they were arguing according to the (soundly interpreted) authority of Christian scripture and doctrine. Such Christians bring ridicule upon the Christian faith and needlessly introduce a prejudice against the Christian scriptures and faith into the minds of those non-Christians who already understand perfectly well the nature of

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<sup>204</sup> The phenomena which Augustine mentions (cf. *DA* 7(2) (III 62)) are: “something regarding the earth or the sky or the other elements of this world, the motion or revolution, as well as the size and the intervals of the stars, certain defects (eclipses) of the sun and the moon, the cycles of years and seasons, the natures of animals, fruits, stones and other things of this kind...” Clearly the separation of accidents in the Eucharist is not supposed to be a natural phenomenon, but Dietrich will try to argue that a true account of the relevant natural phenomena excludes any possibility of such a separation.

<sup>205</sup> *DA* 7(2) (III 62): “...ut certissima ratione vel experientia teneat.”

these things which are foolishly being controverted, and have already grasped them as being indubitable.<sup>206</sup> Accordingly, Augustine writes, “to the great ruin of those for whose salvation we have enough to do as it is, our authors are seized and expelled as if lacking all learning”; and thus those who lack faith are effectively prevented from coming to believe in the authentic doctrines of faith found in the scriptures: the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven.<sup>207</sup>

Commenting on this passage, Dietrich urges upon his reader the need to proceed with modesty and circumspection in regard to the truths found in scripture, and to avoid hasty conclusions regarding the truth or falsity of claims relating to articles of faith.<sup>208</sup> While it is hard to contest the general soundness of such advice, we should again be able to see from experience that the question of how to apply it is likely to be contentious. Also, while chapter 7 of *De accidentibus* is more specifically focused on the dangers associated with naïve exegesis of scripture, the point regarding rational methodology and appeals to scriptural revelation is very similar to the one expressed in *De animatione caeli* (i.e., that “the nature of things should always be saved, so far as is possible”<sup>209</sup>). Thus, in his

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<sup>206</sup> St. Thomas is also solicitous about this danger. In *De potentia* q. 4, a. 1, for example, in explicating the creation of matter in relation to the Genesis account of creation, he refers to the same Augustinian passage as Dietrich does here; and in speaking about the eternity of the world he writes (*ST I.46.2c*): “Hence, that the world had a beginning is believable, but it is not demonstrable or scientifically knowable. And it is useful that this should be given thought, lest someone, presuming to demonstrate what belongs to faith, should introduce non-necessary arguments, which would offer occasion for ridiculing to those without faith, as they judge us to believe because of such arguments that which belongs to faith.” - “Unde mundum incoepisse est credibile, non autem demonstrabile vel scibile. Et hoc utile est ut consideretur, ne forte aliquis, quod fidei est demonstrare praesumens, rationes non necessarias inducat, quae praebeant materiam irridendi infidelibus, existimantibus nos propter huiusmodi rationes credere quae fidei sunt.”

<sup>207</sup> Cf. *DA* 7(2) (III 62) (citing Augustine): “... cum magno eorum exitio, de quorum salute satagimus, tamquam indocti reprehenduntur atque respuuntur. ... [Q]uomodo illis libris credituri sunt de resurrectione mortuorum et de spe vitae aeternae regnoque caelorum ...?”

<sup>208</sup> Ruedi Imbach’s comparison of Dietrich to Spinoza (see Imbach 1998) is quite understandable in light of Dietrich’s emphasis here on caution in the use and interpretation of scripture, together with his emphasis on the essential rational order and knowability of the universe and refusal to let that order be disrupted by miracles (at least decidedly irrational ones, like transubstantiation).

<sup>209</sup> Cf. *an.* 5(3) (III 17).

comments following the Augustinian passage in *De accidentibus*, Dietrich again quite clearly implies that the principle of ‘saving the nature of things’ – i.e., the ‘nature’ that has been determined through strictly ‘natural methods’ of rational inquiry – is not absolute. In this case, he counsels against rash judgments of truth or falsity based on scriptural exegesis, but he doesn’t rule out essentially revelation-grounded judgments altogether. To the contrary, he explicitly grants the legitimacy of judgments grounded directly in scripture, or rationally derived from such directly-grounded-in-scripture judgments; and he also grants the legitimacy of the pope’s power to authoritatively determine the truth in matters pertaining to faith.<sup>210</sup>

Dietrich thus clearly does not defend the legitimacy or coherence of adopting some kind of exclusively naturalistic methodology. It is important to note, however, that in the rest of his treatise on accidents there is no parallel suggestion to the one in *De animatione caeli*, that is, that the necessity of his conclusions regarding *accidents* might be relative to, or a function of, the mode of his inquiry. Instead, as we will see, Dietrich’s arguments in *De accidentibus* effectively incline the criterial ambiguity of the twofold ‘rational’ constitution of the universe – ‘what ought to be posited by right reason’ and ‘what we must confess to have been done by God’ – in the direction of the prerogatives of the former, of strictly natural reason; which is to say, towards a *de facto* conception of strictly natural reason as being in a position to autonomously establish the rational structure of the universe and the absolute

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<sup>210</sup> *DA* 7(3) (III 62-63): “Nor should one easily presume to say that something pertains to faith, or to ground it in some article of faith, and to assert its contrary to be erroneous or heretical, unless this [judgment] should be manifestly held on the basis of canonical scripture; or, the truth of scripture being known and supposed, if some such thing should be concluded by manifest and necessary reasoning; or, again, unless it be determined by the most high pontiff, to whom it belongs to determine articles of faith.” – “Nec facile praesumendum dicere aliquid pertinere ad fidem vel reducere in aliquem articulum fidei et contrarium eius asserere erroneum seu haereticum esse, nisi manifeste hoc habeatur per canonicam scripturam vel cognita et supposita scripturae veritate tale aliquid manifesta et necessaria ratione concludatur vel etiam nisi per summum pontificem determinetur, ad quem pertinet articulos fidei determinare.”

necessity of the structure so-established, with the result being that it is idle to reconsider fundamental principles and limit-case scenarios specifically in light of divine omnipotence. Whether, in light of the actual constitution of the universe and of the human intellect, he is justified in placing such confidence in the power of his own reasoning – at least, anyway, as applied to the present question, regarding the separability of accidents – is a key question which we will have to consider in the next chapter.

#### **4 Accidents of nature**

We have already seen in chapter 5 of *De accidentibus* Dietrich's general scheme for demonstrating the impossibility of separation of an 'accident' (in the broad sense) from its subject. There he argues that in a very real sense the principles of properties (both formal and natural) and the principles of the subjects of those properties are in fact the same identical principles, and his argument against the separability of properties from their subject proceeds from there. Beginning in chapter 8, he seeks to demonstrate that this kind of argument applies not just to properties, but also to 'accidents' in the proper sense, the accidents of nature. The first step in demonstrating the inseparability of accidents of nature is to rigorously determine their essential nature.

We have already introduced some of the essential features of such accidents: they have a real positive nature, the subjects in which they inhere are substances as such, they are involved in motion and change, and they contribute to making their subjects 'something better.'<sup>211</sup> In his introduction to his main discussion of their nature he also tells us that they are "the accidents of nature distinguished *per se* through the nine genera of categories other

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<sup>211</sup> Cf. *DA* 2(2) (III 55).

than the genus of substance”<sup>212</sup> and that quantity and quality are especially important, since these are, as it were, “the roots and fundamentals of the other seven genera.”<sup>213</sup> In chapter 8 Dietrich begins to expand on this characterization.

#### **4.1 General characterization of accidents and substances**

Dietrich begins by first explaining the purpose of accidents, why they are necessary in some beings and not in others (ch. 8). Second he explains the difference in the ‘proper general accounts’ (*proprias generales rationes*) of substance and accident (ch. 9) Third he describes the different ways in which being (*ens*) is predicated of substance and accident and the essential ‘analogy’ of accident towards substance in terms of being (ch. 10).

##### **4.1.1 The necessity and finality of accidents of nature**

Just as Dietrich has said that accidents make their subject to be ‘something better,’ the reason why accidents are necessary for some beings is a matter of the specific mode of their final causality (their end or purpose, that for the sake of which they exist). According to Aristotle’s *De caelo et mundo*, “each thing exists for the sake of its proper operation.”<sup>214</sup> In other words, a thing fulfills its own nature or achieves its own perfection by exercising the operation which is proper to it. This is a fundamental principle governing the intelligibility of things: the natural constitution of a being, so far as this is intelligible, follows from its

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<sup>212</sup> *DA* 7(1) (III 62).

<sup>213</sup> *DA* 7(4) (III 63): “As regards our problem we must now especially look into the nine genera of categories of accidents and principally quantity and quality, which are, as it were, the roots and fundamentals of the other seven genera.” - “Quantum ad propositum autem specialiter nunc intendendum de accidentibus novem generum praedicamentorum et praecipue de quantitate et qualitate, quae sunt quasi radices et fundamenta aliorum septem generum.”

<sup>214</sup> *DA* 8(1) (III 63): “unaquaeque res est propter suam propriam operationem.” Cf. Aristotle, *De caelo et mundo*, II, 3, 286a8-9: “of those things having a function, each exists for the sake of that function” – “*hekaston estin, hôn estin ergon, heneka tou ergou*.” This principle is a key one for Dietrich, which he cites in several places; cf. *De origine* 1(14) (III 141); *De visione beatifica*, 3.2.9.3(1) (I 89); *De intellectu et intelligibili*, I.1(1) (I 137).

ordering to such an end. Should a thing be deprived of its proper operation, or endowed with anything extra, impertinent to its end or purpose, then it would be “in vain in nature.”<sup>215</sup> But as Aristotle teaches, “nature does nothing in vain, nor is it lacking in necessities.”<sup>216</sup>

Some beings, in Dietrich’s view, attain their proper ends through their own simple essences – these are intellects which are by essence in act<sup>217</sup>: their being (*ens*) just is their understanding (*intelligere*), and their understanding is essentially active, making all things.<sup>218</sup>

Other beings have parts and attain their proper ends in virtue of processes of motion and change which affect the disposition of their parts, as is obviously the case for corporeal beings<sup>219</sup> (for example, we might think of a lion hunting or a flower unfolding). These latter beings are unable to accomplish their ends simply through their intrinsic essences. They are thus essentially dependent on extrinsic accidents, and accidents just are the extrinsic dispositions of such beings having parts.<sup>220</sup> Thus, as Dietrich explains in *De origine rerum*

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<sup>215</sup> *DA* 8(1) (III 63): “...frustra esset in natura...”

<sup>216</sup> *DA* 8(1) (III 63): “Natura autem nihil facit frustra, sicut non deficit in necessariis secundum Philosophum II *Caeli et mundi*...” Cf. Aristotle, *De caelo et mundo*, II, 11, 291b13-14: “for nature does/makes nothing unaccountably or in vain” – “*hê de phusis ouden alogôs oude matên poiei*”; Aristotle, *De anima*, III, 9, 432b22-23: “nature neither does/makes anything in vain, nor leaves aside any of what is necessary – except in the mutilated and in the imperfect...” – “*hê phusis mête poiei matên mêthen, mête apoleipei ti tôn anagkaiôn - plên en tois pêrômasi kai en tois atelesin*...” Aristotle thus makes clear that by ‘thing of nature’ is not meant simply ‘whatever exists, as such,’ but rather things that belong to a kind understood in terms of the traits that are characteristic of the flourishing and propagation of that kind.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. *DA* 8(2) (III 64): “intellectus in actu per essentiam.” Dietrich discusses such intellects at length in the other two treatises of *De tribus difficilibus quaestionibus*, especially in his discussion of the agent intellect in *De visione beatifica*, as well as in his other major treatise on intellect, *De intellectu et intelligibili*, which was likely written shortly after his trilogy of difficult questions. Like *De accidentibus*, the latter two treatises also invoke the principle from Aristotle’s *De caelo*: “each thing is for the sake of its proper operation.”

<sup>218</sup> Cf., e.g., *int.* I 3 (I 138), where Dietrich appeals to Proclus. Another favorite authority on this point for Dietrich is Aristotle’s famous statement from book III of *De anima*: that the (agent) intellect *makes all things*.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. *DA* 8(3) (III 64).

<sup>220</sup> *DA* 8(2) (III 64): “accidens autem est dispositio habentis partes.” Cf. *quid.* 11(2) (III 115): “Such a *disposition*, just as the name implies, is nothing but a substance’s diverse positioning in its parts, and this either quantitatively or qualitatively, or in some other such way, by which the parts of such a disposed substance are related to one another by this or that relation.” - “Talis autem dispositio, sicut et ipsum nomen importat, non est nisi substantiae diversa positio in suis partibus, et hoc vel quantitative vel qualitative vel secundum aliquem

*praedicamentalium*, accidents do not pertain to the intrinsic causes of a thing – its essential form and matter – but rather to its extrinsic causes, namely its final cause (i.e., its perfective operation) and its efficient cause (the cause of its being produced and in turn of producing of other beings). Accidents, in accordance with this extrinsic mode of causation, are that by which a thing is ‘made better,’ by which – beyond merely existing – it accomplishes its natural operation according to the notion of its good.<sup>221</sup>

This general account of things leaves us with two most basic kinds of ‘things’ which make up “the universe of beings which are things of first intention and truly things of nature”<sup>222</sup>: those beings which have proper operations (however these are accomplished) *per se*, that is, through themselves – namely substances; and those which do not have proper operations or ends of their own, the natural existence of which cannot be understood as ordered towards their own good and perfection, but rather which exist only to be the instruments by which certain beings of the first kind (certain substances) accomplish their ends, that is, which exist solely as ordered towards the good of another – namely accidents:

Substances are beings, of which their proper characteristic is to act and to be acted upon and universally to exercise an operation and by their operation to be established under the order belonging to their end; and accidents are certain formal dispositions of certain substances, by which they [these substances] fulfill their perfective operations in obtaining their end.<sup>223</sup>

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alium talem modum, secundum quem talem vel talem habitudinem ad invicem se habeant partes talis substantiae dispositae.”

<sup>221</sup> Cf. *De origine* 1(11) (III 140): “...in natural [things]...it is from certain accidents that are superadded to the substance that we observe the intelligible notion of what is good and fitting in nature, in accordance with the notion of the end, under the ordering of which an agent produces accidents of this kind in the subject.” – “...in naturalibus...ex aliquibus accidentibus superadditis substantiae attenditur ratio boni et convenientis in natura secundum rationem finis, sub cuius ordine agens facit huiusmodi accidentia in subiecto.”

<sup>222</sup> *DA* 8(4) (III 64).

<sup>223</sup> *DA* 8(4) (III 64): “...substantiae sint entia, quorum proprium est agere et pati et universaliter operari et sua propria operatione stare sub ordine sui finis; accidentia autem sunt quaedam formales dispositiones quarundam substantiarum, quibus suas perfectivas operationes explent in adeptione sui finis.” In other words, Dietrich explains, accidents are (merely) *instrumental* causes; cf., e.g., *De visione* 3.2.9.5(3)-(4) (I 93-94). We should

An accident, then, is certainly a ‘being’ and a ‘thing,’ rather than nothing; but its intrinsic end (*suum finem intra*),<sup>224</sup> and thus its essence – insofar as each thing is for the sake of its end – wholly derives from and consists in its ordering *ad extra*,<sup>225</sup> towards substance and the proper operations of substance.

#### 4.1.2 Defining the difference between substances and accidents

Having established the general *raison d’être* of accidents in nature, why they exist and what they do, one might be tempted to conclude immediately that accidents cannot exist apart from substances. But in the context of a properly general development of basic ontological concepts, Dietrich wants to be quite clear as to why this is the case, first by specifying more clearly the difference between substances and accidents in terms of the proper general account (*ratio*) of each.<sup>226</sup>

We might formulate this difference simply by saying that a substance is “a being through itself and according to itself” (*ens per se et secundum se*) while an accident is “a being through another and according to another” (*ens per aliud seu secundum aliud*), or, as it is commonly put,<sup>227</sup> “a being in another” (*ens in alio*).<sup>228</sup> Dietrich finds, however, that this

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note that while it is true that accidents do seem to have this essential role in relation to the ‘perfective’ ends of substances, they can of course also function otherwise. Heat, for example, may promote a particular subject’s being healthy or being well-cooked, but also its being exhausted or burnt – or just warm for no particular reason.

<sup>224</sup> *DA* 8(5) (III 64).

<sup>225</sup> Cf. *De magis et minus* 22(1) (II 62): “their whole essence does not exist except in a relation to something outside themselves” – “tota eorum essentia non est nisi in respectu ad extra se.”

<sup>226</sup> *DA* 9, *tit.* (III 64): “...*secundum sibi proprias generales rationes.*” We could also call what Dietrich is after here the proper general *nature* or *notion* or *character* of substance as opposed to accident.

<sup>227</sup> That is, as it is expressed by those Dietrich refers to as the *communiter loquentes*.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. *DA* 9(1) (III 64-65). Thomas sometimes uses this expression; cf., e.g., *SCG* I.65.3; *De veritate* 7.5 ad 3. We can recall that Thomas also distinguishes an accident’s *being in* (*inesse*) from its *being from another* (*ab alio esse*) - cf. *supra*, chapter II.2.3; *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 1. In explicating Dietrich’s argument in *DA* 9(1), Flasch claims that Thomas makes *per aliud* to be equivalent to *in alio* and that in doing this one “replaces the accident’s *essential dependence* with its *inherence*” (1983, p. XLVII). He then implies that ‘inherence,’ *inesse*,

account of the difference in question is, strictly speaking, inadequate, since it is ambiguous in regard to two possible interpretations.

The first interpretation picks up on a secondary (or ‘accidental’) aspect of the proper account of accidents. By this interpretation these formulations might be understood to mean just that substances subsist and exist in nature without ‘being supported’ (*fulciri*) by another, while accidents, in contrast, are always sustained and supported in existence by some substance.<sup>229</sup> But Dietrich does not want to conceive of substance and accident as two things which are on par *qua* essences, and differ only in that one is holding the other up.<sup>230</sup> While in a certain sense this characterization of the difference between substances and accidents – one ‘supports’ the other – may be true, this truth must derive from an ontologically prior characterization.<sup>231</sup>

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is an inherently spatial notion: “Into the place of the insight into ontological dependence there enters a spatializing view of the matter [*eine verräumlichende Vorstellung*]” (*ibid.*), so that Thomas has a Russian doll model of the way in which accidents are in substances. It is not clear why this ‘spatializing’ implication follows: clearly Dietrich himself retains the notion of *inesse*, in-being, to refer to the being of accidents (cf. *DA* 22(2), section 4.3 below); nor is it clear why ‘inherence,’ in itself, should be taken to imply *independence*: in Thomas’ usage it does not – the reason the accidents other than quantity continue to *inhere* in dimensive quantity is precisely because they cannot be conceived to subsist *independently*. It is interesting to note that shortly after writing *DA*, Dietrich himself writes in *De intellectu et intelligibili* III.8(3): “Being *per se* [for substances] and *being in another* [for accidents] are the primary differences making something to stand apart from nothing” - “*Esse enim per se et esse in alio sunt primae differentiae facientes aliquid distare a nihilo*” (emphases added).

<sup>229</sup> Cf. *DA* 9(2) (III 65). Thomas uses this language – *fulcitur* – in describing the first of three ways in which a subject is related to an accident; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *De virtutibus* 1.3 co.: “...a subject is related to an accident in three ways. (1) In one way, as proffering a support for it, for an accident does not subsist *per se*, but is supported (*fulcitur*) by a subject. (2) In another way, as potency to act, for a subject is subjected to an accident as a kind of potency of something active, and so an accident is called a form. (3) In a third way as cause to effect, for the subject’s principles are *per se* principles of the accident.” – “Respondeo dicendum, quod subiectum tripliciter comparatur ad accidentis. Uno modo sicut praebens ei sustentamentum; nam accidentis per se non subsistit, fulcitur vero per subiectum. Alio modo sicut potentia ad actum; nam subiectum accidenti subijcitur, sicut quaedam potentia activi; unde et accidentis forma dicitur. Tertio modo sicut causa ad effectum; nam principia subiecti sunt principia per se accidentis.”

<sup>230</sup> As Flasch reads it, the substance’s function of *support* is “an imaginary representation in the sensible order.” Cf. Flasch 2008, pp. 19-20.

<sup>231</sup> This case here is similar to case of a triangle, which necessarily has some *property*, say having three angles equal to two right angles; this property, however, is not *identical*, but *posterior*, to its essence, namely, being a three-angled/three-sided plane figure.

In addition, Dietrich points out, this first formulation of the distinction is also not universal: material forms, matter, and the ‘parts in the whole’ (*partes in toto* – e.g., fingers and toes) are not accidents; they belong rather on the side of substance. Nonetheless, their subsistence in being is not ‘through themselves and as a function of themselves’ (*per se et secundum se*), since each of these exists only through the whole of which it is a constitutive part.<sup>232</sup>

In contrast to this first attempt to define the difference between substances and accidents, which is made in terms of a secondary characteristic, an adequate account of their essential distinction must be primary and universal<sup>233</sup>: it cannot refer merely to a secondary property, and it must be universal because the subject of the distinction is being (*ens*) as such, which is the very first and most universal (transcendental) notion, “by which a thing first stands at a distance from nothing,”<sup>234</sup> and from which nothing is excluded. Accordingly, Dietrich tells us, the primary distinction between the two manners of (real) being is most rigorously expressed by saying that it pertains to a substance “to have an essence through itself and according to itself according to the notion of its proper and intrinsic quiddity,” while it pertains to an accident “to have an essence through another and according to another and not according to the notion of an intrinsic quiddity, but rather, as we might say, one that is extrinsic.”<sup>235</sup> In other words, we seem to have the same conclusion as in the preceding chapter (*DA* 8), where the distinction was expressed in terms of operation and finality: what a substance necessarily is through itself must be understood with reference to its own formal

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<sup>232</sup> *DA* 9(3) (III 65): “Nec etiam est haec differentia universalis quoad substantias : neque enim forma materialis nec materia nec partes in toto, cum sint substantiae, non tamen per se et secundum se subsistunt in esse.”

<sup>233</sup> Cf. *DA* 9(5) (III 65): “...primus et universalis.”

<sup>234</sup> *DA* 9(6) (III 65): “quo res primo distat a nihilo.”

<sup>235</sup> *DA* 9(6) (III 65): “Prima autem ratio dividendi ens secundum hoc est vel habere essentiam per se et secundum se secundum rationem suae propriae et intraneae quiditatis vel habere essentiam per aliud et secundum aliud et non secundum rationem intraneae quiditatis, sed magis, ut ita dicamus, extraneae.”

nature, its own intrinsic actuality (operation, purpose); and what an accident necessarily is through itself must be understood in terms of the functional role it serves for another – it is that by which the intrinsic actuality of a substance is extrinsically achieved. Heat, for example, has no intrinsic quiddity, since heat only exists as a function of the heating and cooling of substances; but a living body does have an intrinsic quiddity, a formally complete what-it-is-for-itself, and heating and cooling contribute to effecting the processes of change (metabolic processes) that are proper to its intrinsic functioning. Substances and accidents thus have their essences in different ways, and correspondingly they have a “diverse degree of ‘distanciation’ from nothing”<sup>236</sup>; a substance is ‘more essenced’ (*magis essentiatur*) than an accident; an accident must be ‘quiddified’ and seize its essence through another and following upon another.<sup>237</sup>

Dietrich points out that a being can of course also be extrinsically ‘of another’: for example, a horse is, by efficient causation, through another horse.<sup>238</sup> But in the case of an accident the of-another-ness pertains to it essentially, so that it is not just produced by another, but what it is (its quiddity) and that it is (its real essence) are not primarily its own, but must be determined through another and following upon another, according to and following upon the whatness and beingness (quiddity and essence) of the other. Hence, while

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<sup>236</sup> *DA* 9(7) (III 66): “...diversus gradus distandi a nihilo.”

<sup>237</sup> *DA* 9(7) (III 66): “For that which has its essence through itself and according to itself according to the notion of its quiddity is more ‘essenced’ and has more of the character and perfection of being, and consequently stands more distantly from nothing, than is the case for that which is both quiddified (*quidificatur*) and takes hold of its essence through another and according to another. The first of these pertains to substance, the second to accident” – “Magis enim essentiatur et magis rationem et perfectionem entis habet et per consequens magis distat a nihilo id, quod per se et secundum se ipsum secundum rationem suae quiditatis habet essentiam suam, quam id, quod per aliud aut secundum aliud et quidificatur et capit essentiam suam. Primum istorum competit substantiae, secundum accidenti.”

<sup>238</sup> Cf. *quid.* 2(3) (III 100): “When it is said here that the quiddity is an intrinsic principle, extrinsic causes are excluded, namely the efficient and final and material, from which is brought about generation in things which go forth into existence through generation from some determinate principle of material generation...” – “Quod autem hic dicitur, quod quiditas est principium intrinsecum, excluduntur causae extrinsecae, scilicet efficiens et finis et materia, ex qua fit generatio in rebus, quae exeunt in esse per generationem ex determinato aliquo principio generationis materiali...”

accidents are beings with a real positive nature, at the same time they are still fundamentally ‘closer to nothing’ than the beings which are substances.

#### 4.1.3 The essential analogy of accidents to substance

For Dietrich another way of expressing this essential ordination of accidents towards substances is to say that an accident is a being by analogy, or attribution, to substance, that is, an accident is a being just in that it is an attribute or disposition of what is truly a being; and, Dietrich adds, “this is its essence.”<sup>239</sup> Dietrich insists that it is impossible to identify any prior essence of an accident, any “absolute essence in itself,” of which we could subsequently say, further, that it is fitting for this prior essence, that it be the disposition of a substance – this always already pertains to the essence of an accident as such.<sup>240</sup>

It seems that with this claim Dietrich aims to reject Thomas’s redefinition of an accident, such that the true description of an accident is best expressed by saying that “it is suitable (*competit*) for the quiddity or essence of an accident [i.e., considered in itself, ‘absolutely’]

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<sup>239</sup> *DA* 10(2) (III 66): “Accordingly, an accident is called ‘being’ by attribution to a truly being (*vere ens*), which is a substance, since it [the accident] is naught but a certain disposition of a true being, which is a substance; and this is its essence” - “Secundum hoc etiam accidens dicitur ens per attributionem ad vere ens, quod est substantia, quia ipsum non est nisi quaedam dispositio veri entis, quod est substantia: et hoc est essentia eius.”

<sup>240</sup> *DA* 10(2) (III 66): “Thus, [an accident] is not called *a being through attribution to a substance* from something that is accidental to that accident, because of its inherence in a substance, as it were – as if it had another absolute essence in itself, not dependent on a substance according to the notion of essence, for which essence of accident it was *fitting (competat) after the fact (posterius)*, as it were, both in the order of nature and the order of understanding, to be the disposition of a substance. But, as was said, being the disposition of a substance is its *essence*, and accordingly an accident is called a being through attribution to what is truly a being, which is a substance.” -- “Unde non dicitur *ens per attributionem ad substantiam* per aliquid accidentale ipsi accidenti, quasi propter inhaerentiam eius ad substantiam, tamquam ipsum habeat alias essentiam absolutam in se non dependentem a substantia secundum rationem essentiae, cui essentiae accidentis quasi posterius natura et intellectu competit esse dispositionem substantiae, sed, ut dictum est esse dispositionem substantiae est eius essentia, et secundum hoc accidens dicitur ens per attributionem ad vere ens, quod est substantia.” Cf. *De origine* 1(25) (III 144); 2(21) (III 149).

to have being in a subject.”<sup>241</sup> On the contrary, Dietrich argues, we must recognize the proper essentiality of the attribution of accidents, as such, to substance. On Dietrich’s reading, that the very essence of accidental being is being-(only)-by-attribution is borne out by philosophical authority: it is just what Aristotle teaches in the beginning of *Metaphysics* book VII, that is, “that accidents are beings just in that they are of true being, which is substance”<sup>242</sup>; and in *Metaphysics* book IV Aristotle also makes it clear that his characterization of accidents – their division from and analogy towards substance – relates to a primary division of being as such and concerns their essence.<sup>243</sup>

#### 4.1.4 The relation or inclination of accidents to substance

Dietrich also considers the related, more specific possibility – which he characterizes as a ‘cavilling objection’ (*cavillatio*) – that the basic analogical character of the essence of an accident might belong to an accident in virtue of “a certain essential relation, as if in virtue of a certain inclination towards substance, by which it [i.e., the accident considered absolutely, in itself] is inclined through its essence towards inhering in substance.”<sup>244</sup> In regard to this possibility, Dietrich points out that an essence or quiddity cannot consist in a relation or inclination of this kind, since the relation or inclination so conceived would follow from the accident’s essence or quiddity, rather than being identifiable with it. An

<sup>241</sup> *ST* III.77.1 ad 2. Alternately, cf. *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 2, where Thomas says that the true description of an accident is “a thing to whose nature *is owed (debetur)* being in another.”

<sup>242</sup> *DA* 10(3) (III 66): “...accidentia eo sunt entia, quo sunt entis veri, quod est substantia.” Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 1, 1028a18-20: “For the others are called beings by being of such a being [the substance], some quantities, some qualities, others affections, and others some other such thing.” – “*ta d’ alla legetai onta tō tou houtōs ontos, ta men posotētes einai, ta de poiōtētes, ta de pathē, ta de allo ti toiouton.*”

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV.1, 1003a21: “There is a science which studies being qua being and those things which belong to it *per se/secundum se.*” – “*Estin episteme tis hē theōrei to on hē on kai ta toutō huparchonta kath’ hauto.*” Cf. *Metaphysics* IV.2, 1003b4-1003b7: Aristotle explains that some things are called beings because they are *substances*, and some are called beings because they belong to one of the nine accidental *determinations of substance.*

<sup>244</sup> Cf. *DA* 16(3) (III 75): “*analogia accidentis ad substantiam, qua dicitur ens, attendatur in accidente penes aliquem respectum essentialem, quasi per quandam inclinationem ad substantiam, quo per essentiam suam inclinatur ad inhaerendum substantiae.*”

essence or quiddity must be prior to its relations or inclinations, since it is the intrinsic essences of things which serve as the fundamentals (the *relata*) of any relation and which ground their inclinations.<sup>245</sup>

Dietrich tries to illustrate this point through a comparison to material forms, prime matter, and the parts in the whole. He points out that these too have “inclinations or relations through their essences”; but nonetheless, the essences of these things do not consist in or follow from these inclinations or relations; rather the inclinations or relations follow from the essences.<sup>246</sup>

Dietrich’s point again seems to be that, like accidents, these inherently incomplete substantial parts must be defined essentially as a function of the whole substance. Accordingly, they have no absolute essence (*secundum se et absolute*). Taking the essence of a nose, as an example of a part of a whole, a nose’s essence does not somehow derive from a relation which the nose, taken first in itself, bears towards the whole body; rather it is the incompleteness of the nose’s own essence (considered in itself) which entails the necessary relation of the nose to the whole (by which whole the nose’s own incomplete essence is constituted). Prime matter, also, does not take its essence from its inclination or relation to material form; rather from the fact that prime matter is what it is – that is, a constituent of a material substance – it necessarily has a non-absolute essence, which, as such, has a

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<sup>245</sup> *DA* 16(4) (III 75): “Relations do not give an essence or quiddity to their fundamentals, but rather the converse, such relations inhere by reason of the essence and quiddity of the fundament.” – “Respectus enim non dant essentiam nec quiditatem suis fundamentis, sed potius e converso, ratione essentiae et quiditatis fundamenti insunt tales respectus.”

<sup>246</sup> *DA* 16(4) (III 75): “This is clear in the cases of material forms, and prime matter, and the parts of a whole, which indeed have such inclinations or relations through their essences; but nonetheless, their *quiddity* does not *consist* in this, nor *from such relations* are they what they are by essence according to the nature of their quiddity, but rather *from the fact that they are such by essence*, they have such inclinations and relations.” – “Quod patet in formis materialibus et materia prima et partibus totius, quae quidem habent per suas essentias tales inclinationes seu respectus; non tamen in hoc consistit *quiditas* eorum, nec ex talibus respectibus sunt id, quod sunt per essentiam secundum rationem suae quiditatis, sed potius eo, quod sunt talia per essentiam, habent tales inclinationes et respectus.”

necessary ‘inclination’ or relation towards material form. Accordingly prime matter has no independent essence and cannot exist independently.<sup>247</sup> And similar reasoning applies, Dietrich argues, to the relation or inclination of accidents towards substances: The essence and quiddity of an accident cannot first consist in its relation or inclination towards inherence in a substance; instead an accident’s own non-absolute essence and quiddity – its being the disposition of something that it is not, of a substance – essentially implies the accident’s inclination towards inherence in a substance. (We might say that the inclination is not part of the essence of an accident, but is a property flowing from the essence.) Thus, since an inclination, as such, is a mode or disposition of an essence, rather than itself a true essence, an essence or quiddity cannot be primitively defined in terms of such an inclination; and accordingly the essence or quiddity of accidents cannot be properly defined in such a way.<sup>248</sup>

#### **4.1.5 The quiddities and definitions of substances vs. accidents**

As mentioned already,<sup>249</sup> for Dietrich the definitions of non-substances are from addition (*ex additione*), “since there enters into their definitions a thing of another nature, namely a substance, without which none of them can truly and properly be defined”<sup>250</sup>; and since what a definition is supposed to signify is strictly the thing’s own form, its own quiddity,<sup>251</sup> it

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<sup>247</sup> As we saw above (ch.2, §2.1), Thomas would agree with this conclusion regarding prime matter.

<sup>248</sup> We should keep in mind here that this definition ‘by inclination’ likely serves for Dietrich as a gloss on Thomas’s determination of the essence or quiddity of accidents in terms of a ‘suitability’ (quasi-) definition. Cf. above, ch. 3, §4.1.3.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. above, §2.2.

<sup>250</sup> *DA* 11(2) (III 68): “Definitiones autem aliorum generum sunt ex additione, quia ingreditur definitiones eorum res alterius naturae, scilicet substantia, sine qua nullum eorum definiri potest vere et proprie, ut dicit.” Cf. *Metaphysics* VII, 1031a15-24. Cf. the discussion in the preceding chapter of St. Thomas’ *Quodl.* IX.3, where Thomas makes a similar point.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. *DA* 12(2) (III 68): “the quiddity in composite things, according to the Philosopher [in *Metaphysics* VII], is the form, which the definition signifies; but although the definition signifies the form alone, nonetheless it defines the whole composite.”

follows that only in a qualified sense (*secundum quid*) do accidents have quiddities and definitions. Only substances truly and properly have quiddities and definitions.<sup>252</sup>

This analysis follows, Dietrich argues, from the proper notion of a quiddity, which is shorthand for ‘that which it was to be’ (*quod quid erat esse* – Aristotle’s *to ti ên einai*).<sup>253</sup>

According to Dietrich,

a quiddity is that by which a thing is a ‘what’ (*quid*), in virtue of some formal act formally giving the thing an essence (*essentiantis rem*), by which the thing is a being and one through itself, with the removal of all accidentality between the quiddity and that of which it is the quiddity, and between the parts of the quiddity itself, which are the parts of the form from which the definition is established; all of these are essentially one and identical and a kind of whole.<sup>254</sup>

For example, the quiddity rational animal is essentially one and identical to the thing, man, whose quiddity it is, and the parts of the form, rational and animal, are essentially joined to form a single essence, according to which a thing (a man) primarily has its real being and unity.

Accidents, on the other hand, have no such real quiddity, with parts that are essentially one, and by which is constituted a whole that is essentially one. As Aristotle explains (in one of the most humorous passages of the *Metaphysics*), we can give ‘white man’ the name ‘cloak’ and then ask about the essence (or quiddity) and definition of ‘cloak’; but ‘cloak’ will not thereby designate a primary type of individual, a whole that is essentially one, so we

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<sup>252</sup> Cf. *DA* 11(2) (III 68).

<sup>253</sup> Cf. *DA* 12(2) (III 69). Dietrich’s most detailed exposition of the concept of a *quiddity* is found, as the title would suggest, in his treatise *De quidditatibus entium*.

<sup>254</sup> *DA* 12(4) (III 69): “quiditas est id, quo res est quid secundum rationem alicuius actus formalis formaliter essentiantis rem, quo res per se sit ens et unum, remota omni accidentalitate inter quiditatem et id, cuius est quiditas, et inter partes ipsius quiditatis, quae sunt partes formae, ex quibus constat definitio; quae omnia sunt unum et idem et totum quoddam essentialiter.”

cannot speak of its having an essence, or quiddity, or a definition, at least not in the usual, primary sense.<sup>255</sup>

All the same, accidents do have a kind of quiddity proper to them. We do ask in regard to accidents, and not just in regard to substances, what is it? – *quid est?* – and we thus ask about the quiddities of accidents. But we inquire about these, Dietrich says, only in a ‘logical’ way (*modo logico*), that is, by means of logical or dialectical definitions,<sup>256</sup> according to a kind of conventionality (*famositatem*) in our ways of speaking,<sup>257</sup> that is, according to generally accepted opinions about things.<sup>258</sup> And he explains that we make such determinations in two ways: in terms of second intentions and in terms of first intentions<sup>259</sup>:

### ***First logical mode of quiddity***

Dietrich begins with the second intentional determination of the logical quiddities of things,<sup>260</sup> which is a determination deriving primarily from our mode of understanding things, the ordering of our concepts, as opposed to from the natures of the things themselves. Thus we can determine what an accident is in terms of its ordering in second intentional categories: by genus, species, and difference.<sup>261</sup> For example, if we ask what whiteness is, Dietrich says, we can respond by giving its genus – it is a color – or by defining it as a

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<sup>255</sup> Cf. *Met.* VII.4, 1029b25 ff.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. *DA* 12(5) (III 69).

<sup>257</sup> Cf. *DA* 12(6) (III 70); 13(2) (III 71).

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Topics* I.1.

<sup>259</sup> This distinction between inquiries into *real* being – esp. metaphysical inquiry into *per se* being – and merely logical inquiries, wherein a *unified* conceptual framework is imposed upon essentially *different* beings, is one of Dietrich’s major concerns. Cf. Flasch 2007, p. 455: “To sharply demarcate metaphysical investigations from the merely logical consideration of things – this aim forms a consistent theme in Dietrich’s thought, from *De origine* on.” – “Metaphysische Untersuchungen schroff abzugrenzen von der bloß logischen Betrachtung der Dinge, dies bildet ein durchgängiges Motiv in Dietrichs Denken, von *De origine* an.”

<sup>260</sup> Cf. *DA* 12(6)-(7) (III 70). See also *De quidditatibus entium*, ch. 4-6 (III 103-108).

<sup>261</sup> Obviously, as Dietrich points out, we can also make such a determination of what a *substance* is; cf. *DA* 12(7) (III 70).

species in terms of its proper genus and difference – it is the color that is dissociative for vision.<sup>262</sup>

### ***Second logical mode of quiddity***

The first intentional determination of the quiddity of a thing, on the other hand, is a determination deriving primarily from the being of the thing in reality, as opposed to its ordering in our understanding. Such a determination of the (logical) quiddity of accidents involves considering them as real dispositions of substance. In this case, when we ask, ‘what is it?’ our question has the same form of generality as when we are asking about an essence, but our response, Dietrich says, must be in terms of a determinate mode of an essence. Thus, for example, if we ask about the quiddity of color – what color is – we can respond that it is the boundary of the transparent (=disposition or mode) in a terminated body (=substance or essence).<sup>263</sup> While the quiddity of a substance is identical to the particular substance of which it is the quiddity, an accident’s quiddity – its most formal principle,<sup>264</sup> that which most confers formal actuality upon it – is not simply identical to that accident. Accordingly, the more formal part of its (‘logical’) quiddity (that is, its ‘logical’ difference<sup>265</sup>) is expressed

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<sup>262</sup> Cf. *DA* 12(6) (III 10) (cf. Aristotle, *Topics* III.5, 119a28-31). In *De quidditatibus entium* Dietrich tells us that these quiddities should be understood as *proportionally* similar to first-intentional quiddities (cf. *quid.* 4(4) (III 104)).

<sup>263</sup> Cf. *DA* 13(1) (III 71): “color est extremitas perspicui in corpore terminato.” Cf. Aristotle, *De sensu et sensato*, 3, 439b11-12 (tr. Hett): “Hence color will be the limit of the transparent in a defined body.” Also, Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia De sensu et sensato*, tr. 1, l. 6, n. 17: “color est extremitas perspicui in corpore determinato.”

<sup>264</sup> Cf. *DA* 15(4) (III 74): “principium maxime formale.” Cf. *De quidditatibus entium* 13(3): “In the constitution of accidents in their real natural being, both according to the nature of being and according to order of discovering and knowing, substance is the most formal principal.” – “In constitutione autem accidentium in suo esse naturali reali et secundum rationem essendi et secundum rationem notificandi seu innotescendi formalissimum principium est substantia.”

<sup>265</sup> Cf. *De quidditatibus entium* 13(3) (III 118): “The essence of an accident is that it be the disposition of a substance, as stated. Whence in the definition of an accident we posit the definition of the substance, or the very substance, in the place of the difference – just as if ‘snubness’ is defined, it is said to be concavity *of the nose*.” – “Essentia enim accidentis est, ut sit dispositio substantiae, ut dictum est. Unde in definitione accidentis ponitur definitio substantiae vel ipsa substantia loco differentiae, ut, si definiatur simitas, dicetur, quod est concavitas nasi.”

obliquely (*in obliquo*): in a terminated body; while only its ‘material’ part is expressed directly (*in recto*): the boundary of the transparent.<sup>266</sup> Dietrich notes that in an expression like ‘white man,’ white and man are both directly signified, and both equally primarily. But if we consider ‘the white’ (*album* – i.e., ‘the white thing’) by itself (*per se*), it still signifies both, but signifies the disposition (whiteness) directly, and its subject – which, again, is that by which it has actual being and unity – indirectly (i.e., implicitly). As to the thing signified, in the case of a white man, both ‘(the) white’ and ‘(the) white man’ will have the ‘same’ referent (namely, the white man) – except that ‘(the) white’ leaves this referent unspecified, while still implying it in general. Thus, white belongs *per se* to some subject or other, but it does not belong to its particular subject *per se*. In other words, it is *per se* true of an accident (of nature) that it could also not belong to whichever particular subject it happens to belong to (that is, the subject could actually exist, without actualizing the disposition which a given accident is); but the very notion of an ‘accident’ implies that it must belong to some subject or other.<sup>267</sup>

Dietrich also compares accidents and *per se* passions (that is, ‘accidents’ which refer *per se* to a particular subject),<sup>268</sup> and makes a similar point. Using Aristotle’s example of snubness (in Latin, *simitas*) – a word specifically designating a particular shape of nose – Dietrich points out that snubness is a species of the genus concavity, the generality of which is contracted by the addition (*additio*) of nose, which is the (determinate) subject to which snubness belongs *per se*. Concavity of the nose and white man are similar in that each involves the contraction of a general quality (concavity or whiteness) by its respective subject (nose or man); except that unlike the concavity involved in ‘snubness’ (which is *per*

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<sup>266</sup> Cf. *DA* 13(7) (III 72).

<sup>267</sup> Cf. *DA* 13(8) (III 72).

<sup>268</sup> See *DA* 15(4) (III 74).

*se* contracted by nose, as its subject), the white in ‘white man’ is contracted, or formally specified, by its subject only accidentally.<sup>269</sup> It is clear for an accident like whiteness, then, that what the accident is, is determined by its subject, but what its subject is, is not determined by what the accident is.

It follows, Dietrich explains, that accidents lack unity both as they are signified and in reality: First, the concept signifying an accident’s ‘what-it-is’ lacks unity because it always implies a substance. If it is nonetheless true, as Aristotle says in the *Categories*, that the name of an accident, say ‘whiteness,’ signifies only the quality,<sup>270</sup> this, Dietrich explains, is just because according to its genus or species (i.e., its second intentional ordering) its signification is absolutely *sui generis*, such that the signification (or sense) of any one of the categories excludes all of the others. Nonetheless, it should be clear that for any of the nine genera of accidents, according to its real (first intentional) essence *qua* natural accident, substance is necessarily included in the signification of its name. Indeed, the oblique reference to substance contained in the quasi-definition and quiddity of an accident is what most makes known its essential nature,<sup>271</sup> its essential being *as* the mode or disposition of a substance.

Similarly, in reality (*in re*) an accident does not possess unity *per se* and essentially, since it necessarily pertains to a real subject, of which it is a disposition. It thus forms, together

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<sup>269</sup> Cf. DA 15(4) (III 74).

<sup>270</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Categories*, 5, 3b19.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. DA 15(3) (III 73): the subject or substance is “that which in the constitution of any accident, and in making it known in terms of what it is, is more formal and consequently contributes more to making known its essence; [accordingly] it is and is called the quiddity of such an accident” - “quod in constitutione accidentis cuiuscumque et in ipsius notificatione in eo, quod quid est, formalius est et per consequens magis notificativum essentiae eius, *quiditas* accidentis talis et sit et vocetur.”

with its subject, a kind of aggregate, as opposed to an essential unity,<sup>272</sup> and it is in this particular character that its essential accidentality consists.<sup>273</sup> Accidentality, then, essentially implies a kind of mitigated unity or non-unity, and accordingly a kind of non-being, or rather, non-true-being,<sup>274</sup> which is why an accident like white, in order to actually exist, depends upon some true being, a substance, such as a white man, to confer being and unity upon it, in a way similar to that in which a man's body depends upon his soul.<sup>275</sup> Accidents, then, are left with a quiddity according to a 'diminished notion' (*ratione diminuta*)<sup>276</sup> and they have their quiddities only proportionally to substances.<sup>277</sup>

### ***Third logical mode of quiddity***

Dietrich adds that there is also a third way – which evidently is closely related to the second – in which an accident can be said to have a quiddity according to a logical mode: it is said to have a quiddity “because it is a disposition of that which truly and unqualifiedly has a quiddity, a substance, just as it is also called a being (*ens*), since it is the disposition of

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<sup>272</sup> In *De quidditatibus entium* ch. 6 Dietrich explains that in Platonic terms a substance like *man* is also a kind of aggregate, or *simul totum* (Plato's *synolon*), of *species* and *individual*, where these are respectively *form* and *matter* or *subject*. But such determinations are *second-intentional*.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. *DA* 13(6) (III 72).

<sup>274</sup> Again, cf. Aristotle's comparison of quality to *not-being* (*to mê on*), which is also said (with qualification) *to be* (*Metaphysics*, VII, 4, 1030a17-32).

<sup>275</sup> Dietrich holds that the quiddity of a man is just his soul (his substantial form) (cf. *quid.* 8(3) (III 111)), and he holds that the first-intentional (pseudo-) quiddity of an accident, wondrous (*mirabile*) though it may sound, is substance; cf. *int.* III 16(4) (I 189); *DA* 15(3) (III 73); *quid.* 13(3) (III 118): “substance holds the place of quiddity in accidents, just as substantial form does in substances” - “substantia tenet locum quiditatis in accidentibus sicut forma substantialis in substantiis”). Accordingly, substance is the ‘soul’ of an accident (without which it ceases to be).

<sup>276</sup> Cf. *DA* 15(3) (III 73).

<sup>277</sup> Cf. *DA* 15(3) (III 73): “...habent eam [i.e., quiditatem] proportionaliter substantiis...” The fourteenth-century Dominican Nicholas of Strasburg agrees with Dietrich that accidents are comparable to substances by an analogy of *proportion*, but denies that they relate by a strict analogy of *attribution* (cf. above, discussion of *DA* 10; cf. also *DA* 16(1) (III 75)). Nicholas argues that an analogy of *proportion* towards substance – as opposed to *attribution* – does not imply the absolute impossibility of separation from substance. Cf. Imbach 1986.

a true being (*dispositio veri entis*), a substance.”<sup>278</sup> So presumably we could say that just as an accident is an *ens entis* – the (accidental) being of a (substantial) being – an accident’s quiddity is a *quidditatem [habens] quidditatis*: the (accidental) whatness of a [what has] (substantial) whatness.<sup>279</sup>

#### 4.2 Confirmation: an accident does not have an absolute essence or quiddity

At this point Dietrich has made his positive determination of the nature of accidents, in terms of their being and essence and quiddity and definition, according to which they differ *per se* and primarily from substance.<sup>280</sup> Next he presents a series of arguments intended to confirm that an accident cannot have an essence according to its own intelligible quiddity, apart from its essential reference to a substance. He begins with a series of arguments concerned with the essence (*essentia*) or being (*ens*) proper to accidents (*DA17*), then gives arguments focusing on the kind of quiddity or form proper to accidents (*DA 18*).

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<sup>278</sup> *DA 14(1)* (III 73): “quia ipsum est dispositio eius, quod habet vere et simpliciter quidditatem, quod est substantia, sicut etiam dicitur ens, quia est dispositio veri entis, quod est substantia.”

<sup>279</sup> For Thomas’ view we could give much the same analysis, keeping in mind, however, that in Thomas’ account the quiddity of a material substance includes not just its formal elements (the parts of the form), but also, in a certain way, its matter, since matter is a necessary component of such a substance insofar as it actually *is*, and a definition indicating *what is* a thing (*quid est*) combines precisely those elements which constitute the thing-defined in *being*. Cf. *De ente et essentia*, c. 2. Insofar as the formal element of a quiddity is a substantial form, however, Thomas agrees that this kind of quiddity first confers being upon a thing (generates it), while accidental forms are secondary, conferring some additional form (*esse superadditum*) upon an already-substantially-constituted being (the ‘already’ here not necessarily implying a priority in terms of temporal succession); cf. *Quodl.* IX.2.2 co.

<sup>280</sup> Cf. *DA 16(2)* (III 75).

#### 4.2.1 On the essence or being of accidents

Regarding essence, were we to suppose that from itself an accident had an essence “as a function of the intelligible nature of its own proper quiddity, apart from its attribution and analogy to substance,”<sup>281</sup> a number of (absurd) consequences would follow:

First, since this kind of complete essence is proper to substance alone – as Aristotle argues in *Metaphysics* VII – it would follow that there was no difference between accident and substance and an accident would in fact be a true, complete substance.<sup>282</sup>

Second, it would follow that either the qualified (‘diminished’) notion of being (*ens*) predicated of accidents would only be accidental to accidents, not essential<sup>283</sup> (thus leaving the essential nature of their accidentality in question); or the being predicated of them would be predicated of them *per se* and necessarily, even though not according to its analogy to substance; and so the accident’s essence would necessarily in itself constitute a ‘complete intelligible account’ (*perfecta ratio*), predicable as such of a being, i.e., as primarily designating ‘what’ a being is (*quid est*). It would follow that being (*ens*) would be predicated with equal primacy of substance and of accident.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Cf. *DA* 17(1) (III 76): “Si...haberet essentiam secundum rationem suae propriae quidditatis praeter attributionem et analogiam ad substantiam...”

<sup>282</sup> Cf. *DA* 17(1) (III 76). Cf. *quid.* 10 (5) (III 114): “Therefore, if accidents had such quiddities and essences, there would be no difference between substances and accidents, and those accidents would be, truly and unqualifiedly, substances, whether, in accordance with such essences, they were in subjects or they were separated from subjects.” - “Si ergo accidentia tales quidditates et essentias haberent, non esset differentia inter substantias et accidentia, et ipsa accidentia essent vere et simpliciter substantiae, sive secundum tales essentias essent in subiectis sive essent a subiectis separata.”

<sup>283</sup> Cf. *DA* 17(2) (III 76): “the being predicated of an accident ... would not be predicated of it *essentially*” - “ens praedicatum de accidente ... non praedicaretur de accidente per essentiam”; *quid.* 9(2) (III 112): “According to this view, then, it is not essential, but it is accidental to an accident to inhere in a subject, which is a substance, and it is accidental in defining an accident, that substance should enter into the definition of an accident.” - “Secundum hoc ergo non est essentiale, sed *accidit accidenti inesse subiecto*, quod est substantia, et accidit in definiendo accidens, ut substantia ingrediatur definitionem accidentis.”

<sup>284</sup> Cf. *DA* 17(2) (III 76).

Third, we would contradict Aristotle's determination that "accidents are beings in that they are of being."<sup>285</sup> Instead an accident's being would be through itself (*per se*), and its definition would no longer be from addition (of a substance), as Aristotle says.<sup>286</sup>

Fourth, Dietrich supposes that someone might claim that an accident having its essence according to its own absolute quiddity, apart from its attribution or analogy to a substance, would nonetheless necessarily include substance in its definition, because of its being-in (*inesse*) or inhering in substance.<sup>287</sup> This claim too must be mistaken: Either the accident's in-being or inhering in substance simply is the essence of an accident, in which case it cannot be said to have an absolute essence and a proper and complete quiddity and definition, according to and through itself;<sup>288</sup> or the accident's in-being or inhering in substance is merely an accident or a property of the accident, and as such does not, in fact, properly enter into its definition, "since a definition primarily and *per se* regards the essence of the thing according to the notion of its quiddity and not according to its accidentals."<sup>289</sup>

Finally, it would also follow that the quiddity of an accident so conceived would be "as inward and identical" (*aeque intima et eadem*) to the accident itself as the quiddity of a substance is to the substance itself, and as Dietrich has already explained, this is not the case:

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<sup>285</sup> DA 17(3) (III 76): "accidentia sunt entia in eo, quod sunt entis." Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* VII.1, 1028a18-19.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. DA 17(3) (III 76).

<sup>287</sup> Cf. DA 17(4) (III 76). As an example of such a position, the footnote to Dietrich's text (DA 17(4), note 4 (III 76)) refers us to Thomas Aquinas, *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 2: "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." We can note that Thomas does not refer here simply to 'being in a subject (substance),' but to a nature to which such being is owed.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. DA 17(5) (III 76-77).

<sup>289</sup> DA 17(6) (III 77): "cum definitio primo et per se respiciat essentiam rei secundum rationem suae quiditatis et non secundum accidentalia eius."

accidents differ from substances precisely in that they lack a perfect identity and unity in their quiddities.<sup>290</sup>

All of these arguments, Dietrich says, draw upon the most fundamental principles of the philosophers. Recalling Dietrich's Augustinian *praemunitio*, then, these are apparently matters, in Dietrich's view, which the philosophers hold "by means of the most certain reasoning or experience" – although they are rather different in character from the more straightforwardly physical kinds of things to which Augustine had referred.<sup>291</sup> Dietrich concludes that whoever states the contrary simply shows himself to be profoundly ignorant (*penitus ignorare*) regarding "the natures and proper notions of substance and of accident, and of their differences with respect to each other."<sup>292</sup>

#### 4.2.2 On the quiddity or form of accidents

When it comes to an analysis in terms of accidental quiddities, Dietrich focuses on the particularity of accidental form or quiddity, as compared to substantial form and the proper notion of quiddity.

First, if an accident (or accidental form) were a simple form with its own absolute quiddity according to itself,<sup>293</sup> then it would be no different from a substantial form; accordingly accidental forms would truly *be* substantial forms. Accordingly, just as a substantial form is formally constitutive of the being and definition of a substance, the case would be the same for accidental forms, so that by coming to or receding from a substance,

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<sup>290</sup> Cf. *DA* 17(7) (III 77).

<sup>291</sup> Cf. *DA* 7(2) (III 62); see above, Section 3.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. *DA* 17(8) (III 77): "Haec [rationes] inducta sunt ex fundamentis et sentiis philosophorum, quibus in hac parte contradicere ostendit contradicentem naturas et proprias rationes substantiae et accidentis et eorum ad invicem differentias penitus ignorare."

<sup>293</sup> St. Thomas never makes this claim about accidents, namely that they have their own absolute quiddities apart from substances, but it appears that Dietrich believes that he has shown, nonetheless, that this is in fact the position to which a thinker like Thomas must be committed, as a consequence, that is, of the claim that it is possible for an accident to exist without a subject.

an accidental form would change the substance in respect of its very being and definition.<sup>294</sup> For example, a sitting man would be sitting by definition and would not be the same being as the standing man, whose standing would also belong to him by definition.<sup>295</sup> In effect, then, the distinctions fundamental to the Aristotelian account of natural change, which allow us to account for both the reality of change as well as the preservation of identity in the midst of change (whether in virtue of matter or in virtue of substantial form), would be undermined; matter would become the only constant, and there would no longer be a principled distinction between accidental change and substantial change. It would become impossible (or possible and impossible, if one prefers) to step in the same river twice, to use the old example, since the only basis for the real identity of a changed thing would be its matter, which is in a state of constant flux.<sup>296</sup>

Next, Dietrich supposes that to the preceding argument someone might respond by maintaining that substantial and accidental forms can still be distinguished,

since the essence of a substantial form implies a certain essentiality proper to itself, by which the substance takes hold of its essence and by which it truly and unqualifiedly is a being; but the essence of an accident implies only a certain accidentality, by which a substance is only

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<sup>294</sup> Cf. *DA* 18(2) (III 78); *quid.* 11(1) (III 115): “by the change effected according to this kind of form, the changed being is changed substantially, in being and definition, since it is changed in terms of its true quiddity, if we retain the stated position.” - “transmutatione facta secundum huiusmodi formam ens transmutatum mutatur substantialiter secundum esse et definitionem, quia transmutatur secundum veram sui quidditatem dicta eorum positione retenta.”

Alternately formulated, as Dietrich argues in *De quidditatibus entium* 11(3) (III 116), the *subject* of such an accident would necessarily be a being that was by essence *in potency* (just as the proper subject of a substantial form is *matter*, not an actual substance as such); but in this case it would not be possible for an accident to inhere in any *actual substance as such*, just as this is not possible for a substantial form.

<sup>295</sup> Or in terms of Aristotle’s familiar example *white man* (cf. *Met.* VII. 4, 1029b25 ff.), such an expression would express a primary essence and have a proper definition.

<sup>296</sup> If this analysis of the problem were compelling, then Dietrich’s claim that his opponents’ view “uproots the fundamentals of nature and of science” (*DA* 22(4) (III 84)) would be perfectly understandable.

in a certain way and according to some qualification (*solum aliquo modo est et secundum quid*).<sup>297</sup>

But the question would then arise: “whence this accidentality in the essence of an accident, which it has according to itself, according to the intelligible nature (*rationem*) of its own absolute quiddity?”<sup>298</sup> On the one hand, it cannot consist in the accident’s ordering towards the subject in which it inheres,<sup>299</sup> since such ‘accidentality’ would apply equally to substantial form and its ordering towards *its* subject of inherence.<sup>300</sup> On the other hand, such ‘accidentality’ can no more inhere in the essence of an accident as a function of itself (and *not* in its ordering towards a subject),<sup>301</sup> since again, Dietrich says, this would imply that an accident would have “the essence of an absolute (i.e., complete) quiddity as a function of itself,”<sup>302</sup> which would destroy the difference between accident and substance. But again, the quiddity of an accident, including its *per se* accidentality, is not absolute; it is not “one and

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<sup>297</sup> Cf. *DA* 18(3) (III 78): “...differt de essentia formae substantialis et de essentia accidentis, quoniam essentia formae substantialis essentialitatem quandam sibi propriam importat, qua substantia capit suam essentiam et qua vere et simpliciter est ens; essentia autem accidentis solum quandam accidentalitatem importat, qua substantia solum aliquo modo est et secundum quid.”

This position seems to correspond to that of St. Thomas and in the editor’s note to Dietrich’s text we are referred to Thomas’ *ST I.77.6 co.*: “I respond: it must be said that substantial and accidental form are in part the same and in part differ. They are the same in that each is an act, and that in accordance with each something is in act in a certain way. But they differ in two ways. First, because substantial form makes [a thing] to be absolutely, and its subject is a being in potency alone. But an accidental form does not make [a thing] to be absolutely, but to be such, or so much, or as bearing itself in a certain way, for its subject is a being in act. Whence it is clear that actuality is found by priority in substantial form, rather than in its subject, and since what is first is the cause in any genus, substantial form causes being-in-act in its subject.”

<sup>298</sup> *DA* 18(4) (III 78): “...unde sit ista accidentalitas in essentia accidentis, quam habet secundum se secundum rationem suae absolutae quiditatis.” We can note that Dietrich’s formulation here of what ‘they’ say is not an entirely accurate reflection of the language in the Thomistic passage quoted in the preceding footnote.

<sup>299</sup> *DA* 18(4) (III 78): “...in ordine ad subiectum, cui inhaeret...”

<sup>300</sup> Cf. *DA* 9(3) (III 65); above, section 4.1. The obvious response for Thomas here would be to argue that the respective subjects towards which substantial and accidental forms are ordered are equivocal in nature.

<sup>301</sup> Cf. *DA* 18(4) (III 78): “...secundum se, non in ordine ad subiectum...”

<sup>302</sup> Cf. *DA* 18(4) (III 78): “...essentiam absolutae quiditatis secundum se...”

being (*unum et ens*) through itself and essentially,” and consequently, unlike a substance, no accident is “truly a being through itself.”<sup>303</sup>

If an accident had its own complete quiddity it would also follow, Dietrich argues, that an accident, by its essence, would be an intellect in act.<sup>304</sup> To begin with, an accidental form cannot come to belong to something substantially, for the reasons already given. It would thus have to come to its subject accidentally, that is, in such a way that it does not come to belong to – it is not intimated into (*non intimatur*) – the essence of the thing, but remains external to the thing’s intrinsic beingness, while still being complete in itself (as is the case, in a certain way, for the human intellect in respect to the human body). Such an accident would thus necessarily constitute a ‘separated something’ (*quid separatum*). It would be a simple whole without parts in its essence, and thus would be “present to its whole self, and by its whole self would essentially penetrate its whole self”<sup>305</sup> – which manner of being is precisely what essentially constitutes an intellect in act. And again, this kind of absolute simple form would also essentially (not accidentally) modify whatever it informed,<sup>306</sup> just as the human intellect does.<sup>307</sup> But clearly accidents are not like this.

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<sup>303</sup> Cf. *DA* 18(4) (III 78): “in such an *essence of an absolute quiddity according to itself* there can occur no accidentality, since the whole, whatever is in it, is one and being through itself and essentially, and consequently is truly a being through itself – which holds true of substance” - “in tali essentia absolutae quiditatis secundum se nulla potest cadere accidentalitas, cum totum, quicquid est in ea, sit unum et ens per se et essentialiter et per consequens vere ens per se, quod convenit substantiae.”

<sup>304</sup> Cf. *DA* 18(6) (III 79). Thomas addresses a similar objection to his view; cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 arg. 4: “Further, every form separate from matter is an intellect in act, as is proven by the philosophers. But if accidents are here without a subject, they will be certain forms without matter: for they do not have a material part of their own. Therefore they will be intellects in act, which is seen to be false.” - “Praeterea, omnis forma separata a materia est intellectus in actu, ut a philosophis probatur. Sed si accidentia sunt hic sine subjecto, erunt quaedam formae sine materia: non enim habent materiam partem sui. Ergo erunt intellectus in actu, quod falsum apparet.”

<sup>305</sup> Cf. *DA* 18(6) (III 79): “ipsum totum sibi ipsi toti praesens est et se toto se totum penetrat essentialiter.”

<sup>306</sup> Cf. *DA* 18(7) (III 79).

<sup>307</sup> Cf. *De visione beatifica* 1.1: “The agent intellect as substance”; e.g., 1.1.1(6) (I 16): “that which by its nature is formally the image of God in us [namely, the agent intellect] is a substance.” For Dietrich’s account of how the agent intellect is the *essential cause* of the substance of the soul, see *De intellectu et intelligibili* II.2-12 (I 147-155).

Lastly, Dietrich explains the impossibility of assigning an absolute quiddity to accidents with reference to the basic constitution of natural things in terms of their proper operations.<sup>308</sup> An accident with an absolute essence and quiddity according to itself would necessarily have some operation proper to itself. It would thus have to effectively elicit action (acting and being acted upon) in the way proper to substances, that is, on the one hand, insofar as it is a complete substance (like a man or a stone), and on the other, insofar as it is substantially the principle of acting, that is, the substantial form (e.g., the soul of a man or the form of a stone). But substance and substantial form are identical, the former acting, the latter principally eliciting such action, and each is proper to substance alone.<sup>309</sup> An accident, in contrast, does not effectively elicit action in this way, but is instead a “certain principle or ground of acting (*principium seu ratio agendi*) of that which, unqualifiedly and truly, effectively elicits action, namely, the substance.”<sup>310</sup> Citing Aristotle’s *De sensu et sensato*, Dietrich explains that substances like fire and water effectively elicit action, but “not simply as fire and water, but as hot and cold.”<sup>311</sup> In terms of proper operation and action, then, accidents are active, but essentially related to substances as that by which a substance effects some external action (*quo agit*). An accident with an absolute quiddity and essence, however, as such, could not be this kind of merely instrumental principle of action for a substance, since instead it would itself effectively elicit

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<sup>308</sup> Cf. *DA* 8 (III 63-64); above, section 4.1.1. Dietrich reiterates that “every being is for the sake of its operation, otherwise it would be in vain in nature, according to the Philosopher” (*DA* 18(8) (III 79)).

<sup>309</sup> Cf. *DA* 18(8) (III 79).

<sup>310</sup> Cf. *DA* 18(9) (III 80).

<sup>311</sup> *DA* 18(9) (III 80): “ignis et aqua et similia non agunt in eo, quod ignis et aqua, sed in eo, quod calidum vel frigidum.” Cf. Aristotle, *De sensu et sensato*, 4, 441b8-15 (tr. Beare): “For, like all things else, the Moist, by nature's law, is affected only by its contrary; and this contrary is the Dry. Thus we see why the Moist is affected by Fire, which as a natural substance, is dry. Heat is, however, the essential property of Fire, as Dryness is of Earth, according to what has been said in our treatise on the elements. Fire and Earth, therefore, taken absolutely as such, have no natural power to affect, or be affected by, one another; nor have any other pair of substances. Any two things can affect, or be affected by, one another only so far as contrariety to the other resides in either of them.”

its own action, as a function of its own proper operation – or be in vain in nature.<sup>312</sup> To illustrate in terms of a couple of Dietrich’s examples, heating would somehow be produced simply from hotness, rather than from a hot substance (like fire), and it seems that a stone wouldn’t be drawn towards the centre of the earth by *its* gravity, but somehow gravity itself would have the tendency of being thus drawn.<sup>313</sup> If things like heat and gravity (and shape and color and taste, etc.) were assigned this kind of independent status, if accidental quiddities were essentially, intrinsically complete, like substantial quiddities, then presumably it would be difficult to understand how they could also be essentially *of* substance, that by which substances act, and in general the intelligibility of accidental unity (where a unity between substances and ontologically-independent accidents was implied) would become problematic.<sup>314</sup>

#### 4.3 The impossibility of separate accidents

With all these arguments in defense of his determination of the essential natures of substances and accidents in hand, Dietrich is ready to address the question which he set out to answer at the beginning of his treatise: “whether an accident, by the action of any power whatsoever, can exist without a subject and stand fast in its essence through itself without

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<sup>312</sup> Of course Thomas would agree that separate accidents do *not* exist ‘in nature’ in the sense of *according to the order of nature* (as opposed to *the order of grace*).

Whereas Dietrich rejects the proposition that things in nature can be *in vain* – i.e., lacking proper operations or ends or purposes – as fundamentally flawed and destructive of all understanding, we should note that the more-or-less standard modern, materialist, (ostensibly) anti-teleological model of natural science is usually taken to imply just that: that everything strictly *in nature* is ‘in vain’; that nothing, in a strictly scientific account of reality, has an intrinsic purpose; that ends are merely *res rationis*, things of reason, products of our understanding, not products of nature.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. *vis.* 3.2.6(2)-(5) (I 79-80); *DA* 23(20) (III 90).

<sup>314</sup> Cf. *quid.* 11(3) (III 116): “from two actual beings, according to Boethius, is not constituted some third” - “ex duobus actu entibus secundum Boethium non constituitur aliquod tertium.” In Fabrizio Amerini’s view (cf. Amerini 2006), in the second half of the thirteenth century accidents come to be viewed by the majority of thinkers as ‘absolute beings,’ and so in general this problem of explaining the *unity* of substance and accident – rather than their *distinction* – becomes most pressing.

any support of another nature.” His answer: “unqualifiedly, with the exclusion of any distinction, no.”<sup>315</sup>

He notes, however, that there are some authors who would make a distinction before answering: As regards the existence of accidents according to nature (*secundum naturam*), they would say this existing without a subject of another nature is indeed impossible.<sup>316</sup> As regards what is supernaturally possible, however, that is, possible for God and so possible without qualification (*simpliciter*), they say that it is possible and, in fact, on occasion occurs.<sup>317</sup> And this distinction of course appears to be a straightforward attempt to proceed with due consideration for the law of non-contradiction: something cannot be A and not-A (possible and not-possible), in the same sense, at the same time, etc.; but something that is

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<sup>315</sup> Cf. *DA* 19(1) (III 80): “utrum accidens quacumque virtute hoc agente possit esse sine subiecto et in sua essentia per se stare absque omni fulcimento alterius naturae, respondendum simpliciter absque omni distinctione, quod non.”

<sup>316</sup> Cf., e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *In Physicorum* I.3 n.2: “But if it be said that [a being that is one] is an accident only and not a substance, this is altogether impossible: for an accident without a substance can in no wise be; for all accidents are said of a substance as of [their] subject, and in this consists their proper nature.” - “Si vero dicatur quod [ens unum] sit accidens tantum et non substantia, hoc est omnino impossibile: nam accidens sine substantia omnino esse non potest; omnia enim accidentia de substantia dicuntur sicut de subiecto, et in hoc ratio eorum consistit.” *Ibid.*, I.12 n.10: “In these things, then, which come to be relatively, it is clear that they are in need of a subject: for quantity and quality and the other accidents, to which it belongs to come to be relatively, cannot be without a subject; for it belongs only to substance to not be in a subject.” - “In his igitur quae fiunt secundum quid, manifestum est quod indigent subiecto: nam quantitas et qualitas et alia accidentia, quorum est fieri secundum quid, non possunt esse sine subiecto; solius enim substantiae est non esse in subiecto.” *Ibid.*, IV.3 n.8: “Nor is [place] a habit [of the thing], or some kind of accident, since parts and accidents are not separable from the thing; but place is separable.” - “Neque est [locus] etiam habitus [rei], seu quodcumque accidens: quia partes et accidentia non sunt separabilia a re; sed locus est separabilis.”

<sup>317</sup> Cf. *DA* 19(2) (III 80). This position is of course, more or less, that of St. Thomas, although it would also be possible, in a given context, to call what is *naturally* possible, possible *simpliciter* (possible simply, without qualification), and what is only *supernaturally* possible, possible *secundum quid* (possible according to a particular qualification). To make such a distinction represents an intuitively quite obvious position, and is of course not exclusive to Thomas. Cf., e.g., Bonaventure, *Liber IV Sententiarum*, dist. 12, pars I, art. 1, q. 1: “although it always actually inheres according to nature, nevertheless this *follows upon* the essence [implied: and ‘essence’ need not be considered *only* ‘according to nature’]” - “quamvis semper insit actu secundum naturam, tamen sequitur essentiam”; Giles of Rome, *Theoremata de corpore Christi*, prop. 40: “Est ergo ordo naturalis, ut accidens conservetur in esse per subiectum, et non sit, nisi insit. Solus ergo ille, in quo reservatur totus ordo secundorum agentium, et qui ordinem rebus naturaliter inditum immutare potest pro suo libertatis arbitrio, et potest facere sine causa secunda, quod potest facere cum causa secunda, poterit quantitatem sine subiecto conservare.”

impossible in one context – say, relative to one kind of causal agency – need not be impossible in another context – relative to a different kind of causal agency.<sup>318</sup>

Before addressing this point, however, Dietrich also mentions – as something of an aside – that certain recent writers also defend the natural separability of accidents (clearly not a Thomistic view)<sup>319</sup>; his ultimate aim, however, is precisely to show that not just *secundum naturam*, but without qualification and apart from any distinction accidents cannot be without a subject. To this end, he argues that the absolute inseparability of accidents will be evident when we conduct an analysis in terms of Aristotle’s modes of *per se* predication, since “in regard to those things which are *per se* by the first and second mode *per se*, which the Philosopher lists in the *Posterior Analytics*,<sup>320</sup> it is unqualifiedly and in every way impossible that these not be-in (inhere in) those [beings] to which they belong *per se*.”<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> To accuse someone of self-contradiction while ignoring his having made this kind of distinction is to commit the *secundum quid et simpliciter* fallacy, to fail to recognize that what is true *secundum quid* (relatively) need not be true *simpliciter* (absolutely). Cf. *De fallaciis* (a work long attributed to Aquinas, though now known to be inauthentic), c. 13. In commenting on Dietrich’s position in *DA* 19(2), however, Flasch ignores this fallacy and simply approvingly notes that Dietrich, with his superior *Methodenbewußtsein*, demanded an end to “this unclear juxtaposition (*dieses unklare Nebeneinander*)” of science (*Wissenschaft*) and revelation (*Offenbarung*) (Flasch 1983, p. LVIII; see also Flasch 2007, p. 254). In the ensuing chapters we will examine whether it is Thomas’ distinction that is unclear, or rather Dietrich’s (and Flasch’s).

<sup>319</sup> This view is defended, Dietrich reports, using the example of an accidental illumination of one angel – or one ‘celestial body,’ *corpus celeste*, as Galfridus of Aspill puts it in the argument Dietrich apparently alludes to (cf. footnote to *DA* 20(1)) – by another. There need be no subject (such as air) in the space intervening between the two subjects, the argument claims, in order for the light to pass and the illumination to occur; therefore it is possible for the illumination (or light) to be without a subject, that is, while it is in transit from angel A to angel B. Dietrich rejects this as pure foolishness, since in such a case, involving angels, there is no question of a spatial distance or of a transit or flow through a medium; rather the illumination is instantaneous.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I, 4, 73a35-73b (tr. Tredennick): “I describe one thing as ‘belonging *per se*’ (καθ’ αὐτὰ) to another: (i) if it is an element in the essential nature of the other (ὅσα ὑπάρχει τε ἐν τῷ τί ἐστίν – i.e. whatever belongs to the what-it-is (*quid est*)), as, e.g., a line belongs to a triangle and a point to a line (for the line or point is a constituent of the being of the triangle or line, and is an element in the formula which describes its essence); (ii) if it is an attribute the formula of whose essence includes the subject to which the attribute itself belongs. E.g., ‘straight’ and ‘curved’ belong to *line*, ‘odd’ and ‘even,’ ‘prime’ and ‘compound,’ ‘square’ and ‘oblong’ belong to *number*; and the formula of the essence of each one of these includes line or number respectively.”

On this cross-exegetical aspect of the *De accidentibus* – Dietrich’s reading of *Metaphysics* VII together with *Posterior Analytics* I, 4 (in which he follows the example of Albert the Great, while modifying Albert’s interpretation) – see König-Pralong 2009. König-Pralong notes that the latter Aristotelian text is “materially omnipresent [in *DA*], as the supporting structure of the treatise, and as the argumentative operator” (p. 111).

<sup>321</sup> *DA* 21(1) (III 82): “simpliciter et omnibus modis est impossibile non inesse his, quibus conveniunt per se.”

And this impossibility of their being without a subject will be “rooted and grounded in the first impossible, which is implied in the first of all principles of nature, namely that it is impossible that something at once be and not be, and in the first principle of art [*artis*, i.e., knowledge], namely that of whatever [proposition] the affirmation or the negation is true, and not both at the same time.”<sup>322</sup> And obviously Dietrich presupposes here that he has successfully established that the particular propositions he defends are – in keeping with what Aristotle says in the *Posterior Analytics* – true *per se* propositions, that is, genuine “objects of scientific knowledge in the absolute sense” which, accordingly, “cannot be otherwise than [they are].”<sup>323</sup>

#### *The per se modes of predication*

Before specifically addressing the case of accidents, Dietrich begins by reminding us of the general nature of the two *per se* modes of predication, i.e., ways in which subjects and predicates are related *per se*<sup>324</sup>: In the first mode, a predicate is predicated of a subject *per se* when it is a constituent of the expression defining the subject’s essence, as, e.g., lines are *per se* constituents of a triangle. Considering predicate terms as they are combined to form an essential definition, such predicates are inseparable from each other, and they are inseparable from the thing which they define. For example, a substance like ‘man’ is inseparable from ‘rational animal’ so that if it were claimed that a man exists, but also that

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<sup>322</sup> Cf. *DA* 21(1) (III 82): “Radicatur autem et fundatur haec impossibilitas in primo impossibili...” Of course, strictly speaking, *given* that these are the first principles of all nature and all art, it necessarily and trivially follows that *whatever* is subsequently affirmed, provided that it has any claim to being true, will necessarily be ultimately rooted and grounded in these first principles, which constitute, as it were, the very form of truth. So this preamble could, strictly speaking, be applied as a preface to any attempt whatsoever to state the truth.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I. 4, 73a21-23 (tr. Tredennick): “Since the object of scientific knowledge in the absolute sense (*epistêmê haplôs*) cannot be otherwise than it is, the notion reached by demonstrative knowledge will be necessarily true.”

<sup>324</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I. 4, 73a35-b4.

no rational animal exists – or that the man who exists is a non-rational animal, or a rational non-animal – then necessarily it would be claimed that man both does and does not exist. Such a claim or state of affairs would epitomize the first of all impossibles and cannot possibly be brought about by any kind of power, natural or supernatural.<sup>325</sup>

In the second *per se* mode of predication, the predicate is again required to identify what the subject is, but the subject, in this case, is essentially a property or attribute, *of* something else, and the *per se* predicate identifies the kind of thing of which it is *per se* a property; e.g., line is *per se* predicated of curved and straight because it is the thing of which they are properties. The second mode of *per se* predication thus pertains to the *per se* connection of attributes, or ‘passions’ (formal properties), to their proper subjects. Just as Dietrich had explained earlier,<sup>326</sup> in *per se* passions defined in this way the subject, expressed indirectly (in an oblique grammatical case, expressing ‘of’-ness), essentially belongs in the definition of the passion. As he likes to put it, the definition of the subject and of the passion is the same, insofar as the subject’s definition, which states what it is (*quid est subiectum*), is found also in the definition of the passion, stating why it is (*propter quid passionis*) – stating, that is, analogously to a substance’s substantial form,<sup>327</sup> its maximally formal principle, that in (primary) virtue of which it has being and unity.<sup>328</sup> And as Dietrich showed in chapter 5 of *De accidentibus* (see above, §2.3), a subject cannot be separated from its property, nor a property from its subject. A property of some subject is necessarily posited along with that

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<sup>325</sup> Cf. *DA* 21(1)-(2) (III 82).

<sup>326</sup> Cf. *DA* 5(5) (III 60), section 2.3 above; *DA* 15(4) (III 74), section 4.1.4 above.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. *De quidditatibus entium* 13(3) (III 118): “substance holds the place of the quiddity in accidents, just as the substantial form does in substances.” – “substantia tenet locum quidditatis in accidentibus sicut forma substantialis in substantiis.”

<sup>328</sup> Cf. *DA* 15(4) (III 74).

subject, so that if we say that a subject is, but its property is not (or vice versa), then the property is posited as both being and not-being, which again is fundamentally impossible.

Next Dietrich frames his determination of the nature of accidents – accidents that are positive in nature<sup>329</sup> – in terms of these two modes: First, in terms of the first mode of *per se* predication, since the whole essence (*tota essentia*) of any accident is to be the disposition of a substance, and since they are beings only in virtue of being of true being, that is, of some substance, it follows that substance necessarily enters into the definition of an accident according to the first mode of *per se* predication.<sup>330</sup> It follows, then, as in the previous examples, that by positing an accident in being, while denying that it is the disposition of a substance – i.e., while removing its definition – we would be positing that an accident both is and is not, which is simply impossible, by virtue of any power whatsoever.

As for the second mode of *per se* predication, Dietrich claims that there are some<sup>331</sup> who argue that being in a subject (*inesse subiecto*) is accidental to accidents, not essential; further, at least by a supernatural power, a thing can be separated from its accident and

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<sup>329</sup> Cf. *DA* 21(4) (III 82): “...accidentia positiva in natura...”

<sup>330</sup> Cf. *DA* 21(4) (III 83): “In these [accidents of nature], those things which belong in their definition pertain to the first mode of *per se* predication... But then according to this, substance belongs in their definition, without which it is impossible to define any of them, as the Philosopher says in book VII, and the reason for this is that the *whole essence* of any of them is to be the *disposition of a substance*..., and they are *beings*, because they are *of a true being*, which is a substance, as he says in the beginning of book VII.” – “In his enim ea, quae cadunt in definitione eorum, pertinent ad primum modum dicendi per se... Cadit autem secundum hoc substantia in definitione eorum, sine qua impossibile est aliquid ipsorum definiri, sicut dicit Philosophus in VII, cuius ratio est, quia tota essentia cuiuslibet eorum est esse dispositionem substantiae..., et sunt entia, quia sunt entis veri, quod est substantia, ut ibi dicit in principio VII.”

<sup>331</sup> In the editor’s note here (*DA* 22(1), note 2 (III 83)) we are referred to works of Giles of Rome, Simon of Faversham, and Henry of Ghent, and we are given the following argument from Henry’s *Quodl.* X, q. 8: “If an accident did not have a *proper* being in the subject, but only the being *of the subject*, in no way would the composite be one being accidentally [that is, instead it would be one *essentially*].” – “Si enim accidens non haberet esse proprium in subiecto, sed solum esse subiecti, nullo modo compositum esset unum ens per accidens.” This argument is an interesting one against Dietrich’s position, but it is hard to see how it is the one which Dietrich is actually discussing.

posited in being without it; therefore, by the same power, a quantity or quality could be made to exist, without being in any subject.<sup>332</sup>

In response, Dietrich is happy to grant the claim that being in a subject is ‘accidental’ to quality or quantity; but only provided we understand that this is only in the broad sense in which properties are called ‘accidents’<sup>333</sup> – for example, as even and odd are ‘accidental’ to number, that is in accordance with Aristotle’s second mode of *per se* predication. This analysis accords with what Dietrich argued earlier,<sup>334</sup> namely that properties follow necessarily from the essence of the thing (since they are reducible to the thing’s principles). Thus, given that “the essence of any accident is to be a disposition of a substance,” he argues that “this is the reason stating why it is (*propter quid*) that an accident inheres in a substance, as is clear *per se*.”<sup>335</sup>

In summary, by the first mode of *per se* predication the accident is essentially defined as the disposition of a substance; and in accordance with the second mode of *per se* predication we grasp a necessary property of an accident, namely that of inhering in a substance (*inest substantiae*).<sup>336</sup> According to Dietrich, then, the notion that an accident’s being in a subject could be separated from it is as absurd as thinking that God could separate a number from its being even or odd.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Cf. DA 22(1) (III 83): “potest autem supernaturali virtute separari res et poni in esse sine suo accidente...” It is hard to see how this premise, which regards the separation of *a thing from its accidents*, could be taken to support the conclusion of the argument Dietrich presents here, which regards the separation of *accidents from a thing*. This problem is not what concerns Dietrich, however.

<sup>333</sup> See above, §2.1 on properties; §4.1.2 on the secondariness or ‘accidentality’ of an accident’s being supported by or being *in* another.

<sup>334</sup> See above, §2.3.

<sup>335</sup> DA 22(2) (III 83): “essentia enim accidentis cuiuscumque est esse dispositionem substantiae; et haec est ratio dicens propter quid accidens inest substantiae, ut per se patet.” Cf. *quid*. 12(4) (III 117-118).

<sup>336</sup> Recall Dietrich’s argument against the adequacy of the common *definition* of accidents as *being in another* (*ens in alio*) (cf. DA 9(1) (III 64-65), §4.1.2. above); this notion refers rather to a *property*.

<sup>337</sup> Cf. DA 22(2) (III 83).

#### 4.4 Refutation of Thomas' defense of separability

Dietrich concludes his treatise by giving a refutation of St. Thomas' arguments for separate accidents – i.e.: for the possible supernatural maintenance in being of accidents apart from their subject. He addresses each of the three main pillars of Thomas' defence of the separability of accidents, namely the nature of divine causality, the proper definitions of substance and accident, and the priority of quantity in grounding the other accidents.

Dietrich chooses to take these points in a different order, however: he first rejects Thomas' 'redefinition' of accidents, then he addresses Thomas' appeal to the privileged nature of divine causality, before finally rejecting any pretensions made on behalf of quantity and its ability to serve as subject for the other accidents.

##### 4.4.1. Against the (re)definition of accidents

Dietrich first aims to refute Thomas' 're-definition' of accidents.<sup>338</sup> Dietrich refers specifically to those who claim that accidents are dispositions of substance (and inhere in substance) aptitudinally (*aptitudinaliter*), in other words, not always in actuality (*non semper in actu*), at least if we consider what is supernaturally possible.<sup>339</sup> This cavilling objection (*cavillatio*), as Dietrich calls it, is rather similar to the one he addressed earlier in terms of an

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<sup>338</sup> We can recall that Thomas had claimed that it was *owed* to an accident to be in a subject (*InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 2: “[*definitio accidentis est*] *res cui debetur esse in alio*”) or that it was *fitting* for an accident to have being in a subject (*ST* III.77.1 ad 2: “[*quidditati autem sive essentiae accidentis competit habere esse in subiecto*”).

<sup>339</sup> Cf. *DA* 22(3) (III 84). The language of ‘aptitude’ here points more directly to Bonaventure, who specifically uses the term ‘aptitudo’ and speaks of an accident’s relation to a subject as being essential *secundum aptitudinem* (see Bonaventure, *In IV Sent.*, dist. 12, pars 1., art. 1, q. 1; cf. *DA* 22(3), note 1 (III 84)), but the position Dietrich is addressing, that of the non-necessity of accidents existing only by disposing (through inhering-in) a substance, is clearly also that of Thomas. Giles of Rome is another prominent figure who, following Bonaventure, speaks in terms of aptitudes, saying that an accident’s *aptitudo inhaerendi* is inseparable from it, even if, by divine intervention, it should happen to not actually inhere (see Giles of Rome, *Theoremata de corpore Christi*, prop. 41). For an account of Bonaventure’s position on ‘aptitudinal *inesse*,’ see Vijgen 2013, pp. 156-157, and for Giles’ position, *ibid.*, pp. 309-311.

accident's inclination or relation towards substance.<sup>340</sup> Here, however, Dietrich goes out of his way to scold his opponents for their utter foolishness. In his demonstration of the impossibility of separate accidents, Dietrich had claimed that his position is rooted and grounded (*radicatur et fundatur*) in the very first principles of nature and art<sup>341</sup>; now he contrasts the position of his opponents:

But this cavilling objection, the offspring of crudeness and ignorance, uproots the foundations (*eradicat fundamenta*) both of nature and of science: for it destroys the proper account of substances and accidents and their differences with respect to each other, just as has been abundantly shown in the foregoing.<sup>342</sup>

The destruction of the difference between substances and accidents entails the destruction of the foundations of nature and science, in Dietrich's view, because "substances and accidents, according to their [distinct] general rational accounts, contain the whole matter of all the sciences, as much the human, as the divine."<sup>343</sup> As he has argued, the substance-accident distinction is the first division of being *qua* being (the first notion by which anything stands

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<sup>340</sup> See *DA* 16(3)-(4) (III 75); above, §4.2.1.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. *DA* 21(1) (III 82); see above, note 163.

<sup>342</sup> *DA* 22(4) (III 84): "Sed haec cavillatoria instantia, ruditis et ignorantiae filia, eradicat fundamenta et naturae et scientiae: destruit enim propriam rationem substantiarum et accidentium et eorum ad invicem differentias, sicut supra latius ostensum est." Cf. *quid*. 10(1) (III 113): "But this position, with the intolerable falsity that it contains, destroys and annihilates the whole doctrine of the Philosopher which, regarding this matter, he hands on in *Metaphysics* VII." - "Sed ista positio cum hoc, quod intolerabilem falsitatem continet, destruit et annihilat totam doctrinam Philosophi, quam circa materiam istam tradit in VII *Metaphysicae*." For Dietrich's abundant arguments on this point, see *DA* 17-18 (III 76-80); above, §4.2.2. Certainly Thomas would agree in principle with this kind of objection. In *De substantiis separatis*, he makes a similar argument. He argues that if matter is regarded as a kind of substance in itself, so that some kind of universal, common matter is the very substance of all things, then all other forms, besides this supposed basic, universal form of matter, will effectively be related to matter as accidental (non-substantial) forms. Thomas thus argues that this position would – just as Dietrich alleges against Thomas' position – destroy the the proper account distinguishing substances from accidents. Accordingly, Thomas argues: "It removes the foundations of natural philosophy, taking away true generation and corruption from things, just as in the case of the ancient naturalists positing one material principle." – "Tollit etiam naturalis philosophiae fundamenta, auferens veram generationem et corruptionem a rebus, sicut et antiqui naturales ponentes unum materiale principium." Dietrich would agree, but thinks that this same kind of fundamental or foundational refutation in fact applies also to Thomas' doctrine of separate accidents.

<sup>343</sup> *DA* 22(4) (III 84): "substantiae et accidentia, secundum suas generales rationes continent totam materiam omnium scientiarum tam humanarum quam divinarum."

apart from nothing, which is the proper subject matter of first philosophy or metaphysics). The distinction, then, is universal and primary<sup>344</sup>: on it depends the coherence of all of Aristotle's metaphysics, his general account of being and its properties (unity and multiplicity, change, causality, identity, etc.).

Supposing the substance-accident distinction is universal and primary, however, why can it not be made in terms of an aptitude? The distinction is expressed by means of distinct definitions, and Dietrich seems to think that to adequately understand the problem with 'aptitudinal' definitions we must think about how it is that we impose definitions on things. He explains that the definitions of beings, as such – as opposed to nothings – are definitions of them insofar as they are beings in act, which act follows from the intelligible character (*ratio*) of their essence.<sup>345</sup> This is evident from the fact that a definition is a rational account (*ratio*) which is signified by a name,<sup>346</sup> together with the fact that "names are imposed on things according as they are in act,"<sup>347</sup> which is to say, "not as a function of an aptitude or as a function of a potency."<sup>348</sup> To claim otherwise – that names and corresponding definitions could be imposed on things in accordance with a mere potency or aptitude, rather than an act – would be to imply that such beings were beings only according to a potency or aptitude, and not according to act. But something that was, for example, only aptitudinally animated (or ensouled), Dietrich argues, would not be an animal in act (i.e., it would not belong to this

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<sup>344</sup> Cf. *DA* 9(5) (III 65).

<sup>345</sup> *DA* 22(4) (III 84): "the definitions of being just insofar as they are beings are definitions of them insofar as they are being according to act, according to the intelligible character of its essence." – "definitiones entium in eo, quod sunt entia, sunt definitiones eorum, in quantum sunt entia secundum actum secundum rationem suae essentiae."

<sup>346</sup> *DA* 22(4) (III 84): "Ratio enim, quam significat nomen, est definitio secundum Philosophum in IV *Metaphysicae*." (Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* IV. 7, 1012a23-24.) The definition *rational animal*, for example, is an intelligible notion (*ratio*) signified by the name 'man.'

<sup>347</sup> *DA* 22(4) (III 84): "nomina autem imposita sunt rebus, secundum quod sunt in actu, sicut dicit Commentator super VII *Metaphysicae*." Cf. *quid.* 2(2) (III 100).

<sup>348</sup> *DA* 22(4) (III 84): "non secundum aptitudinem seu secundum potentiam."

genus), and something that was aptitudinally an animal, but not actually so, could not actually be a man (i.e., it could not belong to this species).<sup>349</sup> And obviously, if, for example, we were to impose the name ‘man’ on things that were not actually animals, then the name ‘man’ would not signify the same intelligible notion (*ratio*) or have the same definition that it now does.

Granted that names are imposed on things that are in act, and according as they are in act, nonetheless it doesn’t follow that every intelligible character of a thing, by which we grasp what that thing is and which the name that we impose on the thing thus signifies, is the intelligible character of the thing without qualification.<sup>350</sup> Accordingly it seems that we cannot simply take for granted the adequacy and thus immutability of our ‘definitions’ of things. With regard to definitions in the strict, scientific sense,<sup>351</sup> however, Dietrich does argue for their strict immutability. Regarding these, he writes: “The relations of definitions and parts of definitions to definita are thus *per se* and essential that they pertain to the unchangeable rules of eternal truth, because in such relations ... are founded the considerations of the sciences as regards their unchangeable truths.”<sup>352</sup> And quoting

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<sup>349</sup> Cf. *DA* 22(4) (III 84).

<sup>350</sup> In *De visione beatifica* Dietrich invokes a principle that we might reflect on in this regard: “everything which is received in another is there according to the measure of the receiver (*omne, quod recipitur in alio, est ibi per modum recipientis*)” (see discussion, *vis.* 3.2.8.2 (I 83-85)). He cites this principle in support of his contention that the beatific vision cannot be received in virtue of the possible intellect. St. Thomas also invokes this principle in a number of contexts, and we will need to consider how each would apply the principle in the present case, namely our reception of the intelligible characters (*rationes*) of things.

<sup>351</sup> I.e., the sense indicated by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* – see above, note 164.

<sup>352</sup> *DA* 22(5) (III 84): “Habitudo enim definitionum et partium definitionum ad definita sic sunt per se et essentialia, quod pertinent ad regulas incommutabiles aeternae veritatis, quia in talibus habitudinibus definitionum et partium definitionum ad definita fundantur considerationes scientiarum quoad incommutabiles earum veritates.” For Dietrich, the whole existence of science and of intellect rides on our possessing these immutable rules of eternal truth (or eternal rules and immutable truth). Cf. *vis.* 1.3.3(11) (I 59): “This [mode], that is, *possessing the principle of its intellection and of the thing understood*, pertains universally to every created intellect, ... which mode Augustine attributes even to the possible intellect which has been produced in act, ... just as in so many places he speaks of the eternal rules and the immutable truth and similar things present to the mind, from which, as from principles of intellection... we understand whatever it is that we understand. Hence from such principles essentially consists our whole intellectuality, whether these descend immediately from God into the mind, or whether by the mediation of the agent intellect; these principles,

Augustine,<sup>353</sup> Dietrich illustrates what he means by reference to the intelligible notion of a circle, which obviously seems to be unchangeable. Dietrich further claims that such truths are unchangeable because they are grounded in God in a particular way: “Truths of this kind are unchangeable from the fact that they are grounded in the eternal unchangeable truth, which is God, as unchangeable truth according to itself and through itself.”<sup>354</sup> Dietrich doesn’t elaborate on this claim, other than by contrasting it with the other way in which God unchangeably grounds the truth of things, namely “according to that mode by which God immutably disposes or foreknows certain future contingents.”<sup>355</sup> His treatment of the latter category of truths is very brief: “either they depend on extrinsic factors, as is the case for evils, which he foreknows, or, if they are good, he preordains and disposes them, in accordance with the proposal of his will imposing beingness and order upon them.”<sup>356</sup> This latter mode of voluntary, super-natural ordering appears to be very much in line with what Thomas wants to say occurs in the case of separate accidents. However, Dietrich notes that such things, being contingent, are not “absolutely necessary and *per se* according to the

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namely eternal rules, or the immutable truth, either are the intelligible account of the thing, which the definition indicates, and the disposition of premises towards conclusions; or they are intellectually resplendent in these.” – “Hoc [*modum*] autem, id est habere suae intellectionis et rei intellectae principium, universaliter competit omni intellectui creato, ... quem modum etiam attribuit Augustinus intellectui possibili facto in actu, ... sicut in quam plurimis locis loquitur de regulis aeternis et veritate incommutabili et similibus praesentibus menti, ex quibus tamquam ex principiis intellectionis ... intelligimus, quidquid intelligimus. Unde ex talibus principiis tota intellectualitas nostra essentialiter consistit sive immediate descendentes a Deo in mentem sive mediante intellectu agente, quae principia, scilicet regulae aeternae seu incommutabilis veritas, vel sunt rei ratio, quam indicat definitio et dispositio praemissarum ad conclusiones, vel in ipsis intellectualiter resplendent.”

<sup>353</sup> *DA* 22(5) (III 84): “Whence Augustine in *De immortalitate animae*: ‘For what is so eternal as the *ratio* of a circle, or if there be anything else of this kind, so that it is incomprehensible that it could have not existed at some time or that it could not exist in the future?’” – “Unde Augustinus libro *De immortalitate animae*: ‘Quid enim tam aeternum ut circuli ratio vel si quid aliud in huiusmodi artibus nec non fuisse aliquando nec non fore comprehenditur?’”

<sup>354</sup> *DA* 22(5) (III 84-85): “Sunt autem huiusmodi veritates incommutabiles eo, quod fundantur in aeterna incommutabili veritate, quae Deus est, in quantum incommutabilis veritas secundum se et per se...”

<sup>355</sup> *DA* 22(5) (III 85): “...secundum eum modum, quo Deus incommutabiliter aliqua contingentia futura disponit vel praecognoscit.”

<sup>356</sup> *DA* 22(5) (III 85): “vel dependent ab extrinseco ut mala, quae praecognoscit, vel, si sunt bona, ipse ea praeparat et disponit secundum suae voluntatis propositum imponens eis entitatem et ordinem.”

notion proper to them,”<sup>357</sup> and accordingly they cannot be defined. Accidents, however, as Dietrich has argued, do have a *per se* definition, derived from the essential being of actual accidents (although their definition is also relative and in terms of a diminished intelligible notion<sup>358</sup>): they are dispositions of substances. Hence, any actual, existing accident, in accordance with the first mode of *per se* predication, is necessarily actually the disposition of a substance, not merely aptitudinally; and the property of inhering in a substance must actually belong to it, in accordance with the second mode of *per se* predication – if, that is, we wish to preserve intact the most fundamental categories universally grounding the intelligibility of the world for us.

#### **4.4.2. Against any appeal to the special nature of divine causality**

##### ***The correct exegesis of the Liber de causis***

Dietrich next addresses Thomas’ appeal to the *Liber de causis*. Dietrich puts the argument thus:

The primary cause has more in-flow into the effect ... of the second cause than does the second cause itself; thus when from the effect of the second cause is removed the causality of that second cause, there still remains the causality of the first cause; whence if the second cause of an accident is the subject, but God is the first cause of such an accident, then with the removal of the subject, God can still maintain the accident in its existence.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> *DA* 22(5) (III 85): “...absolute necessaria et per se secundum propria sui rationem...”

<sup>358</sup> Cf. *DA* 11(2) (III 68): “...secundum quid et ratione deminuta...” Cf. *quid.* 10(7) (III 115), where Dietrich makes it clear that ‘definition’ as applied to accidents is really not a proper use of the term: “But the definitions of accidents – if nonetheless, by an extension of the name, they can be called *definitions* – are from the addition of another nature, like the definition of *snub*, which is the concavity of *nose*.” – “Definitiones autem accidentium, si tamen extenso nomine possunt dici definitiones, sunt *ex additione* alterius naturae, scilicet substantiae, ut definitio *simi*, quae est concavitas *nasi*.”

<sup>359</sup> *DA* 23(3) (III 86): “quod causa primaria plus influit in effectum seu causatum causae secundae quam ipsa causa secunda. Unde quando a causato causae secundae removetur causalitas ipsius causae secundae, adhuc remanet causalitas causae primae; unde cum accidentis causa secunda sit subiectum, Deus autem sit talis accidentis causa prima, remoto subiecto adhuc Deus potest tenere accidens in suo esse.” Thomas refers to the

In response to this argument, Dietrich points out three defects: First, the author of the *Liber de causis* is referring (only) to causes in the same genus (for example, efficient or formal or material), since he illustrates his principle with an example in terms of only one kind of causality, namely, formal causality.<sup>360</sup> Thus he is not speaking of a case like the one Thomas refers to, where, Dietrich says, the first cause, God, is the efficient cause of the accidents, while the second cause, the substance, is the subjective or material cause.<sup>361</sup>

Second, the example, in terms of formal causality, given in the *Liber de causis*, is that, with the removal of rational from a living thing, it can retain the form of life and being, and with the removal of life it can retain the form of being. But in each case, with the removal of the more specific secondary form, what is left is not the same identical thing, whether numerically or even in species.<sup>362</sup> Thus Thomas' claim that the numerically and specifically identical accidents could remain after the removal of the causality of the substance is, on this point too, foreign to the intention of the author of the *Liber de causis*.<sup>363</sup>

And third, Dietrich points out that if some thing by its essence, according to the notion of its quiddity, intrinsically depends on some principle, then to say that a thing exists apart from

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*Liber de causis* explicitly in *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 co, *Quodlibet* IX, q. 3, and *ST* III.75.5 ad 1. Dietrich's statement reflects quite closely the first of these (cf. above, ch. 2, §2.2.1).

<sup>360</sup> A thing is being, living, and (rational) man *formally*. Cf. *Liber de causis*, prop. 1: "et nos quidem exemplificamus illud per esse et vivum et hominem."

<sup>361</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(4) (III 86): "...Deus est causa efficiens accidentis, subiectum autem est causa subiectiva seu materialis." Commenting on this argument, Vijgen observes: "But Aquinas, at least, assigns causation to the subject which is distinct from material causality. For instance, a proper accident such as the ability of human beings to laugh is caused by the essential principles of a thing." (Vijgen 2013, p. 320) It would seem worth noting that the latter claim would appear to apply just as well to Dietrich – cf. above, ch. 3, §2.1. Also, the crucial point for Dietrich would appear to be not so much that the *subject* does not exercise causation distinct from material causality, but that *God* cannot serve as the subjective or material cause of anything. (The closest God can come to this, in Christian theology, would appear to be by entering into a 'hypostatic union' or 'personal unity' with a created nature, as in the mystery of the Incarnation.)

<sup>362</sup> A dead animal, for example, is no longer an *animal* in the proper sense.

<sup>363</sup> Judging from Dietrich's own account of Christ's corporeal presence in the Eucharist, found in his later treatise *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis*, his position would seem to be that the natural accidents of the bread in fact differ in genus (*differunt genere*) from these 'same' accidents when they serve for the 'clothing over' (*supervestitionem*) of the (glorified, spiritual) substance of Christ (cf. *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis* 37(9) (II 342)).

such a principle is to fall into contradiction, just as he has already explained.<sup>364</sup> Accordingly the authority of the *Liber de causis* must not be interpreted so as to imply *so ein Unding*, and in general Thomas' attempt to associate his view with the authority of the *Liber de causis* fails.

Further, if we turn to the *De visione beatifica*, we see that Dietrich doesn't just think that Thomas' view is unsupported by the authority he cites. On the contrary, we see that Dietrich's positive reading of the philosophical authorities – in this case, Dionysius and Proclus<sup>365</sup> – seems to be that there must be, in terms of fundamental metaphysical principle, a certain 'continuity' in the ordering of causes from highest to lowest:

And according to this disposition of order, it belongs, according to Dionysius, to inferiors to be reduced to superiors through intermediates. For this it is necessary that beings located in orderings of this kind have a certain communicative confinity to each other, by which the superiors, according to what is lower in them, touch the inferiors, according to what is higher in them, so that by the ordering of the divine law the goodnesses and perfectiones of the superiors are communicated to the inferiors and the inferiors are converted to the superiors.<sup>366</sup>

It might seem to follow that the omission of a secondary (intermediate) cause would eliminate the essential 'communicative confinity' between first cause and ultimate effect, thus rendering the procession into being of the ultimate effect impossible.

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<sup>364</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(6) (III 86).

<sup>365</sup> See *vis.*, *Prooemium* (1)-(2) (I 13); 4.1(2) (I 105).

<sup>366</sup> *vis.*, *Prooemium* (2) (I 13): "Secundum hanc autem ordinis dispositionem contingit secundum Dionysium inferiora reduci in superiora per media. Ad quod necessarium est entia in huiusmodi ordinibus locata habere ad invicem quandam communicativam confinitatem, quo superiora secundum sui inferius tangant inferiora secundum sui superius, ut eo divinae legis ordine bonitates et perfectiones superiorum communicentur inferioribus et inferiora convertantur in superiora."

### ***What is possible and not possible for God***

Dietrich next addresses more directly Thomas' own view about the nature of divine causality (regardless of its relation to the claims of the *Liber de causis*). First, in the first *sed contra* of the section on the accidents of the Eucharist in his *Sentences* commentary,<sup>367</sup> in reply to the view that God cannot make accidents to be without a subject, Thomas states: "But against this is what is said in *Luke* 1:37: no word (*verbum*) shall be impossible for God."<sup>368</sup> Dietrich appears to seize upon this appeal to the authority of the scripture, which we find in Thomas' *sed contra*, rather as if it constituted the substance of Thomas' argument and dismisses it as worthless with a very simple argument: it is true that no 'word' is impossible for God, but making an accident to be without a subject is not a 'word,' at least not in the relevant sense. He points out that 'every word' (*omne verbum*) cannot be understood to mean 'everything which is signified by word or verbal sound (*per verbum vel vocem*),' for the obvious reason that "by word or by verbal sound contradictories can be signified to be true at the same time."<sup>369</sup> The relevant sense of 'word,' then, is that found in both Aristotle and Augustine, by which it signifies whatever can be truly conceived by the intellect, in other words, an 'intellectual concept,' which, as such, is always 'true,' since authentic intellection (*intellectus*) is always of what is true.<sup>370</sup> But since Dietrich believes that he has shown that an accident existing without a subject implies a contradiction, he concludes that such a notion is not a 'word' in the relevant sense, and accordingly it does not follow that it is possible for God.

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<sup>367</sup> Cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1.

<sup>368</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 s.c. 1: "Sed contra est quod dicitur *Lucae* 1, 37: non erit impossibile apud Deum omne verbum."

<sup>369</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(9) (III 87). Obviously Thomas would not dispute this general point, and in fact.

<sup>370</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(10) (III 87).

Second, Dietrich continues, it might still be objected that “God can do more than we can understand; but certain philosophers understood and posited dimensions as being separate.”<sup>371</sup> This objection, in due order, happens to mirror Thomas’ second *sed contra* from the same article in his *Sentences* commentary: “Further, God can do many more things than man is able to understand or imagine. But some philosophers posited dimensions to be without a subject, just as some posited separate mathematical objects.”<sup>372</sup> But of course, Dietrich argues, it does not follow that God can do *whatever* man can imagine, and while we can grant that “these philosophers indeed conceived (*conceperunt*) the matter thus,” nevertheless “they did not understand (*non intellexerunt*), since, as was said, intellection (*intellectus*) is always of what is true” – and of course what they conceived is not true, since it is contradictory.<sup>373</sup>

Third, Dietrich mentions an argument that seems to be Bonaventure’s, rather than Thomas’: they object, Dietrich says, that since substance and accident differ by essence, they can be separated, at least by divine power.<sup>374</sup> But again, Dietrich argues, it pertains essentially to accidents to not have an essence *per se*, but only through another (*per aliud*), and thus to have an analogy towards substance through their essence; so in such a case, where one thing is formally and essentially dependent on some other, prior thing, it is not at

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<sup>371</sup> *DA* 23(11) (III 87): “Deus potest facere plus quam possumus intelligere; philosophi autem quidam intellexerunt et posuerunt dimensiones esse separatas.”

<sup>372</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 s.c. 2: “Praeterea, potest Deus plura facere quam homo possit intelligere vel imaginari. Sed aliqui philosophi posuerunt dimensiones esse sine subjecto, sicut qui posuerunt mathematica separata. Ergo Deus potest hoc facere.” As we have seen, Thomas also appeals to the admitted *error* of these philosophers, in positing separate entities, to at least motivate the *intelligibility* of separate dimensioned quantity; cf. above, ch.2, §2.2.3 (discussion of *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 co).

<sup>373</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(11) (III 87).

<sup>374</sup> The footnote here (*DA* 23(12), note 1 (III 88)) directs us to Bonaventure’s commentary on the *Sentences*, d. 12, pars 1, a. 1, q. 1: “I respond. It must be said that through a miracle it can be brought about that accidents should be without a subject or substance. For since they differ by essence, God can, without any inconsistency, separate them through his power.” - “Respondeo. Dicendum quod per miraculum potest fieri quod accidentia sint sine subiecto sive substantia. Cum enim differunt per essentiam, potest Deus sine omni inconvenientia per virtutem suam illa separare.”

all possible to find the posterior without the prior.<sup>375</sup> We should note that the argument Dietrich objects to here seems inconsistent with Thomas' position in that the reason invoked, apparently as a sufficient condition to ground separability – “since they differ by essence” – would seem to ground the claim that all accidents are separable from a subject. Since Thomas argues that the other accidents must still be conceived as inhering – that is, in (dimensive) quantity, as if in their subject<sup>376</sup> – it seems that Thomas would not make this argument.<sup>377</sup>

Fourth, Dietrich addresses a more Thomistic claim: that “that which belongs to something according to the notion of its quiddity, God can make it so that it does not belong to it”<sup>378</sup> – almost exactly as Thomas had argued in his *Sentences* commentary.<sup>379</sup> Faced with this argument Dietrich exclaims: “but the making of this claim is worthy of much wonderment, if it should be stated by someone possessed of wisdom (*ab aliquo sapiente*).”<sup>380</sup> Apart from the apparently clear reference to Thomas' particular argument, nothing much is new here: Once again Dietrich explains the contradiction that is implied if we assert the separation of a thing (accident) from its property (inherence): the definition stating what an accident is (disposition of a substance) also states why the property which it has (inherence in a

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<sup>375</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(13) (III 88).

<sup>376</sup> Cf. *ST* III.77.2; Dietrich will address this argument shortly.

<sup>377</sup> Nicolas of Strasbourg, writing in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century in response to Dietrich's *De accidentibus*, outlines three possible views on the question of the separability of accidents in his *Summa*: all accidents are separable; none are; or some are and some are not. Nicolas argues *against* the first two views (specifically attacking Dietrich's view, that none are), and *for* the third (which is Thomas' view). Cf. Imbach 1986, pp. 361-363.

<sup>378</sup> *DA* 23(14) (III 88): “...id, quod *convenit* alicui secundum rationem suae quidditatis, potest Deus facere, quod *ei non conveniat*.”

<sup>379</sup> Dietrich eliminates Thomas' distinction between what ‘is owed’ (*debetur*) to something and what ‘belongs’ (*convenit*) to it. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 2: “But it can be that that which is owed (*debetur*) to a thing according to the notion of its quiddity should not belong (*conveniat*) to it, through the working of divine power; and thus it is clear that to make an accident to exist without a substance is not to separate a definition from what it defines.” – “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.”

<sup>380</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(14) (III 88).

substance) occurs.<sup>381</sup> Dietrich illustrates his point by appealing to his stock analogy of a triangle and its property of having three angles equal to two right angles<sup>382</sup>: if God could make an accident to be without its property of inhering in a substance, then likewise “God could bring it about that a triangle would be and would not have three angles equal to two right angles; and thus definition would be separated from definitum.”<sup>383</sup> Again, to bring about such a contradictory state of affairs does not lie within the range of God’s power.

#### **4.4.3. Against the inherence of the other accidents in quantity**

Finally, Dietrich is ready to dispose of the third principal argument Thomas offers in defense of the possible existence of accidents apart from their subject. According to Thomas, quantity and quality are first among accidents: in matter, dimensive quantity is formally individuating, and quality is the fundamental category first giving form to quantity; accordingly, in virtue of a supernatural agency, separated (dimensive) quantity can act as the subject for quality and the other accidents, just as matter acts as subject for substantial forms.<sup>384</sup> On this subject, Dietrich attacks two propositions: first, that quality and the other accidents inhere in substance by the mediation of quantity; second, that quality and the other accidents could inhere in a quantity which is separated (by supernatural power) from substance.

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<sup>381</sup> Cf. above, §4.3.

<sup>382</sup> Cf. *DA* 3(3)-(4) (III 56-57). In this example, a triangle in itself has an intrinsic quiddity (‘three-sided plane figure’), while the property (or *per se* passion) of ‘having three angles equal to two right angles’ necessarily inheres in every triangle, since this property follows directly from the same quidditative principles (being a closed plane figure and having three angles subtended by three straight sides) which are constitutive of a triangle as such.

<sup>383</sup> *DA* 23(15) (III 88): “Deus posset facere, quod triangulus esset et non haberet tres aequales duobus rectis; et sic separaretur definitio a definito.”

<sup>384</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 1; *ST* III.77.2.

On the first point, Dietrich has already admitted that quantity and quality are, as it were, “the roots and fundamentals of the other seven genera,”<sup>385</sup> and in *De origine rerum praedicamentaliu* he describes the relation between the two much as Thomas does.<sup>386</sup> Nonetheless, he thinks we would have to be joking (*ut ridendo*) to speak of quantity as ‘more privileged’ than the other accidents in regard to its ordering towards substance: “For there is, belonging commonly to all of the accidents, but one mode of having their essences from that ordering towards substance, [namely] that they are dispositions of substance; and this is their essence.”<sup>387</sup> The idea that the other accidents inhere in substance by the mediation of quantity, for example, “as color is in surface,”<sup>388</sup> – as opposed to in a bounded body (*in*

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<sup>385</sup> Cf. *DA* 7(4) (III 63): “As regards our problem we must now especially look into the nine genera of categories of accidents and principally quantity and quality, which are, as it were, the roots and fundamentals of the other seven genera.” – “Quantum ad propositum autem specialiter nunc intendendum de accidentibus novem generum praedicamentorum et praecipue de quantitate et qualitate, quae sunt quasi radices et fundamenta aliorum septem generum.”

<sup>386</sup> Cf. *De origine* 1(16)-(17) (III 142): “Now the principles of such [perfective] motions are, *per se* and immediately, *qualities*, to which, in natural things, motion in place is necessarily antecedent. But first of all, in everything active and passive and, universally, *in motion* by nature, there is required *quantity* according to continuous dimensions. For it is necessary that the active and the passive be simultaneous, as is said in book I of *De generatione et corruptione*; for it is necessary for them to have both distinction and extension, which is accomplished by virtue of quantity, for which reason quantity, according to its genus, is the first of all accidents in nature.” -- “Principia autem talium motionum per se et immediate sunt *qualitates*. Ad quod in rebus naturalibus exigitive antecedit *motus secundum locum*. Sed primo omnium exigitur *quantitas* secundum dimensiones continuas in omnibus activis et passivis et universaliter motivis secundum naturam. Oportet enim activa et passiva esse simul, ut dicitur in I *De generatione et corruptione*; necessarium est etiam ea in suis partibus habere et distinctionem et extensionem, quod fit per quantitatem, unde quantitas secundum suum genus primum omnium accidentium est in natura.”

Dietrich’s view here seems very similar to Thomas’. For Dietrich’s general view that only the first three categories are real categories of nature, see also *De origine* 2(13)-(18) (III 147-148) and 3(3)-(7) (III 158-159), and *De natura contrariorum* 65(2) (II 129). While Dietrich ultimately roundly rejects Thomas’ view about the separability of accidents, it is important to note that he does agree with Thomas in regard to the general priority that should be accorded to these first two genera of accidents relative to the other seven (namely, *relation, place, time, position, condition, acting, undergoing* – cf. Aristotle, *Categories*, 1b25-2a4), and indeed, for Dietrich, there is no mistaking their real *ontological difference* from the other seven.

<sup>387</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(17) (III 89): “Competit enim communiter omnibus accidentibus unus modus habendi essentias suas ex eo ordine ad substantiam, quod sunt dispositiones substantiae; et hoc est eorum essentia. Et propter hoc non plus separabilis est quantitas a substantia quam aliquid aliorum...”

Again, however, Dietrich in fact *does* grant that first, quantity, and second, quality, *are* privileged over the other accidents – in terms, that is, of their fundamental role in the constitution of natural processes (cf. above, section 4.1.1).

<sup>388</sup> *DA* 23(18) (III 89). Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III.77.2 ad 1: “one accident is said to be the subject of another insofar as one accident is received in a subject by the mediation of another, *just as surface is said to be the*

*corpore terminato*) – thus contains intolerable falsity: it would imply the absurd view that quality and the other accidents were primarily dispositions of quantity, and only secondarily of substance.<sup>389</sup>

The case is similar if we suppose that quality and the other accidents could inhere in quantity that was separated from substance: such an accident would become an accident of an accident, the form of a form, the disposition of a disposition,<sup>390</sup> rather than of a substance, and thus it would not be an accident at all, since accidents, by definition, are of a true being, that is, of a substance.<sup>391</sup> It would also follow, Dietrich argues, that a quantity was hot, cold, white, black: “which is not intelligible.”<sup>392</sup> The reason this is not intelligible is simply that in such a case each accident would be deprived of its own *per se* definition:

No longer would color be the boundary of the transparent in a delimited body,<sup>393</sup> insofar as color is by essence the disposition of a body having in itself the nature of being more or less translucent and more or less luminous, as the Commentator says in his treatise *De sensu et*

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*subject of color.*” -- “unum accidens dicitur esse subiectum alterius, in quantum unum accidens recipitur in subiecto alio mediante, sicut superficies dicitur esse subiectum coloris.”

<sup>389</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(18) (III 89).

<sup>390</sup> *DA* 23(19) (III 89). Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III.77.2 arg. 1: “There is no *accident of an accident*, for no form can be a subject, since to be subjected pertains to the property of matter.” -- “Accidentis enim non est accidens, nulla enim forma potest esse subiectum, cum subiecti pertineat ad proprietatem materiae.”

<sup>391</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(18) (III 89). Cf. Dietrich’s treatise *De natura contrariorum*, 34(3) (II 107): “Similarly in a being according to some accident, whatever the form which is the principle of such a being, it informs the substance immediately, since nothing is in potency towards accidental being except a substance as such. Although it is required that certain forms precede others in the subject – thus, if something is to be hot, then it must be a quantum, and if something is colored, then it must have a surface – but nonetheless, for both hot and white, and quantum and surface, each of these immediately informs the substance.” – “Similiter in ente secundum accidens aliquod quaelibet forma, quae est talis entis principium, est immediate informans substantiam, quia nihil est in potentia ad ens secundum accidens nisi substantia in quantum talis substantia. Quamvis exigitive quaedam formae praecedant alias in subiecto, ut si aliquid debet esse calidum, oportet, quod sit quantum, et si aliquid est coloratum, oportet, quod sit superficiem habens, nihilominus tamen et calidum et album et quantum et superficies, unumquodque immediate informat substantiam.”

<sup>392</sup> *DA* 23(19) (III 89): “sic esset accidens accidentis et formae forma et dispositionis dispositio, et sequeretur quantitatem esse calidam vel frigidam et albam et nigram: quod non est intelligibile.” Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* IV 4, 1007b2-6: “An accident cannot be an accident of an accident unless both are accidents of the same thing. I mean, e.g., that ‘white’ is ‘cultured’ and ‘cultured’ ‘white’ merely because both are accidents of a man.” (tr. Tredennick)

<sup>393</sup> Cf. *DA* 13(1) (III 71); above, §4.1.4.

*sensato*: it is impossible to attribute this disposition of a colored body to a separate quantity.<sup>394</sup>

Dietrich continues by explaining that a body (albeit through quantity) has qualitative parts which are (accidentally) disposed towards each other; but quantity, as such, has no such parts, presumably because he holds that quantity can have parts only insofar as it is the quantity of a real substance having parts.<sup>395</sup> Thus, where Thomas wants to step forward, as it were, from the notion of dimensive quantity as the formal property by which things in the world are spatio-temporally individuated to the notion of a dimensive quantity in itself as possible subject for perceptible qualities, and thence for the other accidents, Dietrich insists on stepping back, from Thomas' 'constructivist' conception of spatio-temporal reality to his own formal definition of quantity *qua* accident – i.e., the disposition of a substance – as the strictly necessary criterion governing the very intelligibility of quantity as such.

## 5 Conclusions

Having reviewed in detail Dietrich's *De accidentibus*, we should now be able to claim to have in hand – in a nutshell<sup>396</sup> – a basic picture of Dietrich's metaphysical understanding of reality.

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<sup>394</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(19) (III 89). The same holds for *relations* of nature, actions and passions like one substance (not quantity) heating another, or the inclination of heavy and light substances (not quantities) towards a proper place (cf. *DA* 23(20) (III 90)).

<sup>395</sup> In other words, insofar as a particular dimensive quantity actually exists at all, it is necessarily constituted by the relation or disposition of the real *corporeal* parts of a substance towards each other. In *De quidditatibus entium* Dietrich illustrates this point with a 'gross' example (*in grosso exemplo*): "If a number of candles were placed and disposed towards each other, either in a circle or in a square, apart from such a multitude of [real] candles, which are as it were the parts of this multitude, the kind of disposition mentioned is nothing." – "Si plures candelae situentur et disponantur ad invicem vel secundum circulum vel secundum rectum, circumscripta autem tali multitudine candelarum, quae sunt quasi quaedam partes huius multitudinis, huiusmodi dispositio dicta nihil est." (*quid.* 11(2) (III 115-116))

<sup>396</sup> Cf. Flasch 2008, p. 14.

Starting with his methodology (see §3 above), it is clear that Dietrich has some strong feelings about the right way to proceed in a philosophical argument and that he has a definite contempt for the supposedly naïve and *ad hoc* process of inquiry followed by his opponents. The general principles to which he appeals, however, would hardly be suitable for re-directing the inquiry of the ‘popular discourses’: they would surely agree with Dietrich, for example, that one should be circumspect when interpreting holy scriptures and that believers should avoid scandalizing unbelievers by adducing scripture in support of stupid and obviously false claims. Such a methodological warning obviously has very little force on its own. Likewise for Dietrich’s appeal to the Augustinian principle that whatever ought to be posited by right reason, we must confess to have been done by God<sup>397</sup>: any application of this principle will necessarily be based on some subsequent, substantive account of what it is that actually ought to be posited by right reason; on its own the principle doesn’t do any work. Dietrich also concludes his treatise with a rather contemptuous dismissal of his opponent’s defective process of inquiry, claiming that when their arguments are effectively challenged his opponents appeal, *ad hoc*, to a miracle.<sup>398</sup> But this complaint seems to make very little sense, at least as applied to Thomas: it seems obvious that the existence of accidents apart from a substance is supposed from the beginning by Dietrich’s major interlocutors to be strictly a miraculous possibility. Certainly Thomas’ argument cannot very well be reduced to the bare assertion: “okay; but anything is possible for God!”<sup>399</sup>

Turning to Dietrich’s substantive argument for the absolute inseparability of accidents from substance, we can articulate three stages of this argument, which are methodologically

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<sup>397</sup> See, e.g., *an.* 1(2) (III 13).

<sup>398</sup> Cf. DA 23(22) (III 90).

<sup>399</sup> Of course it is possible that Dietrich did encounter interlocutors who actually *were* reduced to making such arguments.

and logically required for the establishment of his conclusion: first, a general determination of the nature of accidents; second, a defense of the metaphysical absoluteness of this account of the nature of accidents; and finally, the inference from this account of the absolute essential-quidditative nature of accidents to their absolute inseparability from substance.

At the first stage, Dietrich aims to present a formally complete account, first of all distinguishing the different senses of ‘accident.’ Regarding properties, those accidents which properly, necessarily belong to their subjects, Dietrich divides these into natural and formal properties. He determines that the basic nature of these properties is that they derive from the principles – either natural or formal – of their subjects, and accordingly their principles are identical to the principles of their subjects and they are inseparable from their subjects. With regard to this division, Flasch remarks: “For the debate on separability, this division [of property-kinds]... has no significance.”<sup>400</sup> It is, however, worth taking note of two points here: first, Dietrich grounds his claim that natural properties derive from the principles of their subjects simply in the experiential fact that they are (apparently) always found to pertain to their subjects – that their subjects are never found without these properties; second, Dietrich fails to mark any distinction between the kind of ‘necessary connection’ associated with the formal derivability of a formal property from a formal definition, and the inductive derivability of a natural property from our experience of particular, real things – in other words, he seems to assume a too-strong analogy between geometrical properties and properties like the ability to laugh.

Regarding accidents of nature, properly speaking, as Dietrich summarizes it, he has determined their essences and quiddities, their relation to substances, the modes of their

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<sup>400</sup> Flasch 2008, p. 15.

definitions, and their being, or rather in-being.<sup>401</sup> The fundamental perspective guiding his determination is the Aristotelian prioritization of substance: “Substance is prior to the other [categories] in definition and in knowledge and in time, as the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* VII.”<sup>402</sup> Within this perspective, only a substance truly has a quiddity, that is, an intrinsic formal principal in virtue of which a thing is essentially in act and is an actual being. A quiddity explains why a thing is what it is and only substances have an intrinsic reason for which they exist, namely their proper operation. Accidents have only ‘logical,’ not real quiddities (of their own), and therefore they have nothing in virtue of which they can be intrinsically defined (by a first-intentional definition) or independently exist. Instead, they are essentially *extrinsically* defined (‘by addition’), with reference to substance, such that it simply doesn’t make sense to think of accidents existing in themselves, apart from substance, in virtue only of their own proper essence: to do so would “destroy and annihilate the whole doctrine of the Philosopher which he hands on regarding this subject in *Metaphysics* VII.”<sup>403</sup>

In the second stage of his argument, as regards the absoluteness of his account of accidents, Dietrich appeals to a couple of general principles: First, he appeals to the general nature of properly scientific definitions as expressing that which cannot be otherwise, which implies the impossibility of separating a definition from its *definitum*. Second, he interprets the ‘immutability’ of the content of scientific definitions as expressing their status as ‘eternal truths,’ and explains this (supposed) status of scientific definitions by the fact of their being directly grounded, as such (as being necessarily, not just contingently, true), in God (the primary locus of immutable, eternal truth). Apparently he supposes this to be the case

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<sup>401</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(23) (III 90).

<sup>402</sup> *quid.* 7(2) (III 108).

<sup>403</sup> *quid.* 10(1) (III 113).

because he takes it that this conception of accidents and substances is absolutely fundamental to the understanding of the general nature of physical reality (the reality, that is, of things which undergo change); and without wanting to altogether deny the order of voluntary providence (of grace), he wants to exclude any possibility of God's voluntary acts disrupting the order of nature (of natural providence), at least, insofar as such disruptions would seem to undermine the fundamental grounds of intelligibility of the (prior) natural order.<sup>404</sup>

The third stage of the argument, the entailment from his determination of the nature of accidents to their inseparability from substance, seems easy enough to establish, if the first two are successful: first, if the essential nature and definition of an accident is just to be the disposition of a substance, and it is thus clear that its essential property is being in a substance; and second, if this determination of the nature of accidents in relation to substances concerns the most universal and primary division of being as such and serves as a general principle governing the intelligibility of everything else,<sup>405</sup> so that it is an absolutely necessary, 'scientific' definition *par excellence*; then, it seems that if we can know anything at all with certainty (i.e., scientifically), we should know that accidents, by definition, cannot be separated from a substance.

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<sup>404</sup> The principle here would be that grace builds on nature, rather than destroying it. Cf. *vis.* 4.3.2(4) (I 114): "the order of voluntary providence [i.e., of grace and merit]... is the completion and consummation of the order of natural providence" - "...ordinem voluntariae providentiae, qui est complementum et consummatio ordinis providentiae naturalis." *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis* 22(5) (II 320): "the order of voluntary providence ... supposes the order of natural providence, which is found in the essences of things and in their natural conditions" - "...ordo providentiae voluntariae, qui in talibus supponit ordinem providentiae naturalis, qui attenditur in essentiis rerum et earum naturalibus condicionibus." Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I.1.8 ad 2: "gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat" - "grace does not abolish nature, but perfects it."

<sup>405</sup> While it is thus not rooted and grounded *immediately* in the law of non-contradiction (cf. *DA* 21(1) (III 82)), it is supposed to be very *near* to it, a kind of *primary application* of it.

In the next chapter we will analyze the shortcomings of these arguments vis-à-vis Thomas' arguments for the separability of accidents.

## **Chapter 4: Primary analysis of Dietrich's case against Thomas**

In this chapter I critically analyze Dietrich's proof of the inseparability of accidents and defend Thomas' opposing position on the matter. In light of this chapter's analysis, the subsequent chapter will critically examine the contemporary analyses of the opposing Dominicans' positions, and I will end by offering some conclusions about the general philosophical significance of the question about the separability of accidents, and about what is implied by the kind of typical analysis of the debated problem that we find in the recent literature.

The present chapter will proceed as follows: First, I will show how the fundamental intelligible character of accidents, for both Dietrich and Thomas, is grounded teleologically, and how, consequently, certain elements of Dietrich's general account of accidents cannot be as straightforward as they might seem to be. Second, I will examine the general definitions Dietrich determines for substance and accident and show that the arguments Dietrich introduces in confirmation of his definitions and against alternate definitions leave unscathed Thomas' position on the matter, and that his definition-based proof of the inseparability of accidents does not succeed. Third, in light of the general notion of a definition as a basic constitutive element of Aristotelian science, I will clarify what is meant by an 'aptitudinal' definition, insofar as this term is taken to apply to Thomas' account of the metaphysical nature of accidents, and show that Dietrich's criticism of the kind of 'aptitudinal' definition used by Thomas to define substances and accidents misrepresents Thomas' position and fails to refute it. Fourth, I will show how Thomas and Dietrich differ in their approach to the issue of divine causality and defend Thomas' approach. Fifth, I will show that Dietrich's dismissal

of the special role played by dimensive quantity in Thomas' account fails because it relies upon his unsuccessful arguments against Thomas' quasi-definitional approach to understanding accidents and ignores the evident phenomenological data that ground Thomas' account. Finally, I will discuss Dietrich's methodological position and confirm that his explicit methodologically oriented comments have no force against Thomas' position and in fact make little sense, whereas it is possible to give a coherent and plausible explication of Thomas' methodology relative to his arguments for the separability of accidents.

For the most part, the order of presentation of the subjects in this chapter reflects the order of presentation found in Dietrich's *De accidentibus*, which order for the most part reflects also the logical progression of his argument. Further, since the objective of the present chapter is to critique Dietrich's position – and in the following chapter to critique those who have praised Dietrich's methodological rigor in establishing that position – it is appropriate that this critique should respect the structure of Dietrich's attempt to demonstrate the inseparability of accidents by following Dietrich's own ordering of his argumentation.

## **1 The teleological nature of accidents**

### **1.1 The fundamental teleological *ratio* of accidents**

In the order of Aristotelian scientific demonstration, presumed here by both Thomas and Dietrich, in order to arrive at a properly scientific definition of a real thing, expressing what the thing is, we must at least begin by knowing that the thing really exists. And either prior to or coordinate with knowing that a thing really exists, the putative thing is referred to by some name, which has been imposed for the purpose of referring to it, and which signifies some *ratio*, that is, some meaning, some intelligible nature or character, which is understood,

and is taken to describe or characterize whatever is signified by the name. In respect of the *ratio* of a thing, the end of scientific inquiry is to grasp that *ratio* which properly defines the thing, that is, to establish the *ratio* which constitutes the thing's definition – and certainly one of the aims of Dietrich's *De accidentibus* is to establish the correct definition of (or, more generally, *way of defining*) accidents. As regards the starting point of his rational investigation, however, we must recognize that the primary point of intelligibility (the primary *ratio*) grounding the distinctions in Dietrich's discussion of accidents is their natural end, their teleology or purpose or finality.

### **1.2 Teleology in the distinction between natural properties and natural accidents**

We see the fundamental role of finality already in Dietrich's introductory discussion of (formal and natural) properties, which derive from the (formal and natural) principles of things. Accidents, in contrast, imply the reality of some real positive nature in a substance, which contributes to making the substance 'something better.'<sup>406</sup> As noted in the previous chapter (see above, ch. 3, §2.2), in this account it is not always clear how to determine whether some attribute is a natural property or a natural accident. This lack of clarity arises from the inherent difficulty of determining the dynamic purposes of particular things and consequently determining what does and does not serve those purposes, making them to be either 'better' (presumably by contributing to the exercise of their proper operations, which constitute their reason for being); or not (instead simply arising from the natural principles of a thing, as a natural concomitant of these). On Dietrich's account, both natural properties and natural accidents are 'positive' in nature – that is, they are 'in-the-world,' not mind-dependent, as formal properties are. But natural properties necessarily pertain to their proper

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<sup>406</sup> Cf. *DA* 2 (III 55).

subjects, and they do so simply because this happens to be in the nature of the natural principles of their subjects; thus, they are not involved in making their subjects to be ‘something better.’ Natural accidents, in contrast, exist only in order to serve the dynamical processes by which their subject is made to be ‘something better.’ Dietrich seems to offer this property-accident distinction as a fundamental ontological distinction. It seems, however, that the grounds upon which the distinction is based – ‘making better’ or not, deriving from principles or not – while perhaps clear enough in the abstract, is not in particular cases something into which we have a clear insight, at least in most cases.<sup>407</sup> In other words, we at least sometimes do not understand the natural principles of things clearly enough to distinguish whether some ‘accident’ is in fact merely a kind of side-effect of these principles – as, say, bathroom functions presumably are – or rather belongs to the proper operation of the thing itself – as, say, sexual functions presumably are. Our assignment of some attribute to one or the other category, then, depends on our having some end in view, and follows from our understanding of whether or not the attribute contributes to that end, and thus to the ‘betterment’ of the subject of that attribute. Our ascription of one or the other mode of finality to some attribute does not generally follow from any direct insight into whether the attribute derives from the (*a priori*) constitutive principles of the substance, or is rather related (*a posteriori*) to the whole substance as such. Instead, we have to infer its original subjective-causal principles starting from our direct experience of just the attribute as such.

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<sup>407</sup> Recall that Dietrich himself, referring to the example of the sphericity or the luminosity of celestial substances, seemed to express some ambiguity as to whether our application of this accident/property distinction is based strictly on the metaphysical status of the thing itself, or rather on the status of our (limited) knowledge of its principles (see above, ch. 3, §2.2; cf. *DA* 4(4) (III 58)).

In regard to the consecrated ‘thing’ that is present in the sacrament of the Eucharist, which (at the very least) includes a kind of bundle of accidents, the question of the intelligibility of its subsistence, in light of its principles – including its subject and its efficient cause, whatever one supposes these to be – will necessarily be worked out at least in partial reliance on an understanding of its operation (its reason for being, its purpose), and how exactly that operation or purpose is constitutively determined and effected, in relation to whatever causal powers are deemed to be operative and relevant in such a case.

That these rational requirements for genuine insight into the metaphysical bases of our distinctions constitute an important problem for Dietrich should be quite evident in light of his discussion of the nature of accidents in chapter 8 of *De accidentibus*: There he tells us that the existence of accidents is fundamentally instrumental; that the specific mode of intelligibility according to which they exist is (only) as serving some extrinsic purpose (that of a substance). It seems that quite ordinarily it can be difficult enough to gain a clear insight into the intrinsic purposes of particular kinds of things; but if we must consider not just the intrinsic purposes of things, but also their possible extrinsic purpose(s) in relation to a more general hierarchical ordering of the universe, the range of the ‘possible’ addressed by our consideration may well be far less constrained. Within a broader context of interrelated principles and beings a thing can be characterized in relation to various purposes that it might serve in relation to various beings, and so it is necessary to guard against hasty conclusions if we are attempting to determine *the* purpose of any particular thing.<sup>408</sup> Thus, in relation to the ‘purpose’-criterion, we can begin by recognizing that the conjunction of a merely extrinsic determination of purpose for accidents with a transcendent (indeed, omnipotent) efficient causal power would appear, *prima facie*, to render intelligible, on

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<sup>408</sup> Similarly, it is for this reason very difficult to formulate the so-called ‘problem of evil’ in a compelling way.

Dietrich's own (Aristotelian) principles, the kind of account of separate accidents given by Thomas.

### **1.2.1 Separability of properties**

In regard to Dietrich's introductory discussion of properties and his argument for the inseparability of properties, as we noted in the last chapter, this argument provides the schema for his subsequent argument against the separation of accidents. Dietrich's stage-setting argument for the inseparability of properties might first of all invite the question whether Thomas would be committed to the proposition that properties, like accidents, are also in principle (supernaturally) separable from their subjects.

But it seems clear that Thomas' position does not commit him to defending, willy-nilly, the separability of properties. Indeed, he does not defend the unqualified separability of each and every accident as such. There should be no question of thinking that his argument is just a matter of adducing a positive dogmatic pronouncement on the separability of accidents (i.e., as per Church dogma on the Eucharist) and then declaring that since God is omnipotent, what has been thus dogmatically stated must be possible (and therefore metaphysically possible). While his argument begins with an analysis of (omnipotent) divine causality, because that is the logical place for it to begin, it of course doesn't end there. Rather he goes on to argue and explain how, in the case of the Eucharist, the particular exercise of divine omnipotence in question is indeed conceivable or intelligible. These arguments, we have seen, involve an analysis of particular sets of accidents which are first of all unequivocally present to the senses. And it is an analysis which establishes an integrated, hierarchical ontology of accidents – starting with quantity, followed by quality – such that there is no reason to think that Thomas' position on the accidents of the Eucharist entails that he would

want to defend indiscriminately the separability of any and all accidents and properties – and this regardless of our ability to conceive of such separation. Thus, when Dietrich argues for the inseparability of properties, and especially when he advances the analogy of inseparable geometrical properties (which are presumably not even conceivable as existing separately from their subjects) to support his argument for the impossibility of separate accidents, it should be clear that from Thomas’ perspective it would be a mistake to simply assume that the various cases are in fact analogous, or that they have any direct bearing on the case of the Eucharist.<sup>409</sup>

### **1.3 Proper operations**

Dietrich’s direct, sustained treatment of his principal subject matter – namely, accidents in the proper sense, accidents of substances – begins in his eighth chapter. There, as mentioned, he gives a very general account of his basic metaphysical view, namely, that the world is fundamentally made up of substances, and some of these are constituted as having parts and as requiring accidents in order to accomplish their proper operations. Substances with parts thus provide the *raison d’être* for accidents, the purpose of which is to serve as the instruments for the realization of the ends of such substances; the accidents have no intrinsic purposes of their own. It is important to keep this starting point, this basic conception of accidents, in mind, because the subsequent – more strictly ontic, we might say – characterization in fact derives from it and must be interpreted in light of it – that is, in light of a causal, teleological account of reality. And, we should note, this fundamental conception

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<sup>409</sup> Dietrich’s specific application of this argument to the case of accidents is discussed below, §2.6.

of substance and accidents would seem, certainly on the face of it, to be in basic agreement with Thomas' conception of the matter.<sup>410</sup>

Dietrich and Thomas thus both accept Aristotle's saying, "each thing exists for the sake of its proper operation"<sup>411</sup> – which is to say that final causality is immanent to (and grounds) the natural order of existing things. But this does not mean that natural teleology, as such, accounts for the very existence, and the specific, substantive nature, of the natural order itself. In Thomas' view, in fact, it is clear that God, the transcendent final cause of things, is required to explain natural teleology, so that from the existence of natural ends, it is possible to demonstrate the existence of an intelligent being (God) directing natural things towards those ends.<sup>412</sup> The teleology observable in the proper operations of natural things thus does not explain itself (i.e., there are no grounds for thinking that it is simply uncaused), and since this natural teleology grounds the being of substances (which being is the basis of our intelligible account of them), as well as the intelligibility of the other modes of causality (the final cause is the *causa causarum* – in the order of causality it grounds the intelligibility of efficient, formal, and material causes<sup>413</sup>), then the being of substances cannot be exhaustively accounted for solely with reference to the (intrinsic) natural ends or natural operations of these substances.

In any case, with respect to the stated principle, that each thing exists for the sake of its proper operation, Dietrich himself notes, in *De visione beatifica* (one of the companion

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<sup>410</sup> Cf., e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, c. 6: "substance is first in the genus of being, most truly and maximally having beingness (*essentiam*); it is necessary that it be the cause of accidents, which secondarily and as-it-were in a qualified sense participate in the intelligible notion of being." Cf. *De substantiis separatis*, c. 6; *ST* 1.45.4.

<sup>411</sup> Cf. Dietrich, *DA* 8(1) (III 63).

<sup>412</sup> Cf. Aquinas' 'fifth way': *ex gubernatione rerum* – from the government of things (*ST* I.2.3).

<sup>413</sup> Cf., e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I.5.2 ad 1. Cf. also Dietrich of Freiberg, *De animatione caeli* 4(2) (III 15): "matter stands under the ordering of form, matter and form stand under the ordering of the agent, matter and form and agent stand under the ordering of the end" – "materia stat sub ordine formae, materia et forma stant sub ordine agentis, materia et forma et agens stant sub ordine finis."

treatises to *De accidentibus*), that the scope of this claim is restricted: While each thing exists for the sake of its proper operation, which is to say, for the sake of its own intrinsic perfection, when we consider all things together, clearly this claim does not apply to all things indifferently. To the contrary, some things are (relatively) perfect in themselves and are intended by nature for their own sake (this characterization applies primarily, or paradigmatically, to living things); but others, whether naturally occurring or man-made, are merely instrumental, serving extrinsic purposes, but having little or no intelligible intrinsic purpose of their own.<sup>414</sup> Not everything which merely exists is in fact *per se* “intended in nature.” For Dietrich, too, then, it is clear that some things exist for the sake of non-intrinsic modes of operation, and in virtue of this, they fall under the category of “instruments of nature or of art” – and by Thomas’ account, such instrumental being clearly also characterizes the Eucharistic accidents, which by divine decree serve as (supernatural) instruments of Christ’s real presence.<sup>415</sup>

Thus Dietrich’s positive account of the teleological, operational grounding of the existence of substances and accidents is not wrong *per se*. But it doesn’t provide us with any clear criterion for resolving disputes about the intelligibility of particular putative existents. This is especially true in relation to something like bread, the ‘natural’ end of which is

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<sup>414</sup> Dietrich, *De visione beatifica* 2.3(5) (I 66): “For it is manifest, following the Philosopher in *De caelo et mundo*, book II, that each and every thing exists for the sake of its proper operation, which is necessarily its intrinsic perfection, most of all in regard to those things which are perfect beings and are, in accordance with themselves (*secundum se*) and through themselves (*per se*), intended in nature (in the natural world). And I say this in order to *exclude* instruments of nature or of art, which are unqualifiedly for the sake of another (*propter aliud*), which also exist, nonetheless, for the sake of their operation, but [one that is] *transeunt*, passing over into something external.” – “Manifestum est enim secundum Philosophum in II *De caelo et mundo*, quod unaquaeque res est propter suam propriam operationem, quam oportet esse intraneam eius perfectionem potissimam quantum ad eas res, quae sunt perfecta entia et secundum se et per se intenta in natura. Hoc autem dico ad excludendum instrumenta naturae vel artis, quae sunt simpliciter propter aliud, quae etiam sunt nihilominus propter suam operationem, sed transeuntem in extra.”

<sup>415</sup> In fact, Thomas thinks there is a sense in which *no created thing* can exist purely for its own sake, so as to be purely non-instrumental; cf. *SCG* III.100 n.3: “Since God is the prime agent..., all things which are posterior to him are, in a sense, his instruments.” – “Cum Deus sit primum agens..., omnia quae sunt post ipsum, sunt quasi quaedam instrumenta ipsius.”

obvious: to provide nourishment; but only because, in a sense, it is not really (or rather purely) natural, but (in a sense) artificial<sup>416</sup> – and considered *qua* natural, i.e., in relation to an immanent end, a proper operation, there is simply not much to it: its only (intrinsic) natural purpose would seem to be the rather minimal one of existing *qua* bread, and this notwithstanding the fact that, normally, the only reason it is brought into existence is to serve as nourishment for another.<sup>417</sup> And in this respect a substance like bread is very much like an accident, in that it exists (i.e., it comes to exist, it is produced) only to serve an extrinsic end – even though it clearly has an independent act of existence, that is, one which is not strictly tied to the purpose for which it was produced. (And of course we can note that something that is produced for one purpose can, generally speaking, be used by an intelligent agent for any number of other purposes – e.g., if someone uses a loaf of French bread as a *baguette magique* (or ‘magic baguette’), or a deer’s antler as the handle for a bread knife; and what generally matters in such (literally) ‘artificial’ cases is just the fitness of the accidental properties, not the substance from which they derive.<sup>418</sup>)

Our ability to specify the intrinsic purpose of a natural thing thus does not, at least in general, yield any sharp restrictions on the purposes for which that thing *can* be employed.

Dietrich invokes the principle “nature is not lacking in necessities,”<sup>419</sup> which would seem to

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<sup>416</sup> For Thomas the form of bread is a genuine *substantial* form, which is produced in virtue of the *natural* principles implicated in the making of bread (the appropriate application of heat to properly mixed ingredients). If the form of bread was properly *artificial*, then the form of bread would be a merely accidental form. Cf. *ST* III.75.6 ad 1 & arg. 1.

<sup>417</sup> In this connection, we can note the explicit analogy Thomas draws between a craftsman/artisan and the things which he produces by his craft. Thomas notes that the limits of the craftsman’s art cannot be strictly inferred simply on the basis of whatever may be the *first* form he puts into things; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *SCG* III.100 n.6.

<sup>418</sup> Also in the *making* of bread, one might have some reason in mind other than the normal one - namely, for nourishment. The apprentice baker may bake a loaf not with the hope of nourishing anyone, but with the hope of passing the exam. One might also bake a loaf using “sheat” flour (a poisonous variety of wheat flour, invented for the sake of an example). One’s purpose in making this loaf might be to poison pigeons. (I thank Graeme Hunter for this point and these examples.)

<sup>419</sup> Cf. *DA* 8(1) (III 63).

suggest that the natural ordering of the universe is sufficient for accomplishing all of its ends, so that supernatural interventions would be superfluous.<sup>420</sup> But Thomas would not be made uncomfortable by Dietrich’s invocation of this principle; he would simply point out the impossibility (for us) of understanding these ‘necessaries’ – certainly in relation to the plenitude of divine wisdom – in terms of some fully determinate content.<sup>421</sup> ‘The necessary’ is, in any case, often subordinate to – or at least coordinate with – the good, and what counts as the good (or even the proper operation) for a thing of a particular nature need not refer only to that for which the thing has a strictly intrinsic capacity, but also to that of which it is capable with external help. And in Thomas’ view it is the latter capacity which is generally more important. Thus, while one might manage to be marginally healthy without the (external) help of a doctor, one might also, with the benefit of external help, achieve perfect health. If this is the case, then one is clearly better off accepting help.<sup>422</sup> Thomas’ point seems straightforward enough,<sup>423</sup> and it would seem to follow that the question of what is

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<sup>420</sup> In the next chapter we will see that certain commentators have tried to push this interpretation of Dietrich’s view.

<sup>421</sup> Again, we can call to mind here standard discussions of ‘the problem of evil.’

<sup>422</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *De malo* 5.1: “Two things seem to pertain to the perfection of a certain thing: the first, that it be capable of some great good, or actually possess it; the second, that it be in need of *external help* in nothing, or in few things. The first is weightier than the second: for that which is capable of a great good, even if, for obtaining it, it is in need of many *aids*, is much better than that which is only capable of a small good, though it can achieve this without external help, or with little help. For instance, we say that the body of a man is better disposed if it can achieve perfect health, albeit with much help from a doctor, than if he can achieve only an imperfect degree of health without the help of a doctor.” – “ad perfectionem alicuius rei duo pertinere uideantur, quorum unum est quod sit capax alicuius magni boni vel actu habeat illud, aliud uero est quod exteriori auxilio non indigeat, uel in nullo uel in paucis, prima conditio preponderat secunde: multo enim melius est quod est capax magni boni quamuis ad illud obtinendum indigeat multis auxiliis, quam illud quod non est capax nisi parui boni quod tamen absque exteriori auxilio vel cum pauco auxilio consequi potest. Sicut melius dispositum dicimus esse corpus alicuius hominis si possit consequi perfectam sanitatem licet multis auxiliis medicine, quam si possit consequi solum sanitatem quamdam imperfectam absque auxilio medicine.” Cf. *ST I-II.5.5* ad 2.

<sup>423</sup> While I will pass over a more detailed discussion of this point here, I do not mean to imply that it should always be obvious how and where it applies. For example, in *De visione beatifica*, in the context of the human intellect and the beatific vision, Dietrich argues – and perhaps more plausibly in this case – for the necessity of an *intrinsic fitness* of a given substance’s capacity for whatever operation *it* is to accomplish, thus ruling out certain conceptions of the kind of external aid that could possibly be given a man in order to render *him* (i.e.,

possible for a thing of a given nature or essence must be approached with a good deal of circumspection, especially if we include in our consideration the possibility of ‘external (including super-natural) aids.’<sup>424</sup>

## 2 The essential definition of accidents and proof of their inseparability

### 2.1 The Nature of Definitions

While the primary intelligibility of accidents is expressed through their natural purpose, namely, their instrumental function in relation to substances and their proper operations, the bulk of Dietrich’s analysis aims to establish and defend rigorous essential definitions of substances and accidents. These are definitions by which they are primarily differentiated, qua substance and accident, according to the general formal mode proper to each. We should note that such definitions still involve teleological concepts, even if expressed less directly.

Dietrich first contends that, strictly speaking, the definition for accidents must not involve merely ‘being supported’ by another – a notion which perhaps might well be open to a thoroughly non-teleological (mis-)interpretation.<sup>425</sup> Instead, as Dietrich formulates it, an accident must “have an essence through another and according to another and not according to the notion of an intrinsic quiddity, but rather, as we might say, one that is extrinsic.”<sup>426</sup>

This definition tells us that what an accident is (its quiddity) is only really intelligible in

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the numerically identical man himself) capable of participating (necessarily, somehow, through powers that are indeed *his own*) in the beatific vision.

<sup>424</sup> On Thomas’ account, the notion of ‘obediential potency’ (*potentia obedientiae*) is worth mentioning here. While natural potencies are perfectly present in their subjects, as a function of their natural principles, such that they are reducible to act by a natural agent, obediential potencies (e.g., for bodily immortality) are only imperfectly present, i.e., they are *not* present insofar as we consider strictly natural principles and agents, since their ‘exercise’ depends upon supernatural assistance. Cf., e.g., *InSent* II.19.1.5 co; *ST* III.11.1.

<sup>425</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, Kurt Flasch actually takes a crude interpretation of this notion of ‘being supported’ to be the essence of St. Thomas’ view of the nature of accidents.

<sup>426</sup> *DA* 9(6) (III 65).

terms of what something else is (and the reason for this, again, would be that its operation is only instrumental).

Here there is really nothing for Thomas to object to. Indeed, the accident's lack of an intrinsic quiddity implies both that it cannot be simply identical to a substance (even if it is the disposition of a substance) and that there is nothing in the nature of an accident which binds it to any particular other (i.e., substance), provided only that whatever the substance is, the accident (as instrument) be compatible with the ends of that substance, which ends must be compatible with what the substance (intrinsically) is, i.e., its intrinsic quiddity. (Note that Thomas does not deny that the subsistent Eucharistic accidents are from another (*ab alio*): indeed, they are directly caused by God.) Accordingly, what Dietrich would seem to need to prove, as against Thomas, is that it is simply impossible for Christ to cause his own substantial (corporeal and 'sanguinary') presence, making extrinsic, instrumental use of the appearances of bread and wine<sup>427</sup> – for the purpose, that is, of giving himself as a 'hidden' spiritual sustenance for those who "have been saved in hope" (through baptism) and who are "eagerly awaiting their adoption as sons" into the manifest presence of God in the beatific vision.<sup>428</sup>

In regard to the nature of definitions in general, Fabrizio Amerini makes the following important distinction: "it can be asked whether the definition of a thing has to *express* only the species of being a thing exhibits or if it further has to *explain* what conditions a particular thing must satisfy in order for it to actually exist."<sup>429</sup> For Thomas, the correct conception of human knowledge of simple quiddities would seem to be the former, expressive account.

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<sup>427</sup> We can note here that in a later treatise, *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis*, rather than this being impossible, Dietrich seems to take a view of Christ's real Eucharistic presence that in fact sounds rather similar to this account – see below, ch. 5, §3.3.

<sup>428</sup> Cf. *Romans* 8:23-24: "spe salvi facti"; "adoptionem filiorum Dei expectantes."

<sup>429</sup> Amerini 2006, p. 101 [emphases in original].

While the definitional expression of the form of being a thing exhibits is not entirely independent of the full explanation of the conditions necessary for its actual existence, still, the definition, insofar as it is a proper and *per se* object of human knowledge, is directly abstracted from (a series of) particular images, presumably under ordinary – but not (necessarily) necessary – conditions. The full range of human knowledge, however, pushes much farther: it proceeds to an indirect consideration of the object of its knowledge as known, of itself as finite knower, and of the status of itself, its knowledge, and the object of its knowledge as finite effects, i.e., as particular finite expressions of the fullness of divine being – and such finite expressions (*a fortiori* in the form of definitions) do not in themselves express to us the extreme possibilities of God’s causal power in regard to the objects to which they refer. Creatures, in their definite being, do positively express God’s power, but they do not thereby express the limits of that power.

When considering Dietrich’s ‘definitions,’ we should remember that Dietrich in fact wants to establish that, according to the rigorous Aristotelian account, accidents do not really have quiddities or definitions, properly speaking, although they do have ‘logical’ (or ‘nominal’) definitions. The reason for this is just that the definition of an accident does not designate something that is intrinsically a unity and a whole (and in general Thomas would agree: accidents do not constitute intrinsic unities, that is, primarily subsistent natural things, but rather receive their unity from the substances to which they belong and from which they derive their being). In discussing the specific nature of the definitions that do apply to accidents, Dietrich takes up both first- and second-intentional analyses of accidents.<sup>430</sup> As a general issue, Dietrich is anxious to distinguish between these two kinds of analysis and to

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<sup>430</sup> See *DA* 13 and 12 (III 69-72), respectively.

forestall confusions in their regard.<sup>431</sup> But as our problem concerns the real (i.e., first-intentional) existence of accidents – that is, not merely their hierarchical conceptual ordering, but their real existence outside the mind – we can focus on Dietrich’s first-intentional ‘logical’ (or ‘nominal’) determination of the quiddities of accidents.

Dietrich points out that the reality of accidents is always referred to substance: accidents are the dispositions of substances. But it is not obvious that this fact about what accidents are (or the way they are) should imply that they cannot subsist apart from any substance: Put simply and concretely, if we say that this dimensive quantity and this whiteness are dispositions of this bread, this doesn’t imply the necessary falsity of the subsequent claim that this same dimensive quantity and this same whiteness are no longer dispositions of that (erstwhile) bread. For Thomas, when we make a general statement about what accidents are, we are describing their general mode of being insofar as we have, first, apprehended this by our senses, then, second, grasped it in a confused way by the intellect, through a general concept; and then, as our understanding progresses, gradually in a more distinct way, in virtue of a more distinct, more fully elaborated concept.<sup>432</sup> The distinct concept so-formed may constitute for us the ‘quiddity’ of the thing, which Thomas recognizes as the proper basic object of the intellect; but in Thomas’ view there is no reason to view this distinct quidditative apprehension as a perfect cognition of the thing. Thomas writes:

The human intellect does not seize immediately, in its first apprehension, a perfect cognition of the thing; but first it apprehends something about it, perhaps the quiddity of that thing,

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<sup>431</sup> On this issue, in addition to *DA* 12-13 (III 69-72), see also *quid.* 5-6 (III 104-108) and extensive discussion in *De origine rerum praedicamentalium*.

<sup>432</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I.85.3: “the cognition of singulars is prior, for us, to the cognition of universals, just as sensitive cognition is to intellective cognition. But as much for the sense as for the intellect, more general cognition is prior to less general cognition.” – “Est ergo dicendum quod cognitio singularium est prior quoad nos quam cognitio universalium, sicut cognitio sensitiva quam cognitio intellectiva. Sed tam secundum sensum quam secundum intellectum, cognitio magis communis est prior quam cognitio minus communis.”

which is the first and proper object of the intellect. And then it understands the properties and accidents and relations surrounding the essence of the thing.<sup>433</sup>

Thus Thomas can comfortably agree with Dietrich in holding that accidents are the dispositions of real things (substances), and that they are not primarily subsistent beings in themselves with their own proper quiddities – i.e., quiddities which are ‘perfect,’ ‘unified’ in their formal definitions and contain no oblique reference to a subject which is non-identical to the quiddified thing itself – but recognition of this qualified ‘quidditative’ nature of accidents – qualified in their reality and in the way they are signified – clearly enough does not thereby constitute a perfect knowledge of the circumstantial properties and causal relations affecting, or possibly affecting, any particular accident.

## **2.2 Analogy of accidents to substance**

As mentioned already,<sup>434</sup> for Dietrich, his rather abstract definition of an accident as a function of an extrinsic quiddity is expressed more simply and concretely by saying that an accident is a ‘disposition of a substance.’ This expression implies the ‘analogy’ (or ‘attribution’) of accidents to substance (as expressed by the use of the genitive case: ‘*of a substance*’). Dietrich insists that this analogy or attribution is part of the essential determination of accidents; it is in no way ‘accidental’ to them. In other words, the essential characterization of an accident as a ‘disposition of a substance’ does not designate any kind of secondary property of accidents, in relation to which it would be possible to distinguish some prior, essential core.

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<sup>433</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I.85.5: “intellectus humanus non statim in prima apprehensione capit perfectam rei cognitionem; sed primo apprehendit aliquid de ipsa, puta quidditatem ipsius rei, quae est primum et proprium obiectum intellectus; et deinde intelligit proprietates et accidentia et habitudines circumstantes rei essentiam.”

<sup>434</sup> Cf. above, ch. 3, §4.1.3; *DA* 10 (III 66-67).

Similarly, he rejects the interpretation of the analogy of accidents to substance as an essential relation or inclination towards inherence in a substance, such that an accident's essence would be prior to this relation or inclination and the accident would have an essence "as a function of itself and absolutely" (*secundum se et absolute*).<sup>435</sup> He insists that the analogy or attribution of accidents to substance could not be constituted by any such 'post-essential' relation or inclination towards substance (that is, one that followed from the accident's essence), simply because such a relation would not constitute the essence or quiddity of the thing. Rather, an essence or quiddity must be prior, since it must serve as the fundament constitutively grounding the thing's relations. Thus, Dietrich argues, an accident's analogy or attribution to substance must be prior to any mere property or accident, even one that would give it a necessary relation or inclination towards substance.

How does this argument bear on Thomas' account of the nature of accidents? It seems that the position that Dietrich describes (and rejects) here could well be his construal of Thomas' account: When Thomas says in the *Summa*, for example, that "to the quiddity or essence of an accident it is fitting to have being in a subject,"<sup>436</sup> this might appear to indicate that the accident's quiddity or essence is something 'absolute,' 'according to itself,' something that is prior to and distinct from the property or inclination whereby it fittingly or suitably exists in a subject.

Firstly, however, Thomas does explicitly recognize that accidents have only a qualified, secondary kind of being, and thus a qualified, secondary kind of essence, compared to substances.<sup>437</sup> And while each kind of accident does have some kind of formal, intelligible,

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<sup>435</sup> Cf. *DA* 16(3)-(4) (III 75); above ch. 4, §4.2.1.

<sup>436</sup> *ST* III.77.1 ad 2.

<sup>437</sup> See, e.g., Thomas' *De ente et essentia*, c. 1: "since *being* is absolutely and primarily said of substance, and secondarily and as if qualifiedly of accidents, hence it is that *essence* properly and truly is in substances, but in

‘quidditative’ content proper to it alone – which could be said to determine ‘absolutely’ and ‘according to itself’ the *sui generis* signification whereby it is distinguished from substance and the other genera and/or species of accidents<sup>438</sup> (and in relation to which the question about the separability of particular kinds of accidents can indeed be intelligibly posed) – it does not follow from this – in the view of either Dietrich or Thomas – that an accident has “the essence of an absolute quiddity as a function of itself” (just as a substance does). It thus would not make sense, based on Thomas’ actual account of an accident’s essential ‘inclination’ or ‘relation’ towards substance (to use Dietrich’s terms) – i.e., its ‘suitability’ for being in a subject (to use Thomas’) – to characterize an accident as having a relation to substance, such that the *relata* – i.e., substance and accident – of this relation are ontologically on par with one another. In a sense, of course, it may be correct to say – as perhaps Dietrich intends to – that Thomas’ account of accidents forces us to consider the essence of accidents as ‘absolute,’ that is, in abstraction from their actual attribution to substance; but to insist that such a consideration can only be ‘logical,’ and that any such ‘absolute’ consideration of an accident in the context of real beings in nature must be based on confusing first- with second-intentional modes of consideration, or properly metaphysical with merely ‘logical’ definitions, would appear to simply beg the question, which is precisely whether accidents can possibly exist in such a way, really separate from substance.

Dietrich tries to support his point about the essential analogy of accidents to substance – and, consequently, their real inseparability – by pointing to the analogous cases of material forms, prime matter, and the parts in the whole, which he says also necessarily have an

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accidents it is in a certain way and qualifiedly.” – “quia ens absolute et primo dicitur de substantiis, et per posterius et quasi secundum quid de accidentibus, inde est quod etiam essentia proprie et vere est in substantiis, sed in accidentibus est quodammodo et secundum quid.”

<sup>438</sup> Dietrich acknowledges this point, which is drawn from Aristotle’s categories (cf. *DA* 13(5) (III 71)).

inclination or relation towards substance, and yet which also have prior ‘essences’ or ‘quiddities,’ from which this inclination or relation to substance follows.<sup>439</sup> In other words, what Dietrich apparently wants to say is that in each of these cases there is first some primary intelligible aspect (the essence or quiddity) – presumably involving the intrinsic incompleteness of the ‘thing’ – whereby the ‘thing’s’ own actuality always already implicitly refers to substance; and then there is the secondary aspect of the inclination or relation, as such, of the ‘thing’ to substance.

It seems clear, however – certainly from Thomas’ perspective – that as regards the intrinsic incompleteness of the ‘thing’ implied in the primary characterization of each category mentioned, not all can be incomplete in precisely the same way. In particular, for Thomas the different modes of incompleteness are not all on equal footing in regard to the question of separability. Thomas is quite clear, for example, that the correct primary characterization of prime matter – precisely as potency for material form – implies that it cannot actually exist separately, that is, apart from some material form (its act) which gives it being.<sup>440</sup> So while Thomas would not reject the general claim about the incompleteness of the intrinsic quiddity of an accident, which indeed implies a certain essential analogy or attribution to a substance, in the case of the Eucharist he would add that the attribution of the accidents of bread to the substance of Christ’s body cannot be in the normal, connatural mode of inhering accidents. In normal cases, accidents constitute the natural ‘incarnation’ (i.e., physical, sensible form) of the substance to which they belong. But in the Eucharistic case, the accidents are only extrinsically appropriated and attributed to the body of Christ (otherwise Christ would literally become bread!); accordingly they must be given a strictly

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<sup>439</sup> Cf. *DA* 16(4) (III 75).

<sup>440</sup> Cf., e.g., *ST* I.66.1, for Aquinas’ argument for the *inseparability* of prime matter.

supernatural mode of non-inhering, ‘separate’ subsistence.<sup>441</sup> The substance which is producing and sustaining them is indeed present under the accidental appearances – and thus present in nature, in the world – but in such a way that the intellect has to bypass or transcend the usual mode of its epistemic reliance on the senses, if this super-natural mode of substantial presence is to be recognized. The general point, then, is that establishing an essential analogy to substance, as featured in Dietrich’s argument, does not in itself resolve questions about what modes this analogy could possibly take in particular cases. Each particular case – matter, accidents, etc. – must be analyzed in light of its own essence, its own essential particularity.

How should we properly understand our mode of analysis in such cases? As we have noted, Dietrich’s own assertions about the relative ‘non-beingness’ of accidents, their greater proximity to nothingness, are consistent with the claim – upon which Thomas and Dietrich agree – that we cannot, in all rigor, give strict essential definitions for accidents at all (insofar as accidents do not have complete essences). We can, however, characterize their (natural) modes of being. Silvia Donati notes that in the thought of Giles of Rome this idea was expressed in the general principle that “a being of one category can assume the *modus essendi* (mode of being) of a being of another category, without losing its nature.”<sup>442</sup>

Accordingly, in his *Theoremata de corpore Christi*, prop. 40, Giles writes:

It is not naturally, therefore, but miraculously, that in the sacrament of the altar quantity exists *per se*; and still, it does not follow from this that that quantity will be a substance, but

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<sup>441</sup> While he develops his own terminology, there are certainly resonances of this conception of the Eucharistic presence of Christ in the account Dietrich himself later gives of how it is possible, albeit only in virtue of God’s omnipotence, for the substance of Christ to be “extrinsically clothed-over” (*ab extrinsecus supervestitur*) (or “extrinsically appointed” (*ab extrinsecus indita*)) with the corporeal appearances (*sub specie corporali*) of bread (cf. *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis* 31(5)-32(3), 37(5)-(9) (II 334-335, 340-342)).

<sup>442</sup> Donati 2001, p. 589: “ein Seiendes einer Kategorie den *modus essendi* eines Seienden einer anderen Kategorie annehmen kann, ohne daß es seine Natur verliert.”

rather it will have a certain mode of a substance; for being *per se* expresses a certain mode of being of substance, just as inhering-in expresses the mode of being of accidents.<sup>443</sup>

And it seems clear that Dietrich himself allows for such distinctions between the ‘thing’ (*what* it is) and its mode of being: He notes that we cannot establish the distinction between substance and accidents simply in terms of subsisting *per se* or not, since, for example, both form and matter ‘are’ substance – i.e., they are the constitutive elements of substance – even though they do not (and cannot) subsist *per se*, but rather in the (inhering, *per aliud*) mode of an accident.<sup>444</sup> And again, in the context of his theory of intellect, Dietrich admits that while the possible intellect, in its natural being, may be an accident, nonetheless it can still have the mode of a substance.<sup>445</sup> Thus, notwithstanding Dietrich’s determination of the essential analogy of accidents to substances (as expressed by the fact that accidents are ‘dispositions of substance’), it is not clear why this essential analogy to substance should in itself be taken to imply that no accident can subsist in the mode of being of a substance.

### 2.3 Accidental essence and quiddity

Nonetheless, Dietrich clearly enough sees Thomas as being committed to a particular gravely erroneous view of the essence and quiddity of accidents, and as we have seen he goes to considerable lengths in attempting to demonstrate the absurd consequences of this particular view. The precise position he sets out to refute is that of supposing an accident to have an essence through itself, “as a function of the intelligible nature of its own proper

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<sup>443</sup> Giles of Rome, *Theoremata de corpore Christi*, prop. 40: “Non naturaliter ergo, sed miraculose in sacramento altaris est quantitas per se existens, non tamen propter hoc quantitas illa erit substantia, sed habebit quemdam modum substantiae; per se enim esse dicit quemdam modum essendi substantiae, sicut inesse dicit modum essendi accidentis.” (See Donati, p. 590.)

<sup>444</sup> Cf. *DA* 9(3) (III 65).

<sup>445</sup> Cf. Dietrich, *int.* III 8 (I 183): “intellectus possibilis, quamvis factus in actu sit vere accidens secundum esse naturae, tamen quandoque habet modum et proprietatem substantiae.” -- “even though the possible intellect, when it is made to be in act, is truly an accident according to the being of nature, nonetheless it sometimes has the mode and property of a substance.”

quiddity, beyond its attribution and analogy to substance.”<sup>446</sup> As in the preceding discussion of Dietrich’s ‘essential analogy’ argument (§2.2), it seems that one might reasonably take this formulation to be Dietrich’s way of construing Thomas’ quasi-definition of accidents. But of course, Dietrich’s refutations of this view will only be helpful for his argument against Thomas’ account of the separability of accidents insofar as Thomas’ case for their separability actually essentially depends on the supposition in question. Just as in the previous section, however, it is far from clear here that Thomas embraces the precise view which Dietrich in fact presents and tries to refute. With this in mind we can proceed to analyze Dietrich’s arguments on this point.

First, Dietrich notes that an ‘accident’ would in fact be a substance, that is, if it had the same kind of essence as a substance (*DA* 17(1)). Further – if accidents had essences in the same sense as substances – the ‘diminished’ being (*ens*) we predicate of accidents would either not belong to accidents through their essence, or would exclude their ‘analogy’ (i.e., attribution) to substance,<sup>447</sup> in either case destroying the fundamental difference between accident and substance (*DA* 17(2)). Further, an accident’s being and definition would no longer be ‘defective’ (a being of being, and a definition *ex additione*, one which essentially makes reference to substance) (*DA* 17(3)). However, since Aquinas does not in fact claim that accidents and substances have essences in the same sense, it appears that nothing follows from these arguments relative to his position.

In an argument that closely parallels his inclination/relation-argument (discussed in the previous section), Dietrich further argues that if one conceives of an accident’s essence as

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<sup>446</sup> Cf. *DA* 17(1) (III 76): “Si...haberet essentiam secundum rationem suae propriae quiditatis praeter attributionem et analogiam ad substantiam...”

<sup>447</sup> Here, in the latter case, the supposition is just that one essence cannot be the attribute of another of the same kind.

consisting of a proper and absolute quiddity, that is, one which is complete in itself apart from an analogy to substance, then one cannot subsequently sneak a reference to substance back into its definition in virtue of the fact that it inheres in a substance: for if the inherence is essential, then the quiddity was never in fact absolute; but if it is accidental (whether as a true accident or as a property), it forms no part of the essential definition.<sup>448</sup> Of course, Thomas does not think that an accident's quiddity is 'proper and absolute,' just like that of a substance. But in relation to the precise dilemma that Dietrich's argument advances, between inherence that is merely accidental and inherence that is properly essential – and thus definitional – Thomas would be careful to point out that while inherence is not merely accidental, neither is it straightforwardly essential and definitional: just as the quiddity of an accident is not a 'proper and absolute' quiddity, the definition expressing that quiddity is not a 'proper and absolute' definition – a point which Dietrich himself takes pains to emphasize. Rather, as we have seen in chapter two, Thomas' central argument is that our 'definitional' characterization of accidents as such is only a quasi-definition, based on the natural mode of being of accidents. And this point about the intrinsic 'impropriety' of the definitions of accidents is confirmed in Dietrich's own argument,<sup>449</sup> wherein he insists on the lack of perfect identity and unity in the quiddities of accidents, which should again serve to confirm Thomas' point that accidents can be given only quasi-definitions.

Dietrich's next argument presses the importance of maintaining the crucial distinction between quiddity in substance and quiddity in accidents. He begins by pointing out that the quiddities of accidents can't be complete in themselves, perfect, absolute, like the quiddities of substances: for the quiddities of substances, as such, are substantial forms, which is to say,

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<sup>448</sup> Cf. *DA* 17(4)-(6) (III 76-77).

<sup>449</sup> Cf. *DA* 17(5) (III 76-77).

they are that which determines the essential, substantial identity of a thing. Accordingly, he argues, if accidental forms were absolute quiddities in themselves, then all accidental change would be substantial change (*DA* 18(1)-(2)). Once again, however, this argument is not relevant to Aquinas' position, since he never makes such a claim about the absoluteness of the quiddities of accidents.

Regarding the proper account of the essential accidentality characterizing accidents (*DA* 18(3)-(4)), Dietrich proposes a dilemma: the accidentality of accidents (of accidental forms) derives either from their ordering towards a subject, or from themselves. If it is from their ordering towards the subject in which they inhere, then such 'accidentality' will also belong to substantial forms, which also 'inhere' (in matter). And if this ordering is from themselves, then they must be complete in themselves, and so no different from substantial forms.

But it's not clear why there should be this kind of either/or in the first place: the accidentality of an accident is both a function of its (instrumental) ordering towards a subject (in contrast, a substantial form, while also being ordered towards its subject, is so in a way that is primary and essential, not instrumental); *and* its specifically accidental mode of ordering towards its subject also belongs to it on the basis of what it intrinsically is (*secundum se*), without this implying that it is ontologically complete in the manner of a substantial form.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>450</sup> It seems we might think of Dietrich's view in the following way: it actually *is* impossible to (properly) define accidents, since (in a sense) they do not have *proper* essences; nonetheless, they *do* have proper essences of a kind, they just don't have them *per se*. At the same time, however, it's clear enough that he *does* maintain that an accident has an essence *per se* (i.e., through itself), but that its essence is *per se* (essentially) *not per se* – thus, *through itself*, it is *not* through itself, and *in virtue of its own (real) being* an accident is *not in virtue of its own (real) being* – so an accident both *is* and *is not* through itself. I leave the resolution of this paradox as an exercise.

Dietrich next argues that an accident with its own absolute quiddity, in coming to its subject accidentally – that is, not substantially, without entering into its essence – would necessarily remain separated, not formally joined to its subject; and accordingly, as a separate form, it would necessarily be wholly present to itself, so that – given his conception of the matter, which we needn't detail here – it would in fact be an intellect in act (*DA* 18(6)). But Thomas never suggests that transubstantiation involves the occurrence of anything like this. What Dietrich describes seems barely intelligible, but if we try to actually conceive of a concrete case corresponding to what he describes, perhaps it fits roughly with a case like that of a corpse, wherein – prior to its physical decomposition – the corporeal form of the once-living animal lingers only accidentally, no longer as actually animating the matter it informs – and certainly there is no reason to think of this kind of 'dead,' non-operational, formerly-substantial form as necessarily being an intellect in act.

Finally, Dietrich argues that the specific mode of action of accidents is not, as in the case of substances, to “effectively elicit action,” in terms of some specific natural operation; rather, accidents are the extrinsic qualitative principles through which a thing carries out its natural operation(s). Thus, an accident cannot have an intrinsic, absolute essence or quiddity; for if it did, it would necessarily have its own proper (natural) operation. But once again, Thomas is not a proponent of the principle targeted by this argument.

#### **2.4 Proof of the impossibility of separate accidents**

Having clarified the relevant metaphysical concepts, as these stand for Dietrich, and as they stand for Thomas, we can turn to Dietrich's attempt to directly prove the general impossibility of separate accidents. Dietrich thinks that the matter is quite straightforward.

First of all, a definition cannot be separated from the thing it defines; so if some accident (*qua* thing-defined) exists, then it is necessarily the (actual) disposition of a(n existing) substance (since this is just the definition of an accident). Thus, to assert that there exists something which is an accident, but that it is not actually the disposition of a substance, is to assert that such an ‘accident’ both exists and does not exist. Since this is a plain contradiction, it is not something that could be brought about by any natural or supernatural power.<sup>451</sup>

Second, just as being even or odd is a property of natural numbers which necessarily (*per se*) belongs to them, being in a subject is a *per se* property of accidents, that is, a property which belongs to every accident through itself, as following necessarily from its own essence and definition (*qua* accident). Thus, Dietrich thinks, one can no more plausibly claim that an accident exists without the property of being-in-a-subject than one could claim that a number exists without being even or odd.<sup>452</sup>

Thomas, however, would want to say the opposite on both counts, at least in the case of the Eucharist: first, the Eucharistic accidents certainly do exist, but they are not actually the dispositions of a substance; and second, in the Eucharist one category of accident at least – dimensive quantity – does not have the *per se* property of all accidents, namely being in a subject.

First of all, we can note that Thomas’ ‘definition’ of an accident is of course not the same as Dietrich’s; rather, he explicitly provides a quasi-definition which is supposed to avoid the ‘contradictoriness’ objection. In any case, even accepting Dietrich’s formulation of the definition, the notion of ‘being a disposition of’ is hardly transparently unambiguous: given

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<sup>451</sup> Cf. *DA* 21(4) (III 83).

<sup>452</sup> Cf. *DA* 22(2) (III 83). For a critique of this comparison, see below, §2.6.

that these dispositions are in fact extrinsic qualitative principles, by which a substance acts, the absolute necessity of their also intrinsically disposing the substance to which they ‘belong’ (i.e., which immediately acts through them) should not be taken for granted. Notwithstanding the fact that they are not the kind of accidents which could ‘suitably’ embody and manifest the (non-sacramental) presence of Christ’s unique glorified body, Dietrich still needs an argument here showing that the Eucharistic accidents could nowise be qualified as the immediate ‘dispositions of’ the substance of Christ.<sup>453</sup> For they are still the ‘dispositions of’ Christ’s body, at least insofar as they ‘belong to’ – that is, are immediately caused by and signify the substantial presence of – Christ’s body. The key point for Thomas is that he is not left positing an effect without a cause – even if by sole reliance on the natural light of our intellects we would be blind to the operation of the cause in question. That this point is key is especially evident in light of the fact that, for both Thomas and Dietrich, it is ultimately only in relation to giving a general account of the causal functioning of the universe that the metaphysical definition of accidents is grounded in the first place.

As for the second claim, that no accident, as such, can be separated from the *per se* property of being-in-a-subject, Thomas of course gives specific arguments for thinking that in fact this need not be true in the case of dimensive quantity. But we will analyze these arguments in detail below (§5) in the context of Dietrich’s attempt to rebut this more specific claim.

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<sup>453</sup> One option possibly open to him is to claim that they *are* in fact the ‘dispositions of Christ’s body,’ and that they are such *intrinsically* – in other words, that in the Eucharist Christ properly *appropriates* the accidents of bread so that when one looks at the appearances of bread, one is literally perceiving *Christ’s own* (supernaturally-assumed) *bread-like accidents*. This would presumably imply a kind of second incarnation (or rather *im-pan-ation*), a hypostatic union of Christ the son of God, not just with a human body and soul, but with the substance of bread. Of course, this would seem to entail (for starters) the absurd-sounding claim that someone can be both a human being and a loaf of bread – for which reason (among others) ‘impanation’ has never been a popular theory.

## 2.5 Grounding the truth of definitions

Dietrich follows up his argument for inseparability with an excursus on the grounding of the *per se*, immutable, eternal connections between definitions, the parts of definitions, and the objects they define – and on the grounding, in general, of the necessity of the sciences – in the very first eternal immutable truth, which is God. But of course this kind of generic reference to the grounding of the unchangeableness and eternity of true scientific definitions does nothing to establish the correctness or truth or scientific *bona fides* of Dietrich's own, particular definitions – nor of his applications thereof to the separability-question – as against those of Thomas.

To the contrary, in Thomas' view we must understand the actual conditions under which we labor when we impose names on things and work to establish necessary, scientific truths about them. Clearly we cannot establish that our knowledge about something is scientifically grounded – i.e., grounded for us – by directly appealing to the general status of our knowledge as participating in divine ideas. We must understand the historical, dialectical process by which we come to enter into such participation. As Thomas writes:

Since nonetheless, beyond the intellectual light in us, intelligible species taken from things are required in order for us to have knowledge of material things, for this reason we do not have knowledge of material things only through participation in the eternal reasons, in the way in which the Platonists supposed that participation in the ideas alone was sufficient for having knowledge. Whence Augustine says in *de Trinitate*, book IV, “for since the philosophers by most certain proofs persuade us that everything temporal is made from eternal ideas, are they then able to perceive in these ideas, or to gather from them, how many

are the genera of animals, or what the seeds of each of the individuals? Have they not inquired into all these through the history of places and times?”<sup>454</sup>

Thomas, in his citation of Augustine here, indicates that nobody – not even philosophers! – can infer a substantive knowledge (*scientia*) of the nature of real things directly from the possession of ideas and concepts alone, and Thomas’ account of accidents is consistent with this: the name ‘accident’ is first of all imposed on the basis of our experience of material things, and our conceptualization of what exactly an accident is, is necessarily developed in relation to the totality of metaphysical concepts which we draw from and apply to our experience of actual things – first material, then also immaterial – including our actual historical experience of – as it turns out! – actual separate accidents.<sup>455</sup> Names (with their significations) are always imposed on things as they actually are, but this needn’t imply they are imposed in such a way that their significations are (always or ever) fully explicit; or – obviously – such that any notion whatever which happens to become associated with the signification of a name properly belongs to the essence of the thing named (i.e., belongs to it necessarily). Consequently, Dietrich is right to argue that his opponent’s view must be rejected, insofar as it undermines our overall account of nature and science. But the problem for Dietrich remains that he seems not to have any effective arguments showing that an account like Thomas’ actually has this kind of undermining effect.

Indeed, for Thomas (as for Aristotle), while the distinction between substance and accident is a crucial one, the division between act and potency (and form and matter) is in

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<sup>454</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *ST I.84.5* co.

<sup>455</sup> And so, of our knowledge of things, Thomas writes, *ST I-II.2.3* co.: “But things are known in one way by human knowledge, and in another by divine knowledge; for human knowledge is caused by the things known, but divine knowledge is the cause of the things known.” - “Res autem cognita aliter comparatur ad cognitionem humanam, et aliter ad cognitionem divinam, humana enim cognitio a rebus cognitis causatur, sed divina cognitio est causa rerum cognitarum.” This implies that human knowledge develops progressively and contingently, essentially in relation to our actual experience of the objects of our knowledge; it is not a direct participation in the eternal and necessary divine cognition of things.

fact prior.<sup>456</sup> This priority of act and potency is obvious if we consider that a (material) substance is composed of matter and form, and that matter and form are modes of potency and act; and that substances and accidents too are modes of potency and act, in a secondary way.

But perhaps we might wonder whether Thomas' conceptual manoeuvres with the definition of accidents could have general applicability, or whether they are essentially *ad hoc*.<sup>457</sup> Thus the question might arise as to how not just 'substance' and 'accident,' but also 'form' and 'matter' should be defined, and whether by God's absolute power it would be possible to make not just accidental forms, but either a (substantial material) form or matter to subsist alone, in the mode of a (complete) substance. In this context, we might begin by saying that matter, by its commonly used definition, is *ens in potentia*,<sup>458</sup> that is, a potency for receiving substantial being – in virtue of substantial form – while a material substantial form is the (primary) act of a determinate portion of matter. In Thomas' view, at least in the case of matter, it follows from this definition that matter in itself, *qua* matter, as pure potency, cannot actually exist by itself.<sup>459</sup> But the question is whether, in all rigor and to be consistent, Thomas shouldn't in fact quasi-define matter in a manner analogous to that which he applies to substance and accidents: say, as 'a thing which is suited to be in potency to

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<sup>456</sup> It seems that Dietrich would not dispute this primacy of act and potency, which he refers to as the *proper* or *general modes of being as such* (cf. *vis.* 3.2.9.1 (I 85-87)).

<sup>457</sup> As noted already against the charge of *ad hoc*-ness (see ch. 2, §2.2.2), Wippel points out that it is noteworthy that Thomas addresses the strict inadequacy of the simple, nominal definition of substance, as well as that of accident, indicating that his concern was genuinely rational and philosophical, not grounded simply in the need to make conceptual room for the possibility of separate accidents. See Wippel 2000, p. 228 ff.

<sup>458</sup> See *InSent* IV.11.1.2 co.

<sup>459</sup> Cf., e.g., *InSent* IV.11.1.2 co; above, ch. 2, §2.1. The same conclusion of inseparability would seem to follow from the definition of a material substantial form. The case of a separate 'spiritual' (Platonic) substantial form would be a different matter. Even in the case of an immaterial version of a material form, perhaps such a thing is not evidently and altogether unintelligible (we might think of archetypes in the mind of God), but for Thomas such a form would at least not be sensible (i.e., a possible object of the senses), since, apart from dimensive quantity, it would lack an individuated presence in the sensible world (just as would be the case for a non-individuated material quality like whiteness – cf. *Quodl.* VII.4.3).

receiving substantial forms.’ Perhaps he could do this, but the important point would nonetheless remain: that if the concept of matter is essentially one of pure potency, then while matter is not nothing, neither is it a thing: rather it is *pre-thing* (and the same would seem to apply to material substantial forms). Accidents, in contrast, are not; they are, rather, *post-thing* (rather than thing or pre-thing); but they are post-thing precisely in respect of the thing’s essence (i.e., they are extra-essential; they are not temporally posterior except insofar as they are temporary: they may come and go in a persisting substance). And in fact, by Thomas’ analysis, accidents, beginning, in particular, with the mode of actuality of dimensive quantity, are constitutively determinative of a thing’s particular place and position, its spatio-temporal in-existence (*inesse*), in the world, and to this extent accidents are directly formally causative of the thing’s actual integration within the common domain of spatio-temporal (corporeal) being (of which human beings are a part, with which we directly interact, and to which we have direct cognitive access via the senses).<sup>460</sup> Thus, while in the case of matter, as in the case of accidents, the particular mode of quasi-definition in terms of ‘suitability’ would seem to be possible, such definitions do not bear the burden of settling the question about separability. And the general point remains, that Thomas does provide a workable account of separate accidents, and inseparable matter, within the fundamental framework of the act-potency distinction; and he does not therefore ignore or have no account of the fundamental importance of the substance-accident distinction.

In regard to the internal cogency of Dietrich’s account of the foundation of our necessary, immutable, definitional (‘scientific’) knowledge (that is, insofar as this foundation is supposed to bear upon the question of the separability of accidents), we should notice that

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<sup>460</sup> This conception of things seems intuitively evident. It is thus not so strange, and it is no accident, that we later find Dietrich himself admitting that in the physical world, dimensive quantity is prior by nature even to substantial form. See below, section 5, for discussion.

Dietrich also introduces an apparently critical complication: He explains that science pertains to necessary truths; but that is to say that science does not (directly) pertain to contingent features of reality, such as ‘monsters’ or defects or evil or coincidences; or, such as particular good things ordained by God’s will.<sup>461</sup> Nonetheless, all of reality, Dietrich recognizes, is grounded in the eternal and unchangeable truth which is God, and so he recognizes the need to distinguish between, on the one hand, the way in which scientific truths, which are true *per se*, are eternally and immutably grounded – such that they are expressed in terms of the necessary relations holding between definitions and the parts of definitions and the things they define –; and, on the other hand, the way in which contingent truths (and realities, including the particular reality of every individual *qua* individual) are.<sup>462</sup>

Thus, the particularity of the necessity pertaining to matters of strictly ‘scientific’ interest must be carefully conceived. For instance, we must distinguish the necessity characterizing the natural order from the necessity characterizing the origination of things from the First Cause (*of* the natural order) – just as elsewhere, indeed, Dietrich himself, following Augustine, distinguishes the order of natural providence from the order of voluntary providence.<sup>463</sup> If we accept the rather vague claim that ‘scientific’ propositions, as such, are grounded in the eternal, immutable truth which is God, then we still need to know how (and how adequately) particular propositions are grounded as such (i.e., as directly participating in the immutable truth) for our intellects, in terms of our evidently mutable, discursively-established use of concepts. Dietrich of course wants to ground the absolute necessity of his

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<sup>461</sup> Cf. *DA* 22(5) (III 84-85).

<sup>462</sup> Both Ruedi Imbach and Catherine König-Pralong have recognized an important tension inherent in this distinction. We will examine their analyses in the next chapter.

<sup>463</sup> Cf., e.g., *vis.* 4.3.2(4) (I 114).

claims about accidents in the foundational necessity of the first principles of nature and of art. But by our analysis here, it seems that he has failed to establish this grounding: that is, he has not shown that by a rigorous analysis of our most fundamental metaphysical concepts Thomas' position is simply contradictory. And if Dietrich is unsuccessful in showing us that Thomas' position is simply contradictory in this way, then it seems that, as philosophers, we should be open to considering, with Thomas, the metaphysical possibility that the sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist under the accidental appearances of bread and wine could indeed conceivably be one of the "good things" (*bona*) Dietrich mentions, which God "preordains and disposes, in accordance with the proposal of his will, imposing entity and order upon them."<sup>464</sup>

## 2.6 Defining natural accidents vs. defining geometrical figures

Perhaps the clearest argument that Dietrich offers for thinking that the relation of accidents to substances is not the kind of thing to which the contingent "disposing and ordering" by the will of God could be relevant, consists of his assertion of an analogy between the intelligible constitution of accidents (in their 'rigid' definitional relation to substances), and the intelligible constitution of a geometric figure like a triangle, with its 'rigid' relation to its formal definition and properties.<sup>465</sup> But insofar as this is a clear argument, what seems clearest is that the analogy doesn't seem very compelling. Accidents, on one side, are supposed to be real, positive beings in nature, which make things 'better,' and are real (instrumental) efficient causes of observable changes, the existence of which is

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<sup>464</sup> *DA* 22(5) (III 85): "si sunt bona, ipse ea praeordinat et disponit secundum suae voluntatis propositum imponens eis entitatem et ordinem."

<sup>465</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(15) (III 88). In other words, Dietrich claims that the notion of God making an *accident* to subsist that is not the *disposition of a substance* (in the ordinary sense) or *inherent in a substance* is as absurd as the notion of God making a *triangle* that is not a *three-sided plane figure* and fails to have *three interior angles equal to two right angles*.

in the first place established directly through the senses. In contrast, “in the case of mathematical entities” – says Dietrich himself in *De animatione caeli* – “there is no notion of an end, since there is no notion of good, and consequently neither of efficient cause.”<sup>466</sup> It seems clear that we can conceive of the supernatural efficient causation and/or preservation of a real, observable, concrete, particular phenomenon, one which impinges directly upon the senses, in a way that we simply cannot in the case of something like the abstract, intellectually constituted, universal properties of a triangle. (Similarly, skepticism about the veracity of geometrical propositions is fundamentally more radical than occasional skepticism about the veracity of particular sensory phenomena (or inferences therefrom): the latter can be intelligibly grounded in the occasional passive (mal)functioning of a physical organ, whereas the former would seem to call into question our very ability to reason – to perspicaciously grasp the meanings of and connections between propositions.)

### **3 ‘Aptitudinal’ definition of accidents**

On the general question – the possible separation of accidents from the substance in which they inhere – Thomas’ basic position is clear: this is possible by divine agency, since, just as God can cause secondary causes to exist, so can He cause the effects of these secondary causes to exist, even without the intervention or mediation of the secondary causes. Thus although substances are the proximate causes of accidents, God can nonetheless miraculously cause accidents to be, without reliance upon the usual proximate cause of their being. This account is of course not supposed to present just a ‘logical’ possibility, the discussion of a something that is, in reality, purely a *res rationis*, a product of

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<sup>466</sup> *an.* 3(2) (III 15): “in mathematicis non est ratio finis, quia non est ibi ratio boni, et per consequens nec causa efficiens.”

the intellect: Thomas enunciates his view in the context of a discussion of the Eucharistic accidents of bread and wine, which he supposes do not just possibly subsist on their own (apart from the substances of bread and wine which normally cause and support such accidents), but actually do so. Thus, it is the metaphysical principles which underlie and explain a particular kind of (presumably) real ‘event’ that Thomas discusses and interprets.

Dietrich’s critique of Thomas’ view leaves this particular *ex hypothesi*-real event in the background, so that, in one sense, his discussion of accidents is more general. It might seem, then, that Dietrich’s analysis presents a more strictly philosophical and systematic perspective – a perspective freed from ‘theological pollution.’<sup>467</sup> On the other hand, it seems that the very abstractness of Dietrich’s analysis means that it is liable to neglect the concrete phenomenological reality of its object and to rely too much on *a priori* ‘logical’ considerations of (‘metaphysical’) possibility – that is, considerations (i.e., metaphysical reasoning) bound too tightly to rigid interpretations of verbal definitions, so that the focus on definitions turns attention away from the reality of the thing itself which is being considered.<sup>468</sup>

As a counter to this danger posed by ossified definitions, we can think of Thomas’ insistence on only a quasi-definition of accidents as being intentionally ‘looser,’ with built-in indications of the limitations of our experience of, and ability to form a strict, absolute

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<sup>467</sup> That is, it is apparently free from theological influence, apart from the fact that he is even discussing the problem in the first place! (Even if he aims to address the problem in a purely ‘philosophical’ manner, some ‘philosophers’ might still regard the problem itself as inherently uninteresting, ‘philosophically’ speaking – I will discuss this position in the following chapter.) While Dietrich’s treatise does avoid all mention of the particular theological issue, this is not to suggest that his immediate target therein is anything but the case of the Eucharist and various current accounts of transubstantiation (cf. Kandler 2010, p. 92).

<sup>468</sup> In contrast to the bulk of his analysis of the opposition between Thomas and Dietrich on our subject, this is one point in Thomas’ favor which Flasch does recognize. Referring to Thomas’ notion of ‘divine privilege,’ Flasch writes: “This effected a loosening of ideas of metaphysical ordering; one could assess this as a step towards greater adherence (closeness) to experience and towards the discovery of long hidden premises of metaphysics.” (Flasch 1983, p. LIII) (Flasch does go on, however, to qualify this note of commendation; cf. below, ch. 5, §2.1.1.)

conception of, an accident as such. Thus, Thomas defines an accident as “a thing to which is [merely] owed being in another,” and this by the nature of its quiddity (*secundum rationem suae quidditatis*).<sup>469</sup> Or, put slightly differently, “to the quiddity or essence of an accident it is fitting (*competit*) to have being in a subject.”<sup>470</sup> In other words, we can affirm of an accident that by its nature – essentially, quidditatively – it is apt or suited to exist in a subject. We can fairly call this an ‘aptitudinal’ definition, and for Thomas any general definition stronger than this is not strictly demonstrable.

Dietrich, for his part, categorically declares that the attempt to define accidents ‘aptitudinally’ entails the destruction of nature and science, and the reason he gives is this: “for it destroys the proper account (*propriam rationem*) of substances and accidents and their differences with respect to each other, just as has been abundantly shown in the foregoing.”<sup>471</sup> Having reviewed the particular ‘foregoing’ which Dietrich refers to here (see §2 above), it is far from evident that this is the case. Supposing it were true, however, that an ‘aptitudinal’ definition would destroy the difference between accidents and substances, Dietrich thinks that the result would be the destruction of nature and science because of the primacy and universality of the substance-accident distinction both in reality (nature) and in our knowledge (science). Accordingly, when we get it confused, we will confuse everything else too, since the general distinction structures our understanding of everything else, both human and divine.

Aside from the fact that the substance-accident distinction seems to be not so strictly primary as Dietrich would have it here (see above, §2.5), the first problem with this

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<sup>469</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 2: “*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.*”

<sup>470</sup> *ST* III.77.1 ad 2: “quidditati autem sive essentiae accidentis competit habere esse in subiecto.”

<sup>471</sup> *DA* 22(4) (III 84).

argument would seem to be that Thomas makes it clear that an act of transubstantiation cannot happen by any natural power, nor be known by the natural light of reason. So it is unclear why the supernatural occurrence of transubstantiation in the Eucharist should be taken to affect the reality of natural occurrences or the validity of our natural knowledge thereof.<sup>472</sup>

In any case, what exactly is wrong with an ‘aptitudinal’ definition, of the kind given by Thomas? Certainly, by our analysis thus far, it seems that Dietrich is mistaken in thinking that he has already abundantly shown that it destroys all distinction between substance and accidents.

Dietrich’s argument against an aptitudinal definition of accidents is not just based on his view that his opponents define accidents in such a way as to destroy their distinction from substances or substantial forms; he seeks to reinforce his claim using an argument based on the way in which our apprehensions of quiddities and definitions in the first place come to be. We might say he shifts from a discussion within the context of formal justification to one within the context of discovery, perhaps with the idea being that an understanding of how we discover or establish definitions for (actual) things should imply strict limitations on the range of (actual) things to which those definitions can subsequently be justifiably applied.

Dietrich’s argument begins with the claim that a name signifies the intelligible account (*ratio*) of a thing, that is, its definition. Further, “names are imposed on things according as they are in act” – which is to say: “not as a function of an aptitude or as a function of a potency.”<sup>473</sup> Accordingly, it is in the nature of the definitions of beings that they define

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<sup>472</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, Kurt Flasch and subsequent commentators, while *praising* Dietrich for his methodological rigor, have completely ignored this apparent problem with his argument.

<sup>473</sup> *DA* 22(4) (III 84): “nomina autem imposita sunt rebus, secundum quod sunt in actu, sicut dicit Commentator super VII *Metaphysicae*” – “non secundum aptitudinem seu secundum potentiam”; cf. *quid.* 2(2) (III 100).

beings according as they are in act, not according as they are in potency – or as they are merely apt or suited to be. To illustrate, Dietrich claims that some existing thing which is only aptitudinally ensouled or aptitudinally an animal is, *ipso facto*, not a man.

It would apparently follow from this argument and analogy that some existing thing which was only ‘aptitudinally’ an accident could not actually be an accident. And, taking Dietrich’s definition of accidents, some existing thing which was only ‘aptitudinally’ the disposition of a substance likewise could not actually be an accident. (We can note here that Dietrich does not ignore the fact that some accidents or properties (like risibility and being able to learn (Dietrich’s examples), or ductility, combustibility, etc.) are indeed “designated from a certain aptitude and not from an act”<sup>474</sup>; but a kind of being who can and on occasion does actually break out into laughter always actually possesses risibility (i.e., always actually has such an ‘aptitude’ or power); a kind of being which actually lacked the ability (or ‘aptitude’) to laugh could not be said to actually possess risibility in virtue of the fact that it was merely somehow suited to supernaturally acquiring that power.)

Thomas would agree that, in general, names are imposed on things in act, as they actually are – though he might add that names (with their significations) are imposed on things as a function of our knowledge of them.<sup>475</sup> But clearly Thomas never makes the claim that Dietrich apparently attacks: that the separate accidents of the Eucharist are not actually, but only aptitudinally (or potentially) accidents. Indeed, if they were not actually accidents, we wouldn’t be able to actually perceive them. To the contrary, they are actual(ly) accidents, and throughout Thomas’ account there is never any question that the quasi-definition of accidents which he offers aims to characterize anything but actual accidents. What is

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<sup>474</sup> *DA* 6(4) (III 61).

<sup>475</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I.13 *pr.*: “each thing is *named* by us according as we *cognize* it” – “unumquodque enim nominatur a nobis, secundum quod ipsum cognoscimus.”

‘aptitudinal’ is Thomas’ quasi-definition of accidents, rather than the corresponding *definitum* (although, in the sense approved by Dietrich, the *definitum* too may be ‘aptitudinal,’ as in the case of risibility). Indeed, a key feature of Thomas’ formulation of the quasi-definition of accidents, in particular as regards the question of separability, is precisely that it allows for flexibility in considering the necessity of the relation between actual accidents and their subjects. There is no question of discussing merely potential, or only specifically ‘aptitudinal,’ accidents.<sup>476</sup> In reply to Dietrich, then, to say in this context that a generic kind of being is intrinsically suited or naturally apt to exist in accordance with a particular ‘mode of being’ is not at all the same as saying that this kind of being is found to be in potency to such a ‘mode of being’ – as if to imply that accidents possessed a natural power analogous to risibility, whereby they were apt to break out into an inhering mode of being, given an appropriate stimulus. Rather, Thomas’ characterization of accidents by their generic intrinsic aptitude for a particular mode of being, first, indicates that in normal (i.e., natural, non-miraculous) circumstances (actual) accidents always exist in such a mode of being in actuality; and, second, leaves open the question as to whether or not such a mode of being is absolutely necessary for any particular (kind of) accident, i.e., necessary even in relation to supernatural exercises of power. (And again, as we have argued in the previous section, the primary grounding of the difference between substances and accidents concerns

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<sup>476</sup> There are various particular accidents (e.g., combustibility, risibility) that imply an ‘aptitude’ for a particular ‘mode of being’ (e.g., for *burning*, or *laughing*) and it is intrinsic to such ‘aptitudes’ that even in their natural being they do *not* always express themselves in actuality. In such cases we are speaking about an ‘aptitude’ which constitutes the (specifically ‘aptitudinal’) nature of a particular species of real accident. This is quite different from speaking about an ‘aptitude’ that is supposed to give a general characterization of the ‘mode of being’ of a generically diverse set of phenomena (including size, color, posture, paternity, the power to neigh, virtue, etc.). The latter, generic ‘aptitude’ (and ‘mode of being’) is what we have discussed here in connection with an ‘aptitudinal’ quasi-definition of transcendental categories (*substance* and *accident*); the former, *positively-inhering* kind of ‘aptitude’ regards the specific nature (and related ‘mode of being’) of particular ‘aptitudinal’ accidents which the ‘natural philosopher’ can observe to inhere in particular substances (these accidents are commonly referred to as *dispositions* or *dispositional properties*, or, in Scholastic terminology, *(active or passive) powers*).

not their natural ‘mode of being’ (whether in another or not), but their teleology (whether they have their own end or only serve the end of another).<sup>477</sup>)

#### 4 Divine causality

In the preceding chapter we began by noting Dietrich’s general emphasis, especially throughout the treatises comprising *On three difficult questions*, on the orderliness – and hence intelligibility – of the universe of beings. Naturally, for Dietrich, his rigid conception of the necessity of the connection between accidents and substances is supposed to express one aspect of this orderliness. In the chapter on Thomas we saw that the general conviction about cosmic unity and order is shared by Thomas. From Thomas’ side, however, while the dynamically ordered unity of the universe is a fact, and our knowledge of this fact rests primarily on our apprehension of self-evident first principles, it bears emphasizing that these principles can only secondarily and tentatively – i.e., based on our actual experience, not merely on an *a priori* insistence upon order – be developed into a body of substantive, scientific knowledge.

A basic prior consideration underlying such a difference in perspective is that the ontology of creation (i.e., of created beings) is necessarily grounded in the causal powers of the creator,<sup>478</sup> and so it is at least partly in light of a particular interpretation of these (divine) causal powers that we have to ground a choice between Dietrich’s and Thomas’ opposing positions on the (ontological) separability of accidents.

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<sup>477</sup> We should also remember that their ‘mode of being’ is a *function* of their finality, of the respective fundamental roles of substances and accidents in relation to the good.

<sup>478</sup> Even setting aside any presuppositions about the precise nature of the ‘first cause’ of the universe, the question about the adequate causal explanation of all that exists – and by extension of all that *could* exist – is a wholly general and fundamentally important one, and one to which, so far as I can see, there are no convincing, and certainly no *compelling*, a-theological answers.

At the same time – and perhaps more immediately – the choice must be grounded in light of a particular interpretation of the created causal powers of the (human) intellect, through which the being and well-ordering of the universe is intentionally expressed (for us). The intellect must in some fashion – more or less adequate, ‘positive,’ etc. – conceive in itself the whole universe and all of its causal connections, and so its own nature must in some fashion be apt for doing so. If Thomas’ general theological project – beginning with his *a posteriori* (starting from creatures, *qua* effects) demonstration of the existence of God (the creator, the first cause) – is feasible, certainly this general characterization of the intellect must hold true.

In the case of Dietrich’s philosophical project, one of its most interesting features is the remarkable autonomy which it appears to grant to the human intellect in constituting – intellectually, or ‘conceptionally’ – the whole universe of being (including God):<sup>479</sup> in its essence, intellect is made in the image of God so that, like God, it accomplishes its essential operation of knowing through its own essence. Fundamentally, on this account, intellect is constituted so as to know itself in virtue of grasping its origination from its source (God), and in virtue of this vision of its own origin it has an intellectual insight into all of being, since God is the wholly perfect source of the whole universe of (created) being.<sup>480</sup> The fact remains, however, that in this life, by Dietrich’s account, the agent intellect is the active but hidden principle grounding the cognitive activity of human beings; outside of the beatific vision (which only occurs *post mortem*) man does not have a clear vision of God (understood

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<sup>479</sup> Cf. Flasch’s early (1972) article on Dietrich, entitled: “Kennt die mittelalterliche Philosophie die konstitutive Funktion des menschlichen Denkens?” (“Does medieval philosophy know of the constitutive function of human thinking?”)

<sup>480</sup> See, e.g., *int.* III 20 (I 192-193).

as the first cause of all things) and so, without the light of such vision, cannot have a perfect knowledge of all things.<sup>481</sup>

In relation to Dietrich's actual argument – mounted 'here and now' – for the absolute impossibility of divine preservation of accidents without a subject, Dietrich's position would seem to crucially depend on his having a suitably profound insight into the nature of substantial and accidental realities in themselves; into the essential ordering of their causal grounding, in particular in relation to God; and also into the status of his own intellectual conceptions as being immediate, adequate expressions – or reflections – of the eternal, immutable order of things, as this flows with supernal necessity from the most fundamental ground of all being (real and 'conceptional'). In defense of Thomas, on the other hand, we can consider ways in which Dietrich's insight into these various matters appears to be inadequately grounded.

In regard to God's causal power, Thomas argues that by this power God can directly cause the accidents of the bread to continue in existence, without the concurrence of the causal power of the material substance of the bread, and he cites the *Liber de causis* as an authority in support of his view.<sup>482</sup> Dietrich responds to this claim by arguing that the passage cited from the *Liber de causis* does not say what Thomas wants it to say.<sup>483</sup> Dietrich may well be right about this point of exegesis,<sup>484</sup> but since there is no reason to treat

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<sup>481</sup> In the beatific vision the agent intellect becomes *unhidden* so that it is no longer just the *principle* of our intellection, but its immediate, constantly-fully-active *form* (cf. e.g., *vis.* 4.2.1(4) (I 107)). Thomas has a similar view of the difference in modes of seeing, here and hereafter; cf. *ST* I.84.5 co.: "the soul, in the state of the present life, cannot see all things in the eternal reasons; but in this way, that is, in the eternal reasons, the blessed know all things, since they see God and all things in him" - "anima, in statu praesentis vitae, non potest videre omnia in rationibus aeternis; sed sic in rationibus aeternis cognoscunt omnia beati, qui Deum vident et omnia in ipso."

<sup>482</sup> Cf. esp. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 co.; above, ch. 2, §2.2.1.

<sup>483</sup> Cf. *DA* 23 (3)-(15) (III 86-88); above, ch. 3, §4.4.2.

<sup>484</sup> See Côté 2008 for a discussion of Siger of Brabant's similar argument against Thomas' use of the *Liber de causis*.

Thomas' position here as essentially resting on an 'argument from authority,' this point is really not a crucial one.

Regarding the supposed defects of the doctrine of divine causality which Thomas wants to associate with the *Liber de causis*, Dietrich's arguments are not convincing. His first claim is that Thomas' argument illicitly switches from one genus of causality to another: even if God is the efficient cause of accidents, this doesn't imply that he can do without substance as the material or subjective cause.<sup>485</sup> But this argument simply ignores the fact that Thomas' account explicitly addresses this problem, namely, by its appeal to the role of dimensive quantity in providing the existential-subjective ground for the other accidents.

The second defect Dietrich identifies is that Thomas wants to say that the same – both numerically and specifically – accidents exist after the separation of their substance; but if we examine the example given in the *Liber de causis*, with the removal of rational, or of life, from a being, we are not left with a thing that is either numerically or even specifically the same as before. This may be a correct characterization of the particular example found in the *Liber de causis*, but again, Thomas' account doesn't crucially depend on whether it can be derived from a strict exegesis of the work in question.<sup>486</sup> And in fact it seems that from Thomas' point of view the 'sameness' (*qua* accidents) of the accidents before and after, especially with reference to the accidents that are immediately sensible, can be directly grounded at the purely observational level, in the phenomenal continuity they display, from before the consecration to after.<sup>487</sup> Certainly one could still object that after separation they

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<sup>485</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *DA* 23(4) (III 86).

<sup>486</sup> And indeed, commenting on Dietrich's argument here, Vijgen writes: "Aquinas however does not use this example [from the *Liber de causis*] to argue that the accidents remain numerically identical after the transubstantiation." (Vijgen 2013, p. 320)

<sup>487</sup> It is this continuity or persistence of the accidents before and after the act of transubstantiation which allows them to serve as quasi-subject for the whole-substance-(form *and* matter)-conversion of the bread to the body of Christ. Cf. *SCG* IV.63; Brock 2001, pp. 540-542; above, ch.2, §4.2. According to Vijgen, "it is because

are not accidents in precisely the same sense as before; but Thomas would of course grant that that is so, without this constituting an objection to his account.<sup>488</sup> And we can note that Dietrich himself, in his *De origine rerum praedicamentaliū*, in giving his own account of privative beings – that is, beings in the process of decay (*in via corruptionis*) – seems to effectively admit the cogency of such an account: There he specifically argues that the essential character and nature of the ‘deprived’ subject (e.g., a corpse) – that is, the subject in which the substantial form is no longer present, but has given way to privation – still continues to pertain not just to the same genus (e.g., animal), but also the same species (e.g., man), and, in a way, even to the same numerically identical individual (e.g., this man).<sup>489</sup>

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dimensive quantity has in itself a certain individuation that the accidents remain numerically identical” (Vijgen 2013, p. 320). While it is true that dimensive quantity grounds individuation, the intrinsically individuating character of dimensive quantity does not in itself ground the diachronic identity of the accidents; the latter is grounded rather in the fact that God can (and does) conserve them in being (*conservare in esse*); cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 co.; *ST* III.77.1.

<sup>488</sup> On the basis of his later treatise, *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis*, it seems that Dietrich would want to say that since the natural accidents of the bread, on the one hand, and the (identical in appearance) accidents that serve for the extrinsic ‘clothing over’ (*supervestitionem*) of the (glorified, spiritual) substance of Christ after the Eucharistic consecration, on the other, have different underlying principles – namely, the substance of bread vs. the power of the omnipotent creator (*potentiam creatoris omnipotentis*) – it follows that the two sets of accidents in fact differ in genus (*differunt genere*), since – Dietrich claims – their causes are included in their definitions (*ex quo in definitione importatur causa*) (cf. *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis* 37(7)-(9) (II 341-342); above, ch. 3, §4.4.2). This argument is certainly different from the one found in *DA* and it is not evident how to harmonize the two positions. Generally speaking the (efficient) cause of a thing does not form part of its essence (as Dietrich recognizes – cf., e.g., *an.* 35(3) (III 41)). Perhaps Dietrich wants to say that the body of Christ becomes the *subjective* cause of the accidents (i.e., becomes their subject), and that this implies that they are not ‘identical’ (numerically, specifically, or generically) with the accidents of the bread; but it seems he still wants to say – with Thomas – that Christ’s body is only extrinsically related to the accidents (so not as a subject in the ordinary sense); and in any case, the claim that a generic difference in subject implies a generic difference in accident – as if the colors of emeralds differed by genus from the colors of peacocks – would seem to be evidently false.

<sup>489</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *De origine* 3(33) (III 167): “But if the intelligible character and nature of the subject in privative beings is considered, in which primarily and *per se* privation succeeds in place of the substantial form, then not only do they pertain to the same *genus* as the beings the privations of which they imply, but to a unity according to *species*, and indeed in a certain way they are reducible to a *numerical* identity therewith.” – “Si autem attendatur in entibus privatis ratio et natura subiecti, in quo primo et per se succedit privatio loco formae substantialis, tunc non modo ad idem *genus* pertinent cum entibus, quorum privationes important, sed ad unitatem secundum *speciem*, immo quodam modo ad identitatem *numeralem* reducibilia sunt.”

Finally, as a third defect here, Dietrich simply invokes his base argument regarding the contradictoriness of a thing existing apart from any of its own essential principles<sup>490</sup>; but we have already discussed the problems with this argument.

Beyond the *Liber de causis*-argument, Dietrich also takes aim at Aquinas' first two *sed contra* arguments – “*but against* the impossibility of God making accidents to exist without a subject...” – as found in his *Sentences* commentary: These are that “no word (*verbum*) shall be impossible for God” and “God can do more than we can understand; but certain philosophers understood and posited dimensions as being separate.”<sup>491</sup> Dietrich can dispose of these arguments very peremptorily, insofar as he thinks he has shown that “God making accidents to exist without a subject” entails the assertion of an explicit contradiction, from which it follows that the proposition in question is not a genuine ‘word’ in the sense intended in the citation from Luke’s gospel (in the first *sed contra*); nor did any philosophers actually understand it (as stated in the second *sed contra*), even if they (falsely) conceived it as being possible. The problem with this argument, however, is that Thomas is well aware of the general principles Dietrich invokes here,<sup>492</sup> but in light of our analysis so far, Dietrich has failed to show that the disputed proposition does in fact involve a contradiction.

Dietrich also dismisses as contradictory the notion that God could make some property of a thing, which belongs (*convenit*) to a thing by reason of its quiddity (*secundum rationem*

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<sup>490</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(6).

<sup>491</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 s.c. 1 & s.c. 2; Dietrich, *DA* 23(8) & (11) (III 87).

<sup>492</sup> Cf., e.g., *ST* I.25.3, in particular the closing of the *responsio*, which makes essentially the same point as Dietrich regarding the possibility of every ‘word’: “But those things which imply a contradiction are not contained under divine omnipotence, because they cannot possess the intelligible account of a possible thing. ... Nor is this opposed to the word of the Angel saying, *no word shall be impossible with God*. For that which implies a contradiction cannot be a *word*, since no intellect can conceive it.” – “Ea vero quae contradictionem implicat, sub divina omnipotentia non continentur, quia non possunt habere possibilium rationem. ... Neque hoc est contra verbum Angeli dicentis, *non erit impossibile apud Deum omne verbum*. Id enim quod contradictionem implicat, verbum esse non potest, quia nullus intellectus potest illud concipere.”

*suae quidditatis*) to not belong to it – so that God could make inherence or being-in not belong to an accident.<sup>493</sup>

This argument is clearly enough addressed to the actual heart of Thomas' defense of the extent of divine potency in respect of separate accidents. Dietrich's verbal formulation is very close to Thomas',<sup>494</sup> but with the difference that Thomas claims that it is possible that what is owed (*debetur*) to a thing in virtue of its quiddity can, by divine power, not belong (*non conveniat*) to it. If one takes a strict view of quiddities such that a quiddity is necessarily complete in itself, self-contained, then one could say that nothing can be 'owed' a quiddity, except what also 'belongs' to it (whether as an intrinsic part of the essence or as a strictly necessary property thereof). To insist, however, that this kind of strict view of quiddity applies to the quiddities of accidents would seem to ignore the fact that, on both Dietrich's view and Thomas', accidents do not have this kind of quiddity. In fact, Thomas' argument is supported precisely by the claim that unlike substances, accidents do not have intrinsically complete real definitions, the key claim affirmed by Dietrich. Accidents can be characterized by their (natural) mode of being, but this is different from saying that this mode of being is properly understood as expressing the intrinsically complete essence of an accident. In order to express this essence, even by Dietrich's account, we have to refer to the particular instrumental causal role of accidents in relation to substances, and on Thomas' account, the accidental mode of being (i.e., being-in), which is a function of the instrumental nature of accidents, turns out to be only naturally, not absolutely, necessary in order for at least one class of accident – dimensive quantity – to exist and to exercise its existential-subjective causal function. Dietrich ignores this functional or operational way of grounding

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<sup>493</sup> As mentioned above, Dietrich argues that one might as well say that God could make a triangle, for example, that didn't have three angles equal to two right angles.

<sup>494</sup> Cf. Dietrich, *DA* 23(14); Thomas Aquinas, *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 2.

the intelligibility of the possible (supernatural) existence of accidents apart from their inherence in a substance.

## 5 The primacy of quantity

As we saw in chapter 2, Thomas had claimed that by a special privilege of divine grace, the Eucharistic accidents – or at least the dimensive quantities – were dispensed from the ‘common law’ requiring the inherence of accidents in a subject (a substance). Dietrich’s first retort to such a claim is that we would have to be joking to think that quantity is ‘more privileged’ than the other accidents, that is, in relation to the common essential account of the being of accidents in relation to substances.<sup>495</sup> Here Dietrich does not primarily or directly address Thomas’ general point about ‘privilege,’ namely, that accorded to separate accidents as such (as distinct from inhering accidents); rather it is to quantity, vis-à-vis accidents in the other categories, that he wants to deny any ontological ‘privilege,’ at least in regard to (his account of) the universal essence of accidents as such.

And yet Dietrich does not in general deny that quantity has a certain kind of existential primacy in relation to the other accidents. To begin with, in *De accidentibus* he calls quantity and quality “the roots and fundamentals of the other seven genera.”<sup>496</sup> He expands on this in his (likely) earlier work “On the origin of the categorial realities” (*De origine rerum praedicamentalium*), highlighting the uniquely ‘privileged’ role of quantity:

But first of all, in everything active and passive and, universally, in motion by nature, there is required quantity according to continuous dimensions. For it is necessary that the active and the passive be simultaneous, as is said in book I of *De generatione et corruptione*; for it is

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<sup>495</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(17) (III 89).

<sup>496</sup> *DA* 7(4) (III 63).

necessary for them to have both distinction and extension, which is accomplished by virtue of quantity, for which reason quantity, according to its genus, is the first of all accidents in nature.<sup>497</sup>

The [accident] ‘where,’ which is thing of a determinate genus, one of the ten, ... is a being, because it is of being according to the notion of a subject, which is a substance, in the way which was stated above of the others. But it inheres in substance by reason of its dimensions, which nature regards prior to substance; and thus it inheres in the subject [i.e., substance] as a function of something else [dimensions] which is found in the same subject. But first of all it inheres by reason of the containing place, which is other than the subject, whence it is said in *Sex principiis* that the [accident] ‘where’ is the circumscription of body [i.e., of substance] proceeding from the [accidental] circumscription of place.<sup>498</sup>

Similarly, in Dietrich’s later treatise on the nature of contraries (*De natura contrariorum*), addressing the necessary conditions for a natural agent to act, he writes:

The first thing we encounter in this connection is variation according to place or site, to which is presupposed dimensive quantity, as much in the naturally acting cause as in the passive [object of action].<sup>499</sup>

These other claims Dietrich makes sound rather amenable to Thomas’ view, that dimensive quantity is the principle of individuation in material reality – i.e., very concretely, the formal

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<sup>497</sup> *De origine* 1(17) (III 142): “Sed primo omnium exigitur *quantitas* secundum *dimensiones continuas* in omnibus activis et passivis et universaliter motivis secundum naturam. Oportet enim activa et passiva esse simul, ut dicitur in I *De generatione et corruptione*; necessarium est etiam ea in suis partibus habere et distinctionem et extensionem, quod fit per quantitatem, unde *quantitas secundum suum genus primum omnium accidentium est in natura*.”

<sup>498</sup> *De origine* 2(55) (III 157) : “ipsum *ubi*, quod est res determinati generis, unum de decem, ipsum, inquam, est ens, quia est entis secundum rationem subiecti, quod est substantia, eo modo, sicut dictum est supra de aliis. Inest autem substantiae ratione *dimensionum suarum*, quas respicit prius natura quam *substantiam*, et ita inest subiecto secundum aliquid aliud, quod attenditur in eodem subiecto. Sed primo omnium inest ex ratione loci continentis, quod est aliud a subiecto, unde in *Sex principiis* dicitur, quod *ubi* est circumscriptio corporis a circumscriptione loci procedens.”

<sup>499</sup> *De natura contrariorum* 70(1) (II 132): “Primum autem, quod in hoc occurrit, est variatio secundum locum vel situm, cui praesupponitur *quantitas dimensiva* tam in causa agente naturaliter quam in passivo.”

principle of material division<sup>500</sup> – so that such a quantity cannot itself be in need of any further principle of individuation.<sup>501</sup> And this apparent harmony with Thomas’ view seems to be confirmed in what is likely Dietrich’s final work, *De corporibus caelestibus*, wherein we find the following passages:

But in generable and corruptible bodies ... the dimensions precede in matter, and they are prior by nature to substantial form, even though the generable and corruptible substantial form is prior to the other accidents in the same substance.<sup>502</sup>

But in these generable and corruptible things, which are present to us, the dimensions in matter precede form. And thus the individual is prior by nature to the being in accordance with a species.<sup>503</sup>

In general, then, Dietrich clearly does recognize, with Thomas, some kind of primary, ‘privileged,’ foundational role – prior even to substantial form<sup>504</sup> – for dimensioned quantity in the actual constitution of individual, existing natural things, and of their natural operations. He rejects, however, the claim that they are actually separable, and this, again, for the simple reason that, whatever else we might say about them, they are accidents, and in light of his definitional determination of the essential being of accidents, a separate accident is simply a contradictory notion. But of course to simply reiterate this argument is to ignore the detailed reasoning Thomas provides for thinking that the divine preservation of a quantity –

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<sup>500</sup> Cf. *InBDT* 4.2: “Materia autem non est diuisibilis nisi per quantitatem; unde Philosophus dicit in I *Physicorum* quod subtracta quantitate remanebit substantia indiuisibilis; et ideo materia efficitur hec et signata, secundum quod subest dimensionibus.” – “But matter is divisible only through quantity. Whence the philosopher say in book I of the *Physics* that with the removal of quantity the substance will remain indivisible. And thus matter is made ‘this’ and determinate following upon its being under dimensions.”

<sup>501</sup> See esp. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 3.

<sup>502</sup> *cael.* 7(4) (II 383): “In corporibus autem generabilibus et corruptibilibus secundum praedicta dimensiones praecedunt in materia et sunt natura priores quam forma substantialis, quamvis forma substantialis generabilis et corruptibilis sit prior aliis accidentibus in eadem substantia.” See also *ibid.*, 6(2).

<sup>503</sup> *cael.* 8(2) (II 384): “In istis autem generabilibus et corruptibilibus, quae sunt apud nos ... praecedunt dimensiones in materia formam. Et sic prius natura est individuum quam ens secundum speciem.”

<sup>504</sup> For discussion, see Flasch (2007), p. 688. We might wonder whether this claim from the last published work in Dietrich’s corpus indicates a flat-out reversal of the position he defended in *De accidentibus*.

apart from the kind of substance it naturally quantifies, and as a subject for quality and the other accidents – is in fact not a contradictory notion.

Dietrich claims that it is also absurd (“intolerably false”) to think that quantity is ‘privileged’ in such a way that the other accidents, even when not separated from substance, inhere in quantity as if in their subject, and only ‘mediately’ in the substance.<sup>505</sup> Thomas does in fact think of quantity and quality on an analogy with matter and form, such that quantity is the subject which is actualized by quality. But all accidents, in any category, are still, in normal circumstances, the accidents of the substance(s) which they accidentally inform. Thus, to say that the bread has a white surface, that it is white in virtue of the whiteness of its surface (where ‘surface’ could be construed as a dimensive quantity), should not be taken to imply (falsely and absurdly) that the bread itself is not white, that is, that the substance is not white in virtue of its own whiteness.<sup>506</sup>

Dietrich argues further that if the other accidents inhered in a separate quantity as in a subject, this would imply (absurdly, unintelligibly) that we would have accidents of an accident, forms of a form, dispositions of a disposition; in other words, a quantity that is hot

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<sup>505</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(18) (III 89).

<sup>506</sup> Cf. Brown (1985), p. 146:

Similarly, just as one accident cannot be a subject of another in the order of material causality, the second cannot be the form of the first in the order of formal causality. Nevertheless, a second accident can be formal with respect to the first:

... there is no form of a form, such that one form provides a subject for another. Still, nothing prevents many forms in the same subject from existing in accordance with a certain ordering; that is, so that one is formal with respect to another, just as color is formal with respect to surface. [*De virtutibus* 2.3 ad 2: “formae non est forma, ita quod una forma praestet subiectum alteri. Nihil tamen prohibet plures formas in eodem subiecto esse secundum quemdam ordinem; scilicet ut una sit formalis respectu alterius, sicut color est formalis respectu superficiei.”]

St. Thomas is stressing the fact that only a substance is the subject of a form. No form is the subject of another form. [Except in one, supernatural case.] Hence no accident can be the real form of a second form. But it can be formal, i.e., it can be prior in order – in the order of formal causality. Color perfects a substance through its surface. Color is less ‘close’ to the substance in the order of efficient and material causality. It is therefore ~~more~~ [less] perfect in the existential order. But color, although more remote, is more perfect in the formal order than quantity. It is a further formal perfection of the subject.

or cold, white or black.<sup>507</sup> Certainly, as a general account of things, this way of thinking about the reality of the objects of our perception would be absurd by Aristotelian standards – but only insofar as the foundational role of substance is ignored. Thomas’ account of transubstantiation, however, does not eliminate the centrality of substance; rather it allows that the divine substance (of Christ’s body) can, in a miraculous way, fulfill the foundational, causal role usually played by the substance of bread (without thereby becoming the proper subject of the accidents thus caused).

Dietrich also argues that by its definition, it is unintelligible to attribute color – i.e., by definition, the boundary of the transparent in a determined body – to a separate quantity, because a ‘separate quantity’ is not a ‘determined body.’ While this latter claim is true in a sense, it also seems clear that the intelligibility of Thomas’ proposal can rest on the plausible assumption that there will be no perceptible, phenomenological difference between a finite body that is colored and the place that is coterminous with that body being colored.<sup>508</sup> And again, the definition of color that refers to the essentiality of body is a quasi-definition: it is not in itself an ultimate, unqualified criterion of conceivability and ontological possibility. And given the phenomenological non-distinction between body and place-that-is-coterminous-with-a-body (i.e., a separate quantity), it also does not follow, as Dietrich argues it does,<sup>509</sup> that a separate quantity must lack qualitative parts, and so lack the interrelated dispositions of these parts, which are responsible for producing various particular qualities and natural tendencies (hot or cold, a particular taste, rarity or density, etc.). If a discrete dimensive quantity can serve as the self-individuating subjective ground

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<sup>507</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(19).

<sup>508</sup> As we have just seen Dietrich himself put it, “the [accident] ‘where’ is the circumscription of body proceeding from the circumscription of place” (*De origine* 2(55)).

<sup>509</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(19).

for quality, then surely it can also serve as the self-individuating subjective ground for qualitative parts, i.e., for the ‘parts posterior to the whole’ which are fundamental to the make-up of any being which has ‘accidental being’ instrumentally grounding its operations. Dietrich himself thinks of accidents as nothing but “the disposition of a substance having parts posterior to the whole.”<sup>510</sup> To this Thomas would just add that his analysis shows – if it needed showing – that something that has ‘parts posterior to the whole’ need not be a substance.

## 6 Dietrich’s methodological complaints

We have already discussed in the preceding chapter some of the issues that arise in Dietrich’s methodological *praemunitio* (his chapter 7).

First, there is the criterial ambiguity of the Augustinian axiom that Dietrich appeals to: that whatever ought to be posited by right reason, we must confess to have been done by God. Since our exercise of right reason provides us only with a limited insight into the truth of things, there is necessarily room in our exercise of reason for employment of the converse axiom: whatever we must confess to have been done by God ought to be posited by right reason.<sup>511</sup> One could, of course, present an argument against revelation, that is, for the claim that the set of things that we must confess to have been done by God cannot, in fact, contain

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<sup>510</sup> *vis.* 3.2.9.2(4) (I 88): “(accidentia) non sunt nisi dispositio substantiae habentis partes posteriores toto.” ‘Parts posterior to the whole’ are *material* parts and contrast with *formal* parts, that is, universal concepts, by means of which we formulate formal definitions which designate the essences of things.

<sup>511</sup> Thomas explicitly rejects the error of those who fail to recognize this: cf. *InBDT* 2.1 co.2: “Secondly, [one can go astray] from the fact that in those things which belong to faith, reason precedes faith, and not faith reason; that is, when someone only wants to believe that which he can discover by reason, [in cases] when it ought to be the other way around.” – “Secundo [contingit in hoc peccare] ex hoc quod in his quae sunt fidei ratio praecedat fidem, non fides rationem, dum scilicet aliquis hoc solum vult credere, quod ratione potest inuenire, cum debeat esse e conuerso.”

anything that was not first contained in the set of whatever ought to be ('independently') posited by right reason.<sup>512</sup> I doubt whether such an argument could plausibly be made, but in any case Dietrich appears to be no more committed to such a position than is Thomas.

Second, with regard to Dietrich's specific warning about the abuse of scripture (in chapter 7 of *De accidentibus*), as mentioned in the previous chapter, it seems impossible to assign any particular concrete import to this vague warning. Indeed, there is nothing in Dietrich's general methodological warnings about the circumspect use of scripture with which Thomas could or would disagree.

In addition, the very fact of raising the difficulty of scriptural interpretation as an issue would seem to exacerbate the difficulty of giving a comprehensive account of the finality of things, insofar as we are thus more directly confronted with the need to go 'beyond Aristotle,' that is, by giving more weight to the notion of a particular history (involving creation, revelation, and incarnation) as being necessarily implicated in our most fully general account of reality, and in particular of finality. Whereas the impossibility of exhaustively assigning particular purposes to particular things is evident enough just in virtue of the evident limitations of human understanding, when we include the purport of divine revelation in our consideration of the overall causal structure of reality, we are, on the one hand, offered greater insight into reality (presuming the genuineness of the revelation); but also, on the other hand, afforded a heightened awareness of our own natural (and naturally – if vaguely – knowable) limitations in regard to understanding that reality.

Dietrich's warning about presumption in the use (or abuse) of scripture could thus, duly

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<sup>512</sup> 'Scientistic' reasoning, for example, aims to axiomatically rule out any knowledge claims that cannot be warranted by methodologies of natural science. Thus, from a 'scientistic' perspective, it is held to be vain to assert that 'God' – or however one conceives of the most fundamental level of causality in the universe – has done anything that is inaccessible to 'experimental verification' (usually of some arbitrarily and inconsistently narrowly-conceived kind).

considered, very well also be taken to imply a parallel warning about presumption in the use (or abuse) of natural reason.

In regard to ‘methodological awareness’ in general, it is important to note that a sound understanding of Thomas’ position will require an appreciation of the systematic – as opposed to *ad hoc* – nature of Thomas’ three-part defense of separability.<sup>513</sup> If we consider Thomas’ overall argument, we can see that its structured articulation implies that the separation of one thing from another could be impossible for a number of reasons, each of which Thomas recognizes as in turn requiring due consideration. One way to understand the complexity of the problem is to note that there are different, complementary approaches to understanding a thing, which correspond to Thomas’ successive analyses of divine causality, essential definition, and primacy of quantity. First, any created thing can be understood as dependent, as not self-sufficient (not *a se*, not from itself), thus as grasped in terms of its being fundamentally and intrinsically causally constituted by (or through) another (or others) (efficiently and/or finally). Secondly, a thing can be understood as being in itself, as being described by a term having a particular meaning, as having a definition, a definite nature (grasped in virtue of the formal ‘adequation’ between intellect and thing). And thirdly, a thing can be grasped in terms of certain concrete, material conditions in terms of which the possibility of its actually existing can be seen to be intelligible (in the case of corporeal, spatio-temporally located entities, dimensive quantity is necessary). (We could also draw a loose correspondence here to the three modes, according to Aquinas, in which God is (omni)present to creatures: by his power (as creator); by his knowing presence (his omniscient providence); and through his essence (as immediate cause of being).<sup>514</sup>)

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<sup>513</sup> See above, parts 3, 4, and 5 of the conclusion to Chapter 2.

<sup>514</sup> Cf. *ST* I.8.3.

The distinction between the first two approaches – causal origin vs. formal nature – is crucial. To take an example, in Thomas’ commentary on Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he discusses the resurrection of Christ as the instrumental (and exemplary) cause of the resurrection of all men. Thomas notes that the effect in question – the general resurrection – could still have taken place apart from the particular cause – Christ and his resurrection – whence in fact it obtains, and Thomas indicates that we need to avoid mistaking a claim about the *de facto* necessity of some ordained (efficient) causal connection, for a claim about the kind of fundamental necessity that would necessarily obtain in every possible world (so to speak):

when something receives its ordering [towards something else] from some cause, the argument must proceed towards a consideration of that cause, the ordering [power] of that cause being preserved [i.e., its dynamic, efficient role in establishing (that particular) order being duly considered].<sup>515</sup>

In other words, our apprehension of some revelation that regards a particular (efficient or final) ordering of things – and likewise the philosopher’s apprehension of the intrinsic (formal) natural being of a thing – must be understood as a limited apprehension, commensurate in its certitude and necessity with the limitations (the non-necessity, the contingency) of the established order of which it forms a part, and it must be distinguished from the more complete and absolute apprehension that would be afforded by a consideration of the situation in light of the intrinsic nature of the first principle(s) in virtue of which such an order exists in the first place.

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<sup>515</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Super I Cor.*, cap. 15, lc. 2: “quando aliquid ordinatur ab aliqua causa, debet argumentari ad illud, servato ordine illius causae.”

Dietrich, too, clearly recognizes at least two fundamental ways, corresponding to the first two approaches just mentioned, in which philosophers can understand the notion of being (*ens*) as such:

In one way a thing is said to have the intelligible nature of being insofar as it is traced back to the first principle of all beings as to its cause... In another way it is called a being, as such, according as each thing holds together on the basis of its intrinsic principles...<sup>516</sup>

As Aertsen explains,<sup>517</sup> these conceptions of being, when construed as alternatives, can be correlated to differing accounts of the *transcendentia* (being, unity, truth, goodness, thing, etc.): the former, more Platonic, causal account as privileging goodness, or the one, as prior to and causative of being; the latter, more Aristotelian, onto-logical account as emphasizing the primacy of being in itself. Without addressing the important subject of the transcendentals in any detail, we can note that both Thomas<sup>518</sup> and Dietrich certainly accept at least the legitimacy of both of these transcendental perspectives. But as Aertsen notes, Dietrich does not undertake to explain the relationship between the two.<sup>519</sup> Instead he tends to simply adopt the latter perspective as the correct one for metaphysical investigation and focuses on being as intrinsic essence, so that consideration of the formal causes (the essences or quiddities) of things becomes isolated from consideration of their efficient and final – as well as material – causes.<sup>520</sup> Such a one-sided emphasis seems *ad hoc*, and to the extent that

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<sup>516</sup> Dietrich, *De origine* 5(38) (III 192); cf. *vis.* 3.2.9.1 (3) (I 86).

<sup>517</sup> Cf. Aertsen 1999, p. 35-36, 41-42.

<sup>518</sup> See, e.g., *ST* I.5.2.

<sup>519</sup> Aertsen 1999, p. 36: “Das Verhältnis zwischen beiden Seinsbegriffen wird von Dietrich nicht eigens thematisiert.”

<sup>520</sup> Cf. Dietrich, *De origine* 5(61) (III 199): “Since the metaphysician considers being as *being*, which consideration is of a being by *essence*, according to the notion of its *quiddity*, excluding from the thing its causes, as much those that are *efficient* as those that are *final*, hence it is that he properly defines solely through the formal cause.” Cf. *quid.* 2(3) (III 100). This tendency of Dietrich is confirmed in the argumentative emphasis found in the *De accidentibus*, as it is in Flasch’s assessment of Dietrich as a metaphysician (cf., e.g., Flasch 2007, p. 695).

Dietrich's arguments depend upon an arbitrarily one-sided view of things, those arguments will simply be inadequate, or will at best have only a relativized validity.

## 7 Conclusion

At the conclusion of his treatise on accidents, Dietrich ends by scolding his opponents for their inconsistent argumentative strategy: first using notions or arguments (*rationes*) drawn from the nature and properties of things; then, when this strategy fails, defending themselves by taking recourse to a miracle, worked by supernatural power.<sup>521</sup> But, as mentioned at the conclusion of the last chapter, this characterization seems not at all to fit with Thomas' actual argumentative procedure: the appeal to the supernatural is not at all an *ad hoc* afterthought.<sup>522</sup>

And so, on the whole, it appears that Dietrich's argument is unsuccessful. He certainly appears to aim at mounting a fundamental metaphysical critique of any possible existence of accidents apart from a substance as their subject. However, his argument suffers from a number of shortcomings. First, the methodological principles he invokes are idle. Second, his 'operational' grounding of the existence of things starts out well enough, but then strays towards a dogmatic insistence on a particular rigid construal of abstracted formal definitions, while failing to address the import of Thomas' specific arguments about the proper, more flexible way to conceive of general quasi-definitional characterizations of the categories of substance and accident. Third, the groundlessness of his rigid construal of his definitions of

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<sup>521</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(22) (III 90).

<sup>522</sup> While this charge ill-fits Thomas' argumentation for the separability of accidents, it might well be more plausibly applied to other treatments of the subject. For example, James of Viterbo's argumentative procedure, in his *Quodl.* II.1, seems to fit Dietrich's characterization much better (James was one of Dietrich's contemporaries in Paris in the 1290's).

accidents results in the failure of his attempt to ground the impossibility of separate accidents in straightforward formal contradiction. Consequently, his attempts to refute Thomas' specific arguments for the separability of accidents rely too much on his appeal to such contradiction, and so fail to engage, except in a superficial and unconvincing way, with the detailed causal dynamics grounding the conceptual coherence of Thomas' proposal.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis of recent discussions of Dietrich's case against Thomas**

In this chapter I will review the secondary literature which directly addresses our subject and examine what I deem to be the principal metaphysical, theological, methodological, and interpretive issues that appear in the various analyses of the dispute between Thomas and Dietrich over the separability of accidents. I will first discuss Armand Maurer's view, that the root of Dietrich's rejection of Thomas' view on the separability of accidents is his rejection of the real distinction between essence and existence. Then I will review and critique in some detail Kurt Flasch's analysis of Thomas' and Dietrich's respective positions, which is of particular interest both for the details of its unconvincing analysis, and for the docile acceptance with which this analysis has been received. Third, I will discuss the analyses of three authors – R. Imbach, C. König-Pralong, and K-H. Kandler – who take Flasch's analysis to be a reliable point of departure, and who, on this basis, offer different interpretations of the more general conceptual and methodological framework of philosophy vs. theology within which Dietrich develops his critique of Thomas. In conclusion I offer some remarks addressed to doubts about the status of the question of the separability of accidents as an actual 'philosophical' question.

Naturally the analysis here will proceed on the basis of the analysis provided in the preceding chapter, and the responses provided here to the various criticisms found in the recent literature will aim to confirm the plausibility and probability of Thomas' position, as I have expounded it, in the face of those criticisms. And in the course of pointing out the shortcomings found in the existing attempts to analyse (and defend) Dietrich's arguments in

light of varying interpretations of his general principles and views, my present analyses will also aim to confirm the cogency of my reading of Dietrich's *De accidentibus*, as against the different readings found in the literature.

## 1 Armand Maurer and the relevance of the *esse-essentia* distinction

Writing in 1956, Armand Maurer cautioned against the inexactness, at least, of the interpretation of Thomas' doctrine of accidents found in Dietrich's *De accidentibus*.<sup>523</sup> But Maurer showed little interest in directly analyzing the ultimate cogency of Dietrich's arguments against Thomas. Rather, he is content to interpret the disagreement between the two Dominicans as stemming from "a more fundamental opposition on the meaning of being itself: Two metaphysical views of reality are here at stake: one which sees reality primarily as existential act" – i.e., *esse* – this is supposed to be Thomas' view – "and the other which sees it primarily as essence and quiddity"<sup>524</sup> – this is supposed to be Dietrich's view.

The claim, however, that Aquinas sees reality "primarily as existential act," and thus *not* "primarily as essence and quiddity," makes little sense, so far as I can see; nor can I see what sense it would make for Dietrich – or anyone else – to see reality "primarily as essence and quiddity" and *not* "primarily as existential act" – especially when we recall that his claim is precisely that essence and *esse* are in fact identical. For Aquinas, to be sure, there are compelling metaphysical reasons for recognizing a real distinction between existential act (*esse*) and essence (*essentia*) in every created being (*ens creatum*)<sup>525</sup>; but he does not give

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<sup>523</sup> Maurer 1990, p. 195: "If it is indeed St. Thomas' doctrine of accident which is the object of Dietrich's criticism, his interpretation of it can hardly be said to be exact." Maurer explicates this claim by clarifying that, apart from the Eucharist, Thomas never attributed essence or *esse* to accidents. On this point, as we will see, it would seem that Maurer's own interpretation is less than exact.

<sup>524</sup> Maurer 1990, p. 199.

<sup>525</sup> Thomas' account of the distinction between *esse* and *essentia* has been the subject of a voluminous literature. Thomas offers numerous arguments for their real distinction. See, e.g., Wippel (2000), pp. 132-76, where Wippel reviews five different ways – ways which, in Wippel's view, are independent of arguments for

‘primacy’ to one, at the expense of the other, in accounting for the reality of any (or all) created being(s). Indeed, the point, for Thomas, is to recognize the distinct and strictly necessary role of each.<sup>526</sup>

In any case, Maurer tells us that the “decisive factor” in Dietrich’s criticism of Thomas’ account of accidents is “his rejection of the Thomistic notion of being [*ens*] with its real composition of essence and *esse*.”<sup>527</sup> But while omitting to address the question as to whether this rejection is itself metaphysically tenable, he nonetheless feels justified in claiming that Dietrich’s merit as a metaphysician lies in the fact that his view is metaphysically consistent (and, more specifically, consistently Aristotelian and Averroistic). According to Maurer, Dietrich “prefers” a basic metaphysical view of reality which sees it “primarily as essence and quiddity,” and “having made this choice, he consistently drew from it its manifold implications.”<sup>528</sup>

The first problem, however, with Maurer’s analysis, is that a basic metaphysical view of reality cannot be based on simply adopting, based on one’s preference, some particular point of view – say, an *onto-logical* (i.e., supposedly more Aristotelian, focusing on immanent being) consideration of being – as ‘fundamental,’ and similarly (based on preference)

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the existence of God – by which Thomas argues for the real distinction of essence and existence. Wipfel holds that Thomas has still further ways of making the argument once the existence of God is established.

<sup>526</sup> In respect of the *re-ality* of any created thing (of any *res*), it must be accountable in terms *both* of actually being (or existing) *and* as being something (i.e., something definite, essential, quidditative). Neither Thomas nor Dietrich would hold that one of these elements is less necessary than the other; each is absolutely necessary, and this is so independently of whether one holds with Thomas that the distinction is real, or with Dietrich that it is only conceptual, that is, a question merely of different *modi significandi* (modes of signifying).

<sup>527</sup> Maurer 1990, p. 192. Maurer is referring to Dietrich’s criticism, in Dietrich’s treatise *De ente et essentia*, of Thomas’ doctrine, in his *De ente et essentia*.

<sup>528</sup> Maurer 1990, p. 199: “Two metaphysical views of reality are here at stake: one which sees reality primarily as existential act, and the other which sees it primarily as essence and quiddity. Dietrich recognizes the new direction of St. Thomas’ metaphysics and its un-Aristotelian character. But he himself prefers the second type of metaphysics, which he found in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* as interpreted by Averroes. Dietrich’s merit as a metaphysician lies in the fact that, having made this choice, he consistently drew from it its manifold implications.”

rejecting alternate views – say, a primarily *causal* view (one that is more ‘Platonic,’ i.e., that emphasizes the constitution of things in relation to the good, to their ends (whether intrinsic or extrinsic)).<sup>529</sup> A properly metaphysical view is supposed to constitute genuine knowledge, and so must be rationally grounded, not simply adopted on the basis of an apparently arbitrary preference.

Further, while Maurer claims that Dietrich’s position is based on “consistently” drawing forth the “manifold implications” of his doctrine of being (and essence), he fails to provide convincing explanations of how the conclusions Dietrich draws – in particular, about the absolute inseparability of accidents – actually constitute genuine implications of his “basic metaphysical view of reality.”<sup>530</sup> The reader can note that in the analysis of the preceding chapter I have argued that Dietrich’s position is not consistently argued, and, *pace* Maurer, the issue of the real distinction between *esse* and *essentia* was not (certainly not explicitly) featured as relevant to understanding Thomas and Dietrich’s dispute over separability, never mind as the decisive factor. Consider the basic claim that Dietrich wants to criticize: that God can maintain an accident in its being (*in suo esse*), even with the removal of its (substantial) subject (cf. *DA* 23(3) (III 86)). Thomas never suggests that this possibility is due to the fact that separated accidents have an act of being (*esse*) which is really distinct from their essence – as if Thomas’ view were that separate accidents exist, but,

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<sup>529</sup> See above, ch. 4, §6, for discussion of this (essentially heuristic) dichotomy.

<sup>530</sup> Here it may also be worthwhile to mark the distinction between a ‘basic metaphysical view of reality’ and a ‘basic methodological view of metaphysics’ (or of rational inquiry in general). The content and consistency of each may be implicated *in* the content and consistency of the other, but we should avoid conflating the analysis of one with the analysis of the other – say, by thinking that one (e.g., Dietrich’s ‘rationalist’ philosophical methodology) might be simply an implication *of* the other (i.e., of his metaphysical views). Attempts to specify Dietrich’s philosophical methodology in relation to his metaphysical views will be discussed further in subsequent sections of this chapter.

supernaturally, apart from their own essences (Thomas does not believe this).<sup>531</sup> Nor does Dietrich argue that the impossibility of separate accidents is simply a consequence of there being no real distinction between the essences of things (including accidents) and their acts of being (although he would agree that there is no such real distinction).<sup>532</sup> Maurer's claim, that the disagreement about accidents follows (as an 'implication') from the more basic metaphysical disagreement about *esse* and *essentia*, thus seems unwarranted.

William Wallace provides an assessment that is more to the point if we want to correctly understand the relevance of Thomas' and Dietrich's differing ideas of essence and *esse*.

Wallace writes:

[Dietrich] insisted on plain etymological definitions of essence and *esse*,<sup>533</sup> and talked only of the actual, existent world, rather than become involved in difficulties about possibility and aptitudinal being. He by-passed from the outset the problems which interested orthodox Thomists, and substituted simpler definitions for essence and quiddity based on the Aristotelian questions, *an sit* and *quid sit*. Thereby does Theodoric's [i.e., Dietrich's] notion of essence come closer to Thomas' notion of existence, and his notion of *quid* closer to Thomas' idea of essence, although they are by no means equivalent. As a result, there is no

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<sup>531</sup> As noted earlier, Jörgen Vijgen (2013, p. 180-181) appears to attribute this odd view to Aquinas, but his analysis is clearly problematic (see above Chapter 2, §2.2.1 for critical analysis of his view).

<sup>532</sup> Dietrich's argument rests rather on the claim – which he acknowledges is a strange-sounding one (cf. *int.* III 16(4); above, ch.3, §4.1.5) – that the substance is the quiddity of an accident. (Nor is this latter claim a consequence of his position on the real identity of existence and essence in created beings.)

<sup>533</sup> That is to say, Dietrich insists that *esse* and *essentia* differ only in regard to their *modes of signifying*; cf. Dietrich, *De ente et essentia* 1.5(1) (II 31): “Now essence and *esse* are to be considered, and in regard to them is should be known that they have the same import in their signification ... namely, the whole essence of the thing ... even though they differ in their modes of signifying, so that *esse* signifies in the mode of act, but being (*ens*) and being-ness (*entitas*) signify in the mode of habit and of resting. And also in this way essence and *esse* differ.” – “Nunc de *essentia* et *esse* considerandum, et circa ea notandum, quod idem important in sua significatione ... videlicet totam rei essentiam ... quamvis differant in modis significandi, ut videlicet *esse* significet per modum actus, idem autem significant *ens* et *entitas* per modum habitus et quietis. Et sic etiam differunt *essentia* et *esse*.”

clearly defined issue between Theodoric and Thomas over the real distinction, because by definition they are not talking about the same thing.<sup>534</sup>

Wallace's analysis here does not preclude any relevance of the *esse-essentia* distinction, and perhaps it would suggest that an alternate method of analyzing Dietrich's treatise on accidents would be to attempt a systematic translation of the ontological idiom of Dietrich into that of Thomas – so that the issue between the two would be more clearly defined – and to proceed to an evaluation of the respective force of the two men's arguments on the basis of this translation. But whether or not such a project would be actually feasible, it seems unlikely that this would be a particularly fruitful exercise, insofar as Dietrich's analysis, as we have considered it just on its own terms in the previous chapter, does not present a metaphysically compelling argument against the separability of accidents (or a methodologically consistent or coherent one). Meanwhile, even if we thoroughly analyzed the semantic shifts and resulting conceptual correlations to which Wallace alludes here, it would still be important to recognize that the proposal – even an emphatic proposal which invokes the authority of Augustine and Aristotle – of an alternate semantic interpretation for basic ontological terms (assuming that this is an apt way to characterize Dietrich's reconfiguration of Thomas' ontological vocabulary) will in any case not be sufficient for the establishment of alternate ontological, metaphysical claims.<sup>535</sup> Ontological commitments

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<sup>534</sup> Wallace 1959, p. 77.

<sup>535</sup> Gyula Klima, in the context of the new (*via moderna*) semantic framework developed by Ockham and other nominalists, has discussed “the logical independence of widely different ontological alternatives from the alternative semantic frameworks [in which they are framed]” (Klima 1991, p. 589). Klima also has an interesting discussion of how a new semantics, in spite of its *logical independence* from ontological alternatives, can result in a changed research program for ontology. In the case of Dietrich, Wallace (1959) argues that Dietrich's dialectical method for establishing definitions of accidents – as exemplified in the *De accidentibus* – is a key part of his general methodology for scientific research, which bore fruit in his scientifically verified explanations of certain rainbow phenomena; but, as Wallace notes, this is not to say that Dietrich's particular arguments in the *De accidentibus* remain within the just limits of that methodology. Rather, “in all fairness to Thomas,” Wallace writes, “Theodoric's arguments [against the separability of accidents] on their own terms seem to conclude beyond their premises.” (Wallace 1959, p. 77)

must be *expressed* in terms of some particular semantic framework; but they are not *determined* simply in virtue of whatever semantic framework we happen to use. For instance, we could accept, at least for the sake of argument, Dietrich's claims about the correct usage of *esse* and *essentia*, namely, that these terms signify the same reality but according to different modes of signifying; but this would not entail that the *esse/essentia* of accidents was in fact simply identical to – and absolutely inseparable from – the *esse/essentia* of their subject (a substance). An argument is still required if one wants to establish the latter proposition (or its negation), and this is true regardless of which semantic framework one adopts for expressing that argument.

Besides the problem of the actual consistency of Dietrich's position and cogency of his arguments, a second general problem with the emphasis in Maurer's analysis on the distinction (vs. non-distinction) between *esse* and *essentia* is that the basic understanding of Aquinas' doctrine of accidents which Maurer himself proposes is – arguably, at least – based on an untenable reading of Aquinas. Maurer claims that accidents do not ordinarily – i.e., apart from their miraculous status in the Eucharist – have their own act of being (*esse*) (or their own essence).<sup>536</sup> This interpretation of Thomas' doctrine has been widespread, notably being found in Etienne Gilson's 1956 *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*. A comment in this work of Gilson's was the key impetus for Barry F. Brown's monograph on Aquinas' understanding of accidental being, wherein Brown convincingly demonstrates that for Thomas accidents cannot be assimilated to substances as merely formal aspects thereof; rather, they are assimilated to substance in the order of efficient causality, so that they have a genuine act of being (*esse*) of their own, which remains nonetheless that of the substance

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<sup>536</sup> Maurer 1990, p. 195: "St. Thomas himself never attributed to accidents their own essence or *esse*, except in the case of the Eucharist. Accidents have no existence of their own; only substances exist."

(which is involved in efficiently causing it).<sup>537</sup> We can recall that Dietrich himself holds that natural accidents must be distinguished from formal properties (*per se passiones*), since they are really “certain things having the import of some positive nature in substance”<sup>538</sup>; and this too indicates that accidents indeed have their own existential reality, though it is diminished from, and proportional to, that of substances. Brown also argues convincingly that if accidents ordinarily lacked their own act of being, they would only be distinct from substance by a distinction of reason (*secundum rationem*), which would imperil the reality of accidental change.<sup>539</sup> Brown’s analysis thus seems to confirm that the key to Aquinas’ account of separate accidents is just his general causal analysis of accidents in relation to substances and God. It is not, as Maurer maintained, the real distinction between essence and act of being; this distinction is not the basis of the real separability of accidents from substance.<sup>540</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Cf. Brown 1985, p. xi, and especially p. 110: “We have made an effort, therefore, to show from texts which deal with purely philosophical matters, without relying on these latter [theological (Eucharistic)] texts, that St. Thomas consistently held that accidents are naturally conserved in their being by their substances, through efficient causality. This indicates that they have their own *esse*, as would any effect of efficient causes. The theological texts simply confirm this.” Fabrizio Amerini frames his analysis rather differently, but he too affirms that the correct reading of Aquinas seems to be “that separate accidents have the *same* being they had before the Consecration, with the sole difference that such being is now self-subsistent being” [albeit still with an essential *tendency* to inhere] (Amerini 2006, p. 111). Wippel offers a limited critique of Brown’s 1985 analysis of Thomas on the essence and *esse* of accidents (see Wippel 2000, pp. 253-265), calling part of his interpretation “valiant” but “somewhat forced” (p.264). I find Wippel’s critique of Brown’s interpretation not very cogent, in part because he declines to offer any real analytical critique of the actual arguments that constitute Brown’s “valiant” interpretation (specifically, of a problematic passage from *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 1, ad 8), and in part because I find the alternative interpretation he offers (see p. 265) to be unintelligible. But in any case, Wippel too affirms – as against Maurer – that “Thomas consistently [and not only in relation to the Eucharist] defended the reality of an accidental being (*esse*) which is distinct, and really distinct, from the substantial act of being of its subject” (p. 265).

<sup>538</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *DA* 2(2) (III 55).

<sup>539</sup> Cf. Brown 1985, p. 119.

<sup>540</sup> Thomas distinguishes essence from act of being (*esse*) in all created beings, and this intrinsic composition distinguishes creatures from God; the role of the essence-*esse* distinction is not to distinguish accidents from substances, nor does it ground the intelligibility of separate accidents.

## 2 Kurt Flasch

As mentioned, Kurt Flasch's interpretive analysis of the dispute between Thomas and Dietrich has been influential upon subsequent analyses.<sup>541</sup> Flasch's general position – and attitude – towards the respective positions of Thomas and Dietrich is well-summarized in the following statement from his initial (1983) introduction to Dietrich's *De accidentibus*:

The theory of accidents in the works of Thomas was an intentional mixture of consistency and inconsistency. But without Dietrich of Freiberg's treatise *De accidentibus*, we would have to be permanently in doubt as to whether this was recognizable for a man of the Middle Ages, or whether we pass judgment from a later perspective, one influenced [codetermined, attuned (*mitbestimmt*)] by the Enlightenment.<sup>542</sup>

Flasch makes this statement as a preface to endorsing Dietrich's parting shot in *De accidentibus*, regarding the methodological inconsistency of his opponents: that they try to argue by appealing to the real natures and properties of things, and when this fails, appeal to a miracle.<sup>543</sup> Commenting on this allegation of Dietrich's, Flasch continues: "This means no more and no less than that someone, some 15 years after Thomas' death, found the procedure of intellectual seesawing in his ontology of accidents inconsistent and deserving of scorn."<sup>544</sup> Flasch grounds his endorsement of this scornful perspective – that both of

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<sup>541</sup> Flasch has given three quite detailed expositions: The first is found in the introduction to the third volume of Dietrich's *Opera Omnia*, published in 1983. The second, published in 2007, is found in his comprehensive study of Dietrich's works, *Dietrich von Freiberg: Philosophie, Theologie, Naturforschung um 1300*. And the third serves as the introduction to Catherine König-Pralong's 2008 French translation of *De accidentibus* (as well as of *De quidditatibus entium*). There is little variation between these three accounts.

<sup>542</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LVII: "Die Theorie des Akzidens bei Thomas war eine absichtsvolle Mischung von Konsequenz und Inkonsequenz – aber ohne den Traktat Dietrichs von Freiberg *De accidentibus* müßten wir ständig im Zweifel sein, ob dies für einen Menschen des Mittelalters schon erkennbar war oder ob wir aus einer späteren, durch die Aufklärung mitbestimmten Perspektive urteilen." Kandler (2010, p. 94) cites this claim, and says of it: "Flasch certainly judges rightly" ("Flasch urteilt sicher zu Recht").

<sup>543</sup> Cf. *DA* 23(22) (III 90).

<sup>544</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LVIII: "Dies heißt nicht mehr und nicht weniger, als daß jemand, etwa 15 Jahre nach Thomas' Tod, die intellektuelle Schaukelpolitik in dessen Ontologie des Akzidens inkonsequent und verächtlich fand."

Dietrich, and of post-Enlightenment thinkers like himself – by reference to Dietrich’s claim in *DA* 19(2), where he says that his interlocutors distinguish between what is naturally possible and what is supernaturally possible. Flasch comments: “Dietrich criticized that Thomas had been able to teach as much the radical dependence [of the accident], as its occasional independence. He demanded an end to this unclear juxtaposition.”<sup>545</sup> What Flasch doesn’t explain here is what exactly *is* ‘unclear’ about Thomas’ distinction. He seems to be straightforwardly committing the fallacy of *secundum quid et simpliciter*: failing to recognize that what is true *secundum quid* (with qualification, for a certain context) need not be true *simpliciter* (absolutely). But evidently he doesn’t see it this way. To understand Flasch’s endorsement of Dietrich’s critique of separate accidents, we will begin by analyzing his account of Thomas’ position, and then look at his analysis of Dietrich’s critique.

## 2.1 Flasch on Aquinas on Transubstantiation

### 2.1.1 Divine privilege

Flasch begins<sup>546</sup> by discussing Thomas’ appeal to the notion of divine ‘privilege,’ whereby God reserves to himself the doing of certain things, beyond the common law of nature.<sup>547</sup> Unpacking this claim, Flasch begins by telling us: “It would be unfair to demand the Newtonian concept of the strict law of nature from Thomas.” He expands on this by noting: “The ‘usual law of nature’ – *secundum communem legem naturae* – of Aristotelian

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<sup>545</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LVIII: “Dietrich kritisierte, daß Thomas sowohl die radikale Dependenz wie seine gelegentliche Independenz hat lehren können. Er verlangte, daß dieses unklare Nebeneinander aufhöre.”

<sup>546</sup> Cf. Flasch 1983, pp. LII-LIII. Also Flasch 2007, pp. 267-268.

<sup>547</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *InSent* IV.12.1.1.2 ad 1; *ST* III.77.1 ad 1.

[and, by implication, of Thomistic] physics allowed for exceptions in the sublunary world.<sup>548</sup>

But immediately we should ask: why does Flasch mention these points about Newtonian and Aristotelian physics? Thomas' Eucharistic *metaphysics* is concerned with an understanding of reality in terms of the real teleological operations of real agents, substances – and in particular, intelligent, even omnipotent, ones. To this understanding, the idealized abstract mathematical models of space-time dynamics, which constitutes the form of the laws of Newtonian mechanics, simply does not apply. To demand a 'strict Newtonian conception of laws,' then, would not be unfair – as Flasch puts it – so much as nonsensical.

As for the 'exceptions' in Aristotelian physics, these have nothing at all to do with the intelligent, extraordinary exercise of a transcendent, sovereign power; rather they are a function of the inherent indeterminacy of the material potency of hylemorphic beings. They are thus quite different in kind from – and, *prima facie*, irrelevant to – the intelligence-grounded (rational-volitional) exceptions relating to the exercise of royal or divine privilege (just as the 'strict' laws of Newtonian mechanics are). Flasch's reminder to his readers that in the irrefragably 'medieval' 13<sup>th</sup> century Thomas was, understandably, not standing on the same giant's shoulders that Newton later stood on (i.e., in this case, so as to be able to formulate the concept of a 'strict law of nature') is thus puzzling, since the relative 'strictness' of 'laws of nature' – whether Aristotelian or Newtonian – seems to be strictly irrelevant here. Flasch goes on to explicitly claim that Thomas' "appeal to the experience of special privileges in the medieval state" served to put the "ontological foundation of accidents through substance on the same level as particular natural events, which occur

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<sup>548</sup> Flasch 2007, p. 267: "Es wäre ungerecht, von Thomas den Newton'schen Begriff des strengen Naturgesetzes zu verlangen. Das 'gewöhnliche Naturgesetz,' *secundum communem legem naturae*, der aristotelischen Physik ließ in der sublunaren Sphäre Ausnahmen zu." Cf. Flasch 1983, p. LII.

regularly, but not exceptionlessly.”<sup>549</sup> But again, this characterization seems to be groundless: simply accepting Flasch’s claim at face value, it would seem to imply that a rational agent’s choice to make an exception in the application of some positive law (e.g., the commutation of a death sentence) is on the “same level” as the failure of some natural agent or process to achieve its normal end (as, for example, in the occurrence of deformed offspring, or of an unusual period of drought).

Flasch claims that the plausibility of Thomas’ appeal to ‘divine privilege’ was derived from its analogy to human politics<sup>550</sup>: it is an extension of the kind of special privilege by which the ruler of the medieval state would trigger a change in the effective administrative regime of a place in virtue of his visiting there; or presumably by which – unconstrained by any governing constitution – he could simply suspend the application of the common law in particular cases.

At the same time, however, as Flasch notes, Thomas did not want to declare that God’s omnipotence was exempt from ‘constitutional’ regulation by the law of non-contradiction – and neither did he want to suggest that the claim that God cannot produce a contradictory state of affairs should leave entirely beyond our ken what should count as a contradictory state of affairs.<sup>551</sup> These two points about Thomas’ position are correct, and are obviously in accord with what he tries to accomplish with his overall argument for the metaphysical possibility of separate accidents.

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<sup>549</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LII: “Damit setzte Thomas die ontologische Fundierung des Akzidents durch die Substanz auf dieselbe Stufe wie bestimmte regelmäßige, aber nicht ausnahmslos eintretende Naturereignisse.” Cf. Flasch 2007, p. 267-268.

<sup>550</sup> Flasch claims (Flasch 1983, p. LII) that Thomas’ argument is a “political comparison that was supposed to make the exceptional status of the accidents after the change plausible.” -- “Zunächst brachte er einen politischen Vergleich, der die Ausnahmestellung der Akzidentien nach der Wandlung plausibel machen sollte.” Cf. Flasch 2007, p. 267.

<sup>551</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LII: “Thomas hat versucht, diesen Widerspruch [*between separate accidents and the Aristotelian ontology of accidents*] zu überbrücken: er hat weder...Gottes Allmacht vom Widerspruchsprinzip absolvieren noch...alles Nähere offenlassen wollen.”

But Flasch seems to suggest – quite mistakenly, in my view – that the ‘plausibility,’ in metaphysics, of there being different modes of necessity (and possibility) governing the actions (and effects) of different (kinds of) agents is essentially in need of motivation by an analogy to human politics, and is especially tied to the unenlightened, medieval experience of politics. In fact, it is perfectly plausible, and even obvious, at least from an Aristotelian perspective, to think that different agents (‘political’ or not) may have different causal powers, and Thomas’ comparison simply calls attention to this seemingly obvious fact; in itself, it is not supposed to make plausible any particular possible status of the Eucharistic accidents, and it is misleading for Flasch to intimate that there is anything weirdly medieval about the concept of such ‘privilege.’

Flasch further contends that Thomas reduces the inner necessity of the (Aristotelian) ontological structure of the substance-accident relationship to a merely *de facto* connection: an accident’s definitional relation to substance is thereby interpreted so as to have no real significance, as “a contingent relation, only knowable with probability, for the majority of cases”<sup>552</sup> – just as one could only surmise what unpredictable actions a monarch might take, in respect of laws which he is not strictly bound to follow.

But this argument is clearly misleading: There is no question whatsoever in Thomas’ account of some kind of merely probabilistic association of accidents and substances. Accidents still always have a diminished kind of being in relation to substances, and are always intrinsically ordered towards substances (as the instrumental causes for their operations); and the exceptional cases, where accidents do not inhere in a substance, do not occur probabilistically, but in a perfectly orderly way, under very tightly circumscribed,

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<sup>552</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LIII: “Aber er entleerte den Gehalt dieses Grundsatzes, indem er das definitionsgemäße Enthaltensein der Substanz im Akzidens auflöste oder als ein kontingentes, nur mit Wahrscheinlichkeit für die Mehrzahl der Fälle wißbares Verhältnis interpretierte.” Cf. Flasch 2007, p. 268.

clearly delineated conditions. One could just as well say that the recognition of a right to use deadly force for purposes of self-defense implies that the moral prohibition of murder is meaningless, or only applies with probability, in the majority of cases.

But Flasch pursues this line of thought further: given his inaccurate interpretation of Thomas' position, he naturally enough sees the 'concessions' to divine privilege that it implies as being of great significance:

This was a disempowering of reason of great moment: Someone who assented to this thought of Thomas of Aquino could no longer order his experience of the world with certainty. If not even the cohesion of substance and accident, paradigmatic for the whole Aristotelian philosophy, was secured, if God – without harm to the principle of contradiction – could at any time, on the basis of a 'special privilege,' suspend it, then one could never know when the world was showing us only an accidental appearance.<sup>553</sup>

One could *never know*. It is far from obvious, at least *prima facie*, what it is that would compel us to draw this radically skeptical conclusion. But Flasch goes on to explain his assertion:

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<sup>553</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LIII:

Dies war eine Depotenziierung der Vernunft von großer Tragweite: Wer diesem Gedanken des Thomas von Aquin zustimmte, konnte seine Welterfahrung nicht mehr mit Gewißheit ordnen. Wenn nicht einmal der für die gesamte aristotelische Philosophie paradigmatische Zusammenhalt von Substanz und Akzidens gesichert war, *wenn Gott ihn* – ohne das Widerspruchsprinzip zu verletzen – *jederzeit aus einem „speziellen Privileg“ suspendieren konnte, konnte man nie wissen, wann uns die Welt nur einen akzidentellen Schein zeigte.*

Cf. Flasch 2007, p. 268. Kandler (2010) comes close to plagiarizing this passage, except Kandler misrepresents Aquinas even more badly than Flasch by substituting "the principle of non-contradiction" for Flasch's "cohesion of substance and accident"; cf. Kandler 2010, p. 94:

Thomas wanted, elsewhere, to not break the basic principle that God cannot do the contradictory. But here he does it. That had to have far-reaching consequences, for thus one could never know when the world in which we live shows only its accidental appearance, if God from his special privilege can at any time suspend the principle of excluding contradiction.

[Thomas wollte sonst den Grundsatz, dass Gott das Widersprüchliche nicht tun könne, nicht brechen. Hier aber tut er es. Das musste weitgehende Folgen haben, denn so *konnte man ja nie wissen, wann uns die Welt, in der wir leben, nur ihren akzidentellen Schein zeigt, wenn Gott aus seinem speziellen Privileg das Prinzip vom ausschließenden Widerspruch jederzeit aufheben kann.*]

Thomas thereby [by his recognition of divine ‘privilege’] put in question whether one can infer back from accidents, which one grasps as such, to essence – wherein, after all, according to Aristotle, subsists the scientific method. ... Once ontological ground-relations like substance and accident were reinterpreted as a kind of empirical succession, which permits exceptions, the end of metaphysics was near. But Thomas didn’t think about drawing Humean implications from his concession.<sup>554</sup>

Passing over Flasch’s rather hasty characterization of ‘Aristotle’s scientific method,’<sup>555</sup> we can recognize that by Thomas’ account, if we have, say, what appears to be some bread, which is appropriate matter for the sacrament of the altar, then we cannot be certain on the basis of appearances alone – that is, without knowing its history (specifically whether or not it has been validly consecrated) – what its underlying substance is. But it is unclear what Humean implications derive therefrom. In any case, Flasch continues:

(Thomas) wanted to continue, as normal, to lay claim to the rationality, that is, the necessity, of ontological structures; except the ruler of the world was supposed to be able to dispense therefrom. ... [T]he God of Thomas was supposed to be able to proclaim a state of exception. But the reader of Thomas of Aquino couldn’t know when and where the state of exception was to be expected.<sup>556</sup>

In reality, Thomas explains rather carefully just when and where – under what necessary and sufficient conditions – one should expect this state of exception (see, e.g., *ST* III.75.7 ad 1).

In any case, Flasch expands on this last claim in his 2007 redaction: He asks: “At that point,

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<sup>554</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LIII: “Thomas stellte damit in Frage, daß man von Akzidentien, die man als solche erfaßt, zurückschließen kann auf das Wesen – worin doch nach Aristoteles die wissenschaftliche Methode bestehen soll. ... Wenn ontologische Grundbeziehungen wie Substanz und Akzidens in eine Art von empirischer Abfolge, die Ausnahme zuläßt, umgedeutet würden, war das Ende der Metaphysik nahe. Thomas dachte aber nicht daran, Hume’sche Konsequenzen aus seinem Zugeständnis zu ziehen.” Cf. Flasch 2007, p. 268-269.

<sup>555</sup> See below, §2.2.3 and §4, for analysis of Flasch’s misunderstandings of Aristotelian scientific method.

<sup>556</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LIII: “Er wollte fortfahren, normalerweise die Rationalität, d. h. Notwendigkeit ontologischer Strukturen, zu beanspruchen, nur sollte der Weltenherrscher davon auch dispensieren können. ... der Gott des Thomas sollte den Ausnahmezustand ausrufen dürfen. Nur konnte der Leser des Thomas von Aquin nicht wissen, wann und wo der Ausnahmezustand zu erwarten war.”

whereby could one know which other ontological connections – e.g., that of an effect to its cause – the ruler of the world – from a ‘special privilege’ – has put out of operation?”<sup>557</sup> To summarize, then: Flasch first mischaracterizes Thomas’ explicitly causal account of separate accidents, mistakenly claiming that it simply evacuates the essential connection between substance and accidents; and he then claims that Thomas’ explicitly causal account of separate accidents should somehow be taken to imply not only that the same effect may be produced by different causal pathways, but that in general the fundamental metaphysical principle that an effect is only intelligible with reference to its cause, is no longer reliable, that the causal principle can somehow be turned off at the whim of an all-too-whimsical world-ruler.<sup>558</sup> But this is precisely what Thomas’ explicitly causal account of transubstantiation does not do: the separate subsistence of the Eucharistic accidents is intelligible, in Thomas’ account, precisely in terms of a detailed causal explanation (God as efficient cause, dimensive quantity (i.e., spatio-temporal extension) and qualities as material and formal causes, and the conferral of grace as final cause).

It is not obvious how to explain Flasch’s oversight. One might presume that human rulers whose powers are not effectively limited by the ‘necessity’ of ‘rational constitutions’ will tend to act all-too-capriciously; and perhaps one might extend this same presumption to the case of a divine ruler.<sup>559</sup> Further, since Flasch tends to ignore or dismiss the real elements of

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<sup>557</sup> Flasch 2007, p. 268: “Woher sollte man von da an wissen, welche andere ontologische Verknüpfung, z. B. das der Wirkung mit ihrer Ursache, der Weltenherr aus „speziellem Privileg“ außer Kraft gesetzt hat?”

<sup>558</sup> Flasch continues (Flasch 2007, p. 268): “The connection of a property with its essence was, according to Thomas, tighter than that of an effect with its cause, for without substance an accident was supposed to be able neither to be nor to be defined.” - “Die Verbindung der Eigenschaft mit ihrem Wesen war, Thomas zufolge, enger als die der Wirkung mit ihrer Ursache, sollte doch das Akzidens ohne die Substanz weder sein noch definiert werden können.” Thomas, however, never claims that accidents are fully intelligible apart from reference to substance, any more than he would claim that an effect is fully intelligible without reference to its cause.

<sup>559</sup> Flasch implies – ostensibly on Dietrich’s behalf – that there must be some kind of power-politics at work if we view the sacrament of the altar – “sign of covenant, of peace, and of love,” Flasch writes – as (also)

necessity (and thus ‘rationality’ or ‘constitutionality’) built into Thomas’ account of the economy of grace found in the sacraments of the Church, it would be understandable if he reasoned that if God instituted a purely arbitrary, disorderly state of affairs in one instance – say, the Eucharist – then there is no compelling reason to assume that he should be relied upon to act ‘rationally’ – or intelligibly – in any other. In other words, if we accept in one case the abrogation of the “ontological connection of an effect to its cause,”<sup>560</sup> then perhaps there would be no compelling reason to insist upon it in any other case, and this point would explain Flasch’s allegation that Thomas’ doctrine on the separability of accidents has “Humean implications.” But, again, Thomas does not accept the premise here: that the separate accidents of the Eucharist constitute a suspension of the causal order as such. Thus, rather than Thomas’ position having “Humean implications” and casting doubt upon the principle of causality as such, it seems instead that Flasch’s reading of Thomas’ position may be based on Humean presuppositions, that is, an artificial narrowing of the concept of causality – and thus of the field of rationality or intelligibility grounded in ‘causal’ explanation – that is clearly prejudicial to Aquinas. Clearly Aquinas would not accept such Humean presuppositions, nor has Flasch provided any argument to show that he ought to.

From the perspective of Flasch’s own intellectual project, and predilections, it seems that his very unsympathetic assessment of Thomas’ view is motivated by his project of

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manifesting God’s *power*; and he also doesn’t like the idea that in consecrating the Eucharist the priest is supposed to be a ‘co-operator’ of divine omnipotence (cf. Flasch 2008, p. 40). But Flasch offers no evidence that Dietrich himself had any such qualms about the compatibility of ‘peace and love’ with power; or about the importance of the Eucharist – or, more generally, of things pertaining to what Dietrich (following Augustine) calls the ‘order of voluntary providence’ –; or about the necessity of the priest’s role in confecting the Eucharist. It strikes me, anyway, as simply anachronistic to project such issues onto Dietrich.

<sup>560</sup> Cf. Flasch 2007, p. 268.

conceiving and writing history of philosophy precisely in a ‘perspectivist’ way.<sup>561</sup> On this score he seems to rather clearly show his hand as he continues his commentary:

This effected a loosening of ideas of metaphysical ordering; one could assess this as a step towards greater adherence (closeness) to experience and towards the discovery of long hidden premises of metaphysics. [[H]eretofore hidden presuppositions of European science, especially of metaphysics, would thus be made recognizable and criticizable.] But Thomas wanted to admit exceptions and yet still push Aristotelian ontology.<sup>562</sup>

Unfortunately, Flasch fails to clarify exactly which ‘hidden premises’ he has in mind here; but I think it becomes hard to avoid the sense that behind Flasch’s (sometimes simply inaccurate) analyses there is perhaps an overactive drive to validate his own historical narrative and worldview.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>561</sup> Flasch has devoted considerable ink to explaining and defending his approach to philosophy and his methods and aims in writing history of philosophy (*Philosophiehistorie*). See especially his two volumes of essays, *Philosophie hat Geschichte*, Volume 1: *Historische Philosophie: Beschreibung eine Denkart* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 2003); and *Philosophie hat Geschichte*, Volume 2: *Theorie der Philosophiehistorie* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 2005). Flasch characterizes his own writing style as “a style of distance, of almost guilt-free positivism and occasionally of irony” (“Ein Stil der Distanz, des fast unschuldigen Positivismus und gelegentlich der Ironie” (2003, p. 19)), and his avowed aim is to move away from an orientation towards “understanding” (*das Verstehen*) – a concept which he wants to “historize” – and towards simply “documenting and presenting” the past (cf. 2005, p. 168), that is, strictly from his own admittedly particular – albeit “enlightened” – perspective in the present. In his book review of Flasch’s *Philosophie hat Geschichte*, vol. 2, Guy Guldentops concludes with a telling remark: “The question remains, however, whether judging medieval (or ancient) philosophers from an ‘enlightened’ perspective isn’t necessarily inadequate and unreasonable.” (“Vraag blijft echter of de beoordeling van middeleeuwse (of antieke) filosofen vanuit een ‘verlichte’ optiek niet noodzakelijk inadequaet en onrechtvaardig is.” (see *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 68 (2006) p. 654.))

<sup>562</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LIII: “Dies bewirkte eine Lockerung metaphysischer Ordnungsvorstellungen; man könnte dies als einen Schritt zu größerer Erfahrungsnähe und zur Aufdeckung bislang verborgener Prämissen der Metaphysik werten. Aber Thomas wollte Ausnahmen zugestehen und doch weiter aristotelische Ontologie treiben.” Flasch 2007, p. 269 (interpolated text): “...bisher verborgene Voraussetzungen der europäischen Wissenschaft, besonders der Metaphysik, wären damit kenntlich und kritisierbar geworden.”

<sup>563</sup> For Flasch, *qua* historian of philosophy, this ‘greater proximity to experience’ (*größerer Erfahrungsnähe*) should be interpreted not just in the direction of Humean empiricism, but also – and more importantly – in that of a kind of Nietzschean perspectivism, whereby one claims to eschew crudely dogmatic historicism, while at the same time insisting that intimate *experience* with historical sources reveals the importance of the *essentially first-personal, historical, assertive* character of even the most fundamental metaphysical axioms. Cf., e.g., Flasch 2003, p. 337.

### 2.1.2 Definition of Accidents

Flasch next discusses Thomas' arguments regarding the definition of accidents. First, from Thomas' *Sentences* commentary, he cites a passage we discussed in chapter 2 (§2.2.2):

It must be said that being-in does not state the being of an accident absolutely, but rather the mode of being which belongs to it from its ordering towards the proximate cause of its being. And since with the removal of the accident's ordering towards its proximate cause there can still remain its ordering towards the first cause, according to which its mode of being is not being-in (*inesse*) but being from another (*ab alio esse*), for this reason God can bring it about that there be an accident, and that it not be-in; and it is nonetheless not the case that the being of the accident is removed from the accident, but rather its mode of being.<sup>564</sup>

So says Thomas. But Flasch sees a contradiction in this passage. He writes:

While Thomas wanted to keep contradictions away from his God, he entangled himself in them. If all creatures are defined as *ens ab alio*, they lose their distinctions from one another. If one pushes this issue, all definitions lose their meaning (*Sinn*).<sup>565</sup>

Thomas, however, doesn't define any creature as *ens ab alio* (being from another), never mind all creatures<sup>566</sup>; so what does Flasch have in mind here? While he doesn't present any

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<sup>564</sup> *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 1: "dicendum, quod inesse non dicit esse accidentis absolute, sed magis modum essendi qui sibi competit ex ordine ad causam proximam sui esse. Et quia remoto ordine accidentis ad causam proximam, adhuc potest remanere ordo ipsius ad causam primam, secundum quem modus ipsius essendi non est inesse, sed ab alio esse; ideo potest Deus facere quod sit accidens, et non insit: nec tamen esse accidentis ab accidente removebitur, sed modus essendi."

<sup>565</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LIV: "Indem Thomas von seinem Gott Widersprüche fernhalten wollte, verwickelte er sich selbst in sie. Wenn alle Geschöpfe als *ens ab alio* definiert werden, verlieren sie gegeneinander ihre Abgrenzungen. Urgiert man diesen Aspekt, verlieren alle Definitionen ihren Sinn."

<sup>566</sup> To be sure, one could perhaps offer *ens ab alio* as a working generic definition for *creatures*, as such, and so in a sense it would be correct to say that all creatures, *qua* creatures, fall under this one definition, and thus, *qua* creatures, lose their distinctions from one another: that, of course, is how a generic definition is *supposed* to work. But simply defining a genus (e.g., animal) in no way entails that the various species falling under that genus "lose their distinctions from one another" or that "all definitions lose their meaning" (thus cats do not become indistinguishable from dogs, nor do their respective definitions become meaningless, just because they are both animals and can be defined with a common definition in respect of their animality).

explicit argument for this claim, it turns out that he just has in mind the same idea as before.

And so he continues:

Thomas didn't see that he destroyed the concept of substance and accident, in that he interpreted the in-being, which he held to be the characteristic feature of an accident, as a *de facto* occurrence (or incidence) in a substance.<sup>567</sup>

That is, Flasch again claims that Thomas' view entails that there is no rhyme or reason governing whether an accident exists in a substance or not: whatever (*de facto*) happens to be the case, just (*de facto*) happens to be the case. But this is obviously not Thomas' view: again, Thomas carefully articulates a causal account which clearly indicates when, why, and how accidents occasionally subsist without being in a substance.

Flasch adds that the text quoted from Thomas' *Sentences* commentary shows how Thomas makes an accident to be 'independent,' "distinguishing its *esse absolute* from its mere *modus essendi*, thus speaking of an accident as if dealing with a substance with its *modi*."<sup>568</sup> This claim is true in a limited sense – obviously Thomas speaks of the "modes of being" of accidents, as opposed to their ('absolute') *esse* – but as we saw in the preceding chapter, this analysis of accidents hardly implies that Thomas has eliminated the fundamental (essentially *teleological*) distinction between substance and accident.

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<sup>567</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LIV: "Thomas sah nicht, daß er das Konzept von Substanz und Akzidens zerstörte, indem er das Insein, das er für das Charakteristikum des Akzidens hielt, als ein faktisches Vorkommen in einer Substanz deutete."

<sup>568</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LIV: "Außerdem zeigt der Text, wie Thomas entgegen anderslautenden Erklärungen das Akzidens verselbständigt, z. B. indem er dessen *esse absolute* von seinem bloßen *modus essendi* unterscheidet, also vom Akzidens spricht, als handle es sich um eine Substanz mit ihren *modi*." -- "Moreover, the text shows how Thomas, as against contrary explanations, makes accidents to be independent, e.g., by distinguishing its *esse absolute* from its mere *modus essendi*, thus speaking of accidents as if dealing with a substance with its *modi*."

Flasch also wonders, in relation to the text cited, how Thomas' view can fit together with his emphasis on the proper rights of secondary causes.<sup>569</sup> But the answer to this question is obvious (whether or not it is obviously correct): Thomas thinks the first cause can create genuine secondary causes, but can also directly produce the effects of those secondary causes. This is very straightforwardly what Thomas explicitly says, so if Flasch wants to raise this question, the real question would seem to be, why does he do so in relation to this text<sup>570</sup> (which does not address it) and in such a way as to ignore the immediately preceding text<sup>571</sup> (which does)?

The next text Flasch attempts to analyze is the following, from Thomas' *Quodlibet* IX, question III, which we also discussed in chapter 2 (§3.2):

When it is said 'the being of an accident is in-being,' or however it is that the subject is put in the definition of an accident, it is understood to be a definition *per additionem*, as *Metaphysics*, book VII has it (and it is said to be a definition *per additionem* when in the definition is put something which is outside of the essence of the defined thing, just as nose is put in the definition of pug [i.e., snub-nosed]); but this is because of the natural dependence of an accident on the subject. But notwithstanding this, God can preserve accidents without the subject, nor does it follow that contradictories are true at the same time; since the subject does not belong to the essence of the accident.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LIV: "Finally it should be asked, how the entire consideration can stand together with the proper rights of the *causae secundae*, otherwise so emphasized by Thomas." -- "Schließlich fragt es sich, wie die ganze Überlegung zusammen bestehen kann mit dem von Thomas sonst so hervorgehobenen Eigenrecht der *causae secundae*."

<sup>570</sup> Namely, the one cited above: Thomas Aquinas, *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 ad 1.

<sup>571</sup> Namely: Thomas Aquinas, *InSent* IV.12.1.1.1 co.

<sup>572</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Quodl.* IX.3 ad 1: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, cum dicitur: 'accidentis esse est inesse,' vel qualitercumque ponatur subiectum in diffinitione accidentis, intelligitur esse diffinitio per additionem, ut habetur in VII *Methaphisice* (et dicitur diffinitio per additionem quando in diffinitione ponitur aliquid quod est extra essenciam diffiniti, sicut nasus ponitur in diffinitione simi); hoc autem est propter naturalem dependenciam accidentis a subiecto. Sed hac non impediende, Deus potest accidentia sine subiecto conseruare, nec tamen sequitur contradictoria simul esse uera; quia subiectum non est de essencia accidentis."

Here Thomas states that an accident's subject does not belong to its essence and thus there is no inherent contradiction in the divine conservation of accidents without their subject. For when an accident is defined in terms of its relation to its subject, this is not a proper definition, but a definition 'by addition' (*per additionem*), the addition, that is, of something that is extra-essential, but on which the defined-thing naturally (in its natural mode of existence) depends – and as an example of this kind of definition, Thomas cites Aristotle's old example: 'snub-nosed' (*simus*), which has 'nose' (*nasus*) included in its definition.

In response, Flasch poses a question: "Perhaps an ingenious logician can define 'snub-nosedness' without using the word 'nose,' but can God, according to Thomas, conserve 'snub-nosedness' in being, without also conserving the nose that belongs to it?"<sup>573</sup> It would seem that in regard to the visible, tangible 'snub-nosed'-thing, we should respond: why not? If we consider the nose of a corpse, for example, properly speaking even this entirely natural entity is no longer an integral part of a 'nosed' subject, that is, it is no longer properly speaking a nose; yet it can still clearly enough be characterized as 'snub-nosed' (or as pug, to use the synonymous expression) in a strongly analogous sense, regardless of the fact that the substantial form which lends it its properly nasal actuality has ceased to do so. We could say there is a form of 'corporeity' left, but this too is no longer being caused by the substance which was its proper proximate cause (the living soul), and thus it is a thing which can only be defined privatively, in relation to the process of decay. Flasch, however, doesn't offer any answer to his question about 'snub-nosedness,' presumably believing the absurdity of what it suggests to be obvious.

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<sup>573</sup> Flasch 1983, pp. LIV-LV: "Vielleicht kann ein scharfsinniger Logiker „Stumpfnasigkeit“ definieren, ohne das Wort „Nase“ zu gebrauchen, aber kann nach Thomas Gott „Stumpfnasigkeit“ am Sein erhalten, ohne die dazugehörige Nase auch zu erhalten?"

Instead, Flasch continues with an objection regarding an ambiguity he perceives in the expression ‘natural dependence.’ He writes:

Are we dealing here with an essential ordering (*Wesensabfolge*) – which is what the context suggests: an accident should not be defined without substance – or with a natural resting of an accident-thing, conceived as quite independent, upon its bearer? Only in the latter case does it become comprehensible that the God of Thomas contravenes, not against the principle of contradiction, but rather only against the usual – though still interspersed with exceptions – course of nature. Thomas exploited the logical possibility of producing a definition of an accident that was supposed to be no [mere] definition *per additionem* [i.e., one essentially including the accident’s subject], to make plausible the independent existence of detached accidents.<sup>574</sup>

Flasch doesn’t tell us where the ‘logical possibility’ of producing a non-*per-additionem* definition of an accident is exploited in Thomas’ argument (as opposed to in Dietrich’s characterization of his opponents’ argument), but as regards the ambiguity between ‘essential ordering’ and ‘one thing resting on another,’ Thomas’ position is clear enough: substances are, ordinarily, the immanent proximate cause of accidents, such that the accidents’ being is (expressed in the mode of) in-being and primarily belongs to the substance; certainly accidents do not just perch on substances like birds in a nest, or – to take the absurd image by which Flasch describes Thomas’ view – like Russian dolls, each one

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<sup>574</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LV: “Handelt es sich hier um eine Wesensabfolge – was der Zusammenhang nahelegt: das Akzidens soll ohne Substanz nicht definiert werden – oder um ein naturhaftes Aufruhen eines als recht selbständig vorgestellten Akzidensdings auf seinem Träger? Nur im letzteren Fall wird einsichtig, daß der Gott des Thomas nicht gegen den Satz vom Widerspruch, sondern nur gegen den gewöhnlichen, aber ohnehin von Ausnahmen durchsetzten Naturablauf verstößt. Die logische Möglichkeit, eine Definition des Akzidens zu verfertigen, die keine *definitio per additionem* sein soll, nutzt Thomas aus, um die selbständige Existenz abgelöster Akzidentien plausibel zu machen.”

inside the next.<sup>575</sup> So there certainly is an essential ordering of accidents to substance.<sup>576</sup> But this fact of essential ordering does not amount to showing that this ordering should be conceived as absolute,<sup>577</sup> that is, such that the essential (fundamentally efficient) causal ordering pertaining to particular cases must be immune from any direct ingeference of divine causality (i.e., of the first cause of all essential ordering), as active within the (super-natural) order of grace.<sup>578</sup> Accordingly, when Flasch goes on to claim that “the texts prove that one does no injustice to Thomas” by characterizing his position on the substance-accident relation as that of bearer to thing-born, or carrier to thing-carried, it seems he is flatly mistaken.<sup>579</sup> He points out that it is “when something is carried, [that] one can ask *what* is being carried there.”<sup>580</sup> But this argument simply ignores Thomas’ point, that when

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<sup>575</sup> Flasch 2007, p. 264: “(Thomas) thinks of an accident after the model of one Russian doll within another. One can take such a doll out, without destroying the doll’s essence; one cannot separate an *ens secundum aliud* from an *ens per se*.” - “Er denkt das Akzidens nach dem Modell einer russischen Puppe in einer anderen. Eine solche Puppe kann man herausnehmen, ohne das Puppenwesen zu zerstören; ein *ens secundum aliud* kann man vom *ens per se* nicht trennen.” Thomas certainly does not claim that accidents are ‘in’ substances, such that they can also simply be taken ‘out’; rather he claims that they can be *directly actualized* by the power of God, so as to exist in a subsistent *mode of being*.

<sup>576</sup> We saw in chapter two that this *essential ordering* was expressed by Thomas in a number of ways. In *ST* III.77.1, for example, Thomas notes that a substance (*qua* secondary (‘natural’) cause) is ordered towards its accidents (*qua* effects of the substance) according to “the ordering of things which God imparted to nature” (*rerum ordinem, quem Deus naturae indidit*) (arg. 1), that is, “according to the common law of nature” (*secundum communem legem naturae*) (ad 1). Recall also that for both Dietrich and Thomas the ultimate *raison d’être* of accidents is teleological: they are essentially ordered to substances as instruments through which substances fulfill their proper operations.

<sup>577</sup> When considering its ‘essential ordering,’ it should always be borne in mind that an *accident*, as such, is ‘accidental’; i.e., it is necessarily *not absolutely identical* with a substance, but only *accidentally* identical.

<sup>578</sup> Recall Thomas’ distinction between the “common law of nature,” by which there is a natural essential ordering between secondary causes and their effects, and that which is ordained in accordance with a “special privilege of grace” (cf. *ST* III.77.1 ad 1), that is, as flowing directly from the causal power of the first cause, which is not dependent on the created order of nature, but rather grounds and transcends whatever causal powers are present in the natural order.

<sup>579</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LV: “The texts prove that one does Thomas no injustice when one says that he preferentially described the relation of substance and accident as the relation of a carrier to a thing-carried. He advanced the spatialized characterization that lay in this description in order to be able to speak of the *substantia* of the carried thing.” – “Die Texte beweisen, daß man Thomas nicht unrecht tut, wenn man sagt er habe das Verhältnis von Substanz und Akzidens bevorzugt als das Verhältnis eines Trägers zu einem Getragenen beschrieben. Er brachte die Verräumlichung, die in dieser Beschreibung liegt, um von der *substantia* des Getragenen sprechen zu können.” – I would add that this last claim, about speaking of the *substantia* of the thing, seems gratuitous and beside the point.

<sup>580</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LV: “Denn wenn etwas getragen wird, kann man fragen, *was* da getragen wird.” [emphasis in original]

something is being *caused*, one can ask, what is being caused there and what is doing the causing.

In regard to Thomas' definition of accidents in terms of their 'aptitude' or 'suitability' for being in another, Flasch alleges that Thomas "corrupted the Aristotelian concept of act, just as much as that of accident." But he wants to ground this claim in the same old (bad) argument: "Insofar as Thomas defined an accident through its suitability for inherence, he accepted in exchange that the actualization of this predisposition became accidental or haphazard."<sup>581</sup> First, however, there is no real logical connection between defining an accident through its suitability for inherence and thinking that the actualization of this predisposition (towards inherence) must therefore be(come) accidental or haphazard: nothing entails that the 'suitability' in question must needs be expressed in an 'accidental or haphazard' way. And again, Flasch badly mischaracterizes Thomas' view here, since Thomas in fact carefully explains the very narrow, precise (i.e., not accidental or haphazard) conditions under which the natural grounding of accidental being in a natural substance (through the substance's secondary causality) is in fact not actualized (i.e., in the case of the holy Eucharist). Further, Flasch's language confuses the issue, since Thomas is not really concerned with contemplating any kind of prior-to-substance independent existence of an accident, such that it would make sense to talk about an accident's *predisposition* for inherence, that is, prior to its actual inherence: the relevant issue is one of suspending actual inherence in the case of inhering accidents, not of actualizing a predisposition for inherence

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<sup>581</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LVI: "Indem Thomas das Akzidens durch seine Eignung zur Inhärenz definierte, nahm er in Kauf, daß die Aktualisierung dieser Prädisposition akzidentell oder zufällig wurde. Er zerstörte damit den aristotelischen Begriff sowohl des Aktes wie des akzidens."

in the case of non-inhering accidents.<sup>582</sup> And Flasch closes his discussion of Thomas' definition of an accident in similar fashion, by claiming that whether or not the accident's ordering towards a 'carrier' (i.e., substance) is realized, is determined by "other factors, which are adventitious, incidental (*zufällig*) with respect to the ontological structure."<sup>583</sup> This claim could be unobjectionable, if it were ever appropriate to characterize the transcendentally-causal ordering power of the first cause as 'adventitious' or 'incidental' with respect to the ontological structure of reality. But surely such is not the case, certainly not in Thomas' view. The order of nature is not merely 'incidentally' directed towards the order of grace, even though the order of grace transcends the natural order.

### 2.1.3 Quantity as Subject

Flasch says much less about Thomas' claim that quantity can serve as subject for the other separate accidents, but in what little he says, he again clearly misunderstands Thomas' argument. He writes:

But in order to keep the intrusion of happenstance (*Zufall*) as slight as possible, Thomas underlined that God kept the quantity of the bread-substance miraculously in being; the remaining accidents kept their previous ordering towards quantity as the carrying accident. ... He gave a privileged status to quantity, in order not to have to suspend the natural dependence in the case of all the other accidents. ... In this way nothing was supposed to be changed in the relations of the accidents among themselves; all were supposed to continue to inhere in quantity as in their quasi-substance, as if nothing had happened.<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> Recall that an accident's finality, or purpose, is *essentially* instrumental: It does not, in addition, have an independent, non-instrumental end (such as its own *actual inherence*). That is, an accident is not independently predisposed towards any end *of its own*, but always essentially serves the end *of another*.

<sup>583</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LVI: "Ob diese Zuordnung realisiert wird, bestimmen andere, der ontologischen Struktur gegenüber zufällige Faktoren."

<sup>584</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LVII: "Um aber das Eindringen des Zufalls so gering wie möglich zu halten, betonte Thomas, Gott erhalte die Quantität der Brotschubstanz wunderbarerweise am Sein; die übrigen Akzidentien

In regard to the Flasch's claim here about why Thomas gave a privileged status to quantity, it would be interesting to hear Flasch's account of why, say, Galileo or Descartes, Newton or Kant, also assigned a privileged status to the spatial modality and measurability of things; or, most pressing, why he chooses to ignore the fact that Dietrich himself clearly did the same, in several of his works, including in *De accidentibus* itself.<sup>585</sup> In any case, Thomas' account of the primacy of quantity among the separate accidents aims at accounting for the concrete, individualized, self-subsistent, perceptible status of the separate accidents, and does so in terms of independently motivated characterizations of the foundational role of dimensive quantity (i.e., spatial extension) in accounting for the basic dynamic nature of sensible, physical realities (with which account, again, Dietrich appears to agree)<sup>586</sup>; it has nothing to do with trying to reduce the amount of haphazard 'miraculousness' associated with the Eucharistic conversion of substance, as Flasch claims.

In his most recent account of the matter, Flasch again clearly misinterprets Thomas' account of the primacy of quantity. He explicates Thomas' view as follows:

We claim that the accidents subsisting without substance need a subject, but that they are carried by quantity; in virtue of a divine intervention, the latter plays the role of substance and thus attenuates the miraculous character of the process. God 'only' brings it about that the quantity exists without a subject; for the other eight categories, there is no change.<sup>587</sup>

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behielten ihre frühere Zuordnung zur Quantität als dem tragenden Akzidens. ... Er gab der Quantität eine privilegierte Stellung, um bei allen anderen Akzidentien die naturgemäße Dependenz nicht suspendieren zu müssen. ... So sollte sich in der Eucharistie im Verhältnis der Akzidentien untereinander nichts ändern; alle sollten in der Quantität weiter als in ihrer Quasi-Substanz inhärieren, als sei nichts geschehen."

<sup>585</sup> Cf. above, ch. 4, §5.

<sup>586</sup> Flasch insists upon the fact that for Dietrich, *color* does not have a real quiddity, it is not independent, but is the disposition of a concrete thing (cf. e.g., Flasch 2008, pp. 20-21); but in doing so he apparently ignores the fact that Thomas' prioritization of dimensive quantity is precisely an account of the fundamental role of concrete spatial extension as the necessary subjective ground for the existence of an accident like *color*, which indeed – Thomas agrees! – must not be independent but must be the disposition of a concrete 'thing.'

<sup>587</sup> Cf. Flasch 2008, p. 22: "Nous prétendons que les accidents subsistent sans substance ont besoin d'un sujet, mais qu'ils sont portés par la quantité; en vertu d'une intervention divine, celle-ci [la quantité] joue le rôle de

This account is mistaken on three points: First, quantity does not simply play *the* role of substance: it is either *all the accidents* that play ‘the role of substance,’ insofar as the role of substance (in some cases) is to be the subject of some change, that is, to be the thing which remains constant, both before and after a change or conversion<sup>588</sup>; or quantity, taken by itself, plays the role not of the whole substance – namely, a matter-form composite – but only of the matter (*qua* subject), that is, strictly of the material part of the composite, which – like prime matter – cannot conceivably subsist independently of its formal part, and thus does not, on its own, play “the role of substance.”<sup>589</sup> Second, this postulate is not intended to ‘attenuate’ the miraculous character of what occurs; it is intended to concretely explain how the miracle occurs. (An occurrence is either natural or miraculous and the Eucharistic conversion belongs unambiguously in the latter category.) Third, Thomas does not hold that “for the other eight categories, there is no change.” Plainly this is not the case: In the normal, natural case, on the one hand, matter (i.e., *qua* subjective-material constituent of a substance) does not cause the forms it receives – whether this be the substantial form, which confers a primary mode of actuality upon the matter receiving it, or accidental forms, which confer

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substance et atténue ainsi le caractère miraculeux du processus. Dieu fait ‘seulement’ en sorte que la quantité existe sans sujet; pour les huit autres catégories, il n’y a aucun changement.”

<sup>588</sup> Thus, just as a *substance* can be *the same subject* that first sits and then stands, in an analogous way the *accidents* are *the same accidents* which first inhere in bread, as caused by bread, and then subsist apart from the substance of bread, as caused directly by God. Cf. *ST* III.75.5 arg. 4 & ad 4.

<sup>589</sup> Recall (cf. above, ch.2, §2.2.3) that for Thomas, as for Dietrich, there is an analogy or ‘proportion’ between the ordinary hylemorphic composition of a substance (a matter-form composite, where form is *in* matter, as in the “first subject not in another”) and the composition of quantity and quality: thus, in analyzing the quantity-quality composition of separate accidents, quantity assumes the material role of “first subject not in another,” and is made sensible and actual in virtue of the qualitative forms informing it. Cf. *InSent* IV.12.1.1.3 ad 1: “the first accidents following from substance are *quantity* and *quality*; and these two are proportioned to the two essential principles of substance, namely to *form* and to *matter* ...; but *quality* on the side of *form*. And since *matter* is the first subject which is not in another, but form is in another, namely matter, therefore *quantity*, rather than quality, approximates more to that which is *not being in another* [i.e., to matter *qua* subject in which forms inhere]” - “prima accidentia consequentia substantiam sunt quantitas et qualitas; et haec duo proportionantur duobus principiis essentialibus substantiae, scilicet formae et materiae...; sed qualitas ex parte formae. Et quia materia est subjectum primum quod non est in alio, forma autem est in alio, scilicet materia; ideo magis appropinquat ad hoc quod est non esse in alio, quantitas quam qualitas...”

accidental modes of actuality upon the composite of matter and form – but is rather actualized and perfected by them; whereas all of the accidents (including “the other eight”) are caused by their subject, namely, the substance, a composite of matter and form. In the Eucharistic case, on the other hand, after the occurrence of transubstantiation the role of subjective-material constituent is now played by dimensive quantity, rather than prime matter. This constituent still does not cause any of the forms it receives. However, with regard to the substantial subject (which normally causes all of its own inhering accidents), after transubstantiation none of the accidents are caused by such a subject (*ex hypothesi* there is no longer any substance serving as subject, and dimensive quantity does not take on this role); instead they are directly caused by God.<sup>590</sup> And thus we can see that Flasch’s (1983) claim, that in transubstantiation there is supposed to be no suspension of the ‘natural dependence’ of the other accidents, is wrong on this count too, since the actual form of ‘natural dependence’ of the other accidents – e.g., on the substance of bread – is certainly not somehow converted into a ‘natural dependence’ on dimensive quantity as their immediate (efficient) cause. Again, the other accidents merely take dimensive quantity as their (quasi-material) subject; but all the separate accidents are still, by Thomas’ account, supernaturally dependent, for their non-inhering-in-substance subsistence, directly upon the omnipotent causal power of God.

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<sup>590</sup> Recall that God *directly* (i.e., apart from the usual secondary causal influence of a material substance) causes a subjective-*quantitative* formation in space-time, and *also* directly causes the formal-*qualitative* forms, and consequently the other accidental forms (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *SCG* IV.63.9; see above, ch.2, §4.3), which together constitute the sensible object which effects the real quasi-physical (sacramental) presence of Christ in the world. One might argue that for the other *seven* accidents there is no change – insofar as these still follow ‘naturally’ from the supernatural combination of quantitative and qualitative dispositions – but certainly not for the other *eight*, as Flasch claims.

## 2.2 Flasch on Dietrich on Thomas on Transubstantiation

The shortcomings of Flasch's exposition of Thomas' account of the separability of accidents, naturally enough, carry over into his exposition of Dietrich's criticisms of the same.

### 2.2.1 Methodological issues

We have already seen at the beginning of our review of Flasch's position that he unquestioningly endorses what appears to be an obvious mischaracterization of Thomas' argumentative procedure: namely, Dietrich's concluding charge that his opponents' appeal to miraculous, supernatural power is an *ad hoc* attempt to shore up failed arguments. As we saw, Flasch also speaks of Thomas' 'unclear juxtaposition' of accidental dependence and independence. And he asserts that Dietrich wanted to put an end to Thomas' dithering, by means of "the distinction between science and revelation."<sup>591</sup>

While the making of such a distinction may seem like a sound idea, the problem remains that neither Dietrich nor Flasch tells us how exactly the distinction is supposed to be made – and in particular: *differently* from the way in which it is made by Thomas – so as to actually clarify either Thomas' or Dietrich's position. (Nor do they give any credible account of what exactly was unclear about Thomas' position in the first place.) In the immediate context of his claim about Dietrich's "distinction between science and revelation," Flasch gives his reader only such generalities as that Dietrich aimed to "put aside all the diminutions of the dignity of substance" (which had occurred under the influence of Avicenna), and to promote "the strengthening of the ontological position of substance, in the Aristotelian-Averroistic

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<sup>591</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LVIII: "Dietrich kritisierte, daß Thomas sowohl die radikale Dependenz wie seine gelegentliche Independenz hat lehren können. Er verlangte, daß dieses unklare Nebeneinander aufhöre. Dies sollte durch die Unterscheidung von Wissenschaft und Offenbarung geschehen."

sense.”<sup>592</sup> – Well that may be, but such claims hardly constitute an account of “the distinction between science and revelation.”

Furthermore, as we have seen in previous discussions, Dietrich’s own methodological position is anything but clear. And Flasch himself, well prior to making his unsupported claim about Dietrich’s ‘clarity-bringing’ science vs. revelation distinction, noted this lack of perspicuity: Commenting on Dietrich’s invocation of Augustine’s warning about passing off fallible – and flatly foolish – beliefs as matters of revelation, and noting that he can only be referring to the danger of presenting the doctrine of transubstantiation as a revealed truth, Flasch writes:

It is remarkable that in the same context, he acknowledges the right of the popes to decide about what belongs to revelation, and in doing so speaks as if there had been no declaration of the fourth Lateran council in favor of transubstantiation.

He adds, “But Dietrich is anxious to avoid theological discussions.”<sup>593</sup> Be that as it may – Ruedi Imbach, for one, challenges this claim<sup>594</sup> – it should at least be clear that when the distinction between science and revelation is thus made – i.e., in a context where one has explicitly accepted the magisterial authority of the pope – this would seem rather to support Thomas’ position on separate accidents; certainly it could hardly be the kind of conceptual tool with which anyone could hope to clear up Thomas’ supposed lack of clarity regarding the normal dependence of accidents (as regards their inherence in substance) – known by

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<sup>592</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LVIII: “...die Beseitigung aller seit Avicenna vorgebrachten Abschwächungen der Dignität der Substanz. ... Die Stärkung der ontologischen Stellung der Substanz im aristotelisch-averroistischen Sinn...”

<sup>593</sup> Flasch 1983, p. XLV: “Merkwürdig ist, daß er im selben Zusammenhang das Recht der Päpste anerkennt, darüber zu entscheiden, was zur Offenbarung gehört und dabei redet, als gäbe es nicht die Erklärung des 4. Laterankonzils zugunsten der Transsubstantiation. Aber Dietrich ist bestrebt, theologischen Diskussionen aus dem Wege zu gehen.” Cf. Flasch 2007, p. 276; Flasch 2008, p. 24-25 (here (p. 25) Flasch remarks that it is inconceivable that Dietrich was unaware of the Church’s 1215 affirmation of transubstantiation as dogma).

<sup>594</sup> Cf. Imbach 1986, p. 394.

natural reason – but occasional independence – known by revelation. And yet somehow Flasch is of the view that “above all what [the Thomists] are missing is consciousness of method (*Methodenbewußtsein*).”<sup>595</sup> One can only guess, based on his earlier remarks, that he is referring to some kind of Hume-inspired, naturalistic method. But such a method would comport as ill with Dietrich’s as with Thomas’ philosophical-metaphysical-theological views.

### 2.2.2 The operational distinction between substance and accidents

When it comes to his exposition of Dietrich’s account of the fundamental distinction between substance and accidents, Flasch correctly notes that Dietrich insists upon the instrumental view of accidents: they are required for the effecting of change in the context of the operations of natural things. He also notes that this emphasis on operation is not just Aristotelian, but is also upheld by Thomas. He then claims, however, that notwithstanding this emphasis on operation, there is also, among 13<sup>th</sup> century Scholastics, an undeniable tendency to conceive of ontology rather as a “cataloguing of extant things” (*Katalogisieren des Vorhandenen*) than as a functional analysis of them. In Flasch’s view, “Dietrich applied himself against this tendency: What a being is, should be investigated *ex processibus causalibus* [on the basis of causal processes].”<sup>596</sup>

This contrasting of Thomas and Dietrich makes sense in light of Flasch’s less-than-felicitous interpretation of Thomas’ position as based on a spatialized conception of

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<sup>595</sup> Flasch 1983, p. XL: “Was ihnen [den Thomisten] vor allem fehlt, ist Methodenbewußtsein.”

<sup>596</sup> Flasch 1983, p. XLV: “Die Einteilung des Seienden in Substanz und Akzidens ist als sinnvoll einzusehen, wenn man sie als Requisite von Veränderungen bei Naturdingen versteht. Dieser Akzent auf der operatio ist aristotelisch, und er ist auch bei Thomas von Aquin erhalten, aber insgesamt wird man der Scholastik des 13. Jahrhunderts nicht die Neigung absprechen können, die Ontologie eher als Katalogisieren des Vorhandenen den als Funktionsanalyse konzipiert zu haben, und gegen diese Tendenz wandte sich Dietrich: Was das Seiende ist, soll ex processibus causalibus erforscht werden.”

accidents: as things that merely happen to be carried around by substances, most of the time – like smaller Russian dolls inside the big Russian doll. Accordingly, on Flasch’s (approving) reading, Dietrich thinks that the metaphor of carrying and being carried has obscured the functional-causal-operational grounding of the substance-accident distinction.<sup>597</sup> But this interpretation of Thomas is itself all the more inexplicable, since, as we have seen,<sup>598</sup> the correct interpretation of his position clearly involves just what Flasch claims he ignores: an analysis in terms of causal processes.

### 2.2.3 On Thomas’ destruction of science

On the subject of Thomas’ supposed bastardizing of the rigorous Aristotelian concepts of nature and science, Flasch explains Dietrich’s critique as follows:

Definitional-structures must retain their inner necessity and pertain to the actual, not just a possible, world; otherwise one corrupts the concept of nature and of science. Thomas of Aquino too had thought so, since for him too there was no science of the merely contingent.<sup>599</sup> Dietrich’s critique must be read on the background of this concept of science, which was supposed to rest on the substantive reality (*Realitätsgehalt*) of *a priori* insights.<sup>600</sup>

Here Flasch once again ignores the fact that Thomas’ account does not jettison ‘inner necessity’ but gives a differentiated account of it: with respect to secondary causality vs.

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<sup>597</sup> Flasch 1983, p. XLVII: “Nach Dietrich verdinglichte Thomas die bedeutendsten Ansätze der augustinischen Geisttheorie. Ebenso verselbständigte er, nach Dietrich, die Akzidentien. Und dies deshalb, weil er die Vorstellung des Tragens bzw. Getragenwerdens bei der Bestimmung der Substanz bzw. des Akzidents in den Vordergrund rückte. Aber für Dietrich ist diese Differenz nicht das erste und entscheidende Unterscheidungsmerkmal.”

<sup>598</sup> Cf. above, ch. 2 (throughout), for discussions of the various causal analyses which constitute St. Thomas’ account of transubstantiation and the subsistence of separate accidents.

<sup>599</sup> Here Flasch cites Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I.86.3.

<sup>600</sup> Flasch 1983, p. LIX: “Definitionsstrukturen müssen ihre innere Notwendigkeit behalten und die aktuale, nicht bloß eine mögliche Welt betreffen, sonst zerstört man das Konzept der Nature und der Wissenschaft. Auch Thomas von Aquin hatte so gedacht, denn auch für ihn gab es vom bloß Kontingenten keine Wissenschaft. Die Kritik Dietrichs muß auf dem Hintergrund dieses Wissenschaftskonzepts gelesen werden, das auf dem Realitätsgehalt apriorischer Einsichten beruhen sollte.” Cf. Flasch 2007, p. 272.

with respect to primary causality.<sup>601</sup> And as detailed in the preceding chapter (ch.4, §3), Thomas' quasi-definition of accidents indeed applies to all *actual* accidents, not to merely *possible* ones.

But it is also worth commenting on the particular concern Flasch mentions here, about science regarding the *necessary*, not the merely *contingent*. First of all, this point is effectively irrelevant because by Thomas' account there in fact clearly *is* a necessity proper to the order of grace (and specifically the economy of grace incarnated in the sacraments).

Secondly, Flasch's flat claim, that in Aquinas' view there is no science of the merely contingent, is hardly illuminating and certainly far too simplistic. In fact, in the article cited by Flasch (*ST* I.86.3), Thomas explains that to properly understand our knowledge of contingent things, we must distinguish between contingent things precisely as contingent, and contingent things insofar as there is 'something of necessity' found in them – as there invariably is – and obviously, then, it is also necessary to give an actual account of whatever there is 'of necessity' in a given thing (i.e., of universally cognizable import). He also points out that, as in the closely related case of singular things (i.e., individuals as such), contingent things are directly cognized by the senses, whereas universal and necessary *rationes* – i.e., definitions – are directly known by the intellect. Hence, Thomas says, in relation to universal definitions, all sciences are of necessary things; but in relation to the things themselves (i.e., the things to which the definitions are applied), some sciences – in particular those concerned with the physical world, the world of generable, corruptible, alterable things – are indeed concerned with contingent things, but only indirectly.<sup>602</sup> And so Flasch's allusion to

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<sup>601</sup> And again, it seems obvious that it would be necessary to do so.

<sup>602</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I.86.3: "contingentia dupliciter possunt considerari. Uno modo, secundum quod contingentia sunt. Alio modo, secundum quod in eis *aliquid necessitatis* invenitur, nihil enim est adeo contingens, quin in se aliquid necessarium habeat. ... Dictum autem est supra quod *per se et directe* intellectus

the ‘non-scientific’ status of contingent things in fact entails the necessary indirectness of our application of intellectual or ‘scientific’ concepts to the contingent, individuals things of our sense experience; and it so happens that this is precisely what grounds Thomas’ distinction between the sensible apprehension of the Eucharistic accidents and our intellectual judgment about what is actually there under the accidental appearances. Thomas makes this point quite explicitly:

To judge of the substance of the thing does not pertain to the senses, but to the intellect, whose object is the essence (*quod quid est*), as stated in book III of *De anima*; and for this reason, no deception occurs there [in the Eucharist], since the accidents are there, of which the senses judge; but of the substance, the intellect, aided by faith, has a true judgment. Nor is it problematic that the intellect without faith errs in this sacrament, [for that this occurs is] just as in other matters which belong to faith.<sup>603</sup>

It thus seems clear that in his casual citation of Thomas’ position – a position which, it would seem, is shared by Dietrich<sup>604</sup> – Flasch in fact misses the relevant and crucial point.

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est universalium; sensus autem singularium, quorum etiam *indirecte quodammodo* est intellectus, ut supra dictum est. Sic igitur contingentia, prout sunt contingentia, cognoscuntur *directe* quidem sensu, *indirecte* autem ab intellectu, rationes autem universales et necessariae contingentium cognoscuntur per intellectum. Unde si attendantur *rationes universales* scilicet, omnes scientiae sunt de necessariis. Si autem attendantur *ipsae res*, sic quaedam scientia est de necessariis, quaedam vero de contingentibus.”

<sup>603</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *InSent.* IV.12.1.1.2 ad 2: “de substantia rei iudicare non pertinet ad sensum, sed ad intellectum, cuius objectum est quod quid est, ut dicitur in III *de anima*; et ideo non accidit ibi aliqua deceptio; quia accidentia sunt ibi de quibus sensus iudicat; sed de substantia verum iudicium habet intellectus fide iuvatus. Nec est inconveniens quod intellectus absque fide erret in hoc sacramento, sicut et in aliis quae sunt fidei.” Cf. *ST* III.75.5 ad 2 & 3.

<sup>604</sup> Dietrich, in his *Quaestio utrum in Deo sit aliqua vis inferior intellectui*, a work which is auxiliary to *De visione beatifica*, and which expounds the differences between sensitive, rational, and intellectual modes of cognition, recognizes a kind of *mutual exclusion* between *sensitive cognition* (of particulars) and *rational cognition* (by means of universal formal principles, from which are comprised definitions); *Qu. utrum in Deo* 1.2(2)-(4) (III 295): “For rational (cognition) abstracts from sensitive (cognition), so that in that rational cognition the kind of cognition or certitude which is had through sensitive (cognition) is only *in potency*. ... The reason for this kind of difference is that rational (cognition), abstracting from sensitive (cognition), is distinguished from it with a certain *exclusion* of the one from the other, because of the contrary mode and contrary notion (*rationem*) of their proper objects and modes of cognizing, which are not compatible with one another in regard to one and the same cognitive power.” – “Rationale enim abstrahit a sensitivo, ut in ipsa cognitione rationalis cognitio seu certitudo, qualis habetur per sensitivum, sit solum in potentia. ... Huiusmodi autem differentiae ratio est, quoniam rationale abstrahens a sensitivo ab eo distinguitur cum quadam exclusione

### 3 Other expositions of *De accidentibus* in relation to Flasch's

Given that, if my analysis is correct, Flasch's reading of both Thomas and Dietrich is deeply flawed, it is puzzling to observe that while subsequent commentators on the present subject have expressed minor disagreements with Flasch, for the most part they seem not to have found anything to be fundamentally wrong with his basic analysis, and have indeed generally endorsed it.

#### 3.1 Ruedi Imbach

Like Flasch, Ruedi Imbach has done a considerable amount of work on Dietrich's treatise on accidents, in particular seeking to understand the reasons for his opposition to Thomas' views.<sup>605</sup> Imbach was quite taken (at least in Imbach 1979) with the idea of Dietrich as a medieval anticipation of a kind of transcendental idealism *à la* Kant, as was first described by Flasch in his early article on Dietrich, "Is Medieval Philosophy aware of the Constitutive Function of Human Thinking?"<sup>606</sup> and he has some suggestive remarks about grounding Dietrich's metaphysical, and especially ontological, doctrines in his radical theory of intellect (although I am not aware of that project having since been carried through, beyond the suggestive remark stage – and perhaps there is good reason for this, i.e., the difficulties inherent in such a project).

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alterius ab altero propter contrarium modum et contrariam rationem suorum propriorum obiectorum et modorum cognoscendi, qui circa eandem vim cognitivam se non compatiuntur." Dietrich holds that the sensitive and rational modes of cognition are combined in *intellectual* cognition, the kind of simple, all-penetrating understanding by which God cognizes things; but we do not formally participate in this kind of cognition in this life (although it does serve as the *principle* of our cognition – that is, as its (hidden) starting point and that towards which it aims).

<sup>605</sup> See Imbach 1979; 1986; 1987; 1993; 1997; 1998.

<sup>606</sup> Flasch 1972: "Kennt die mittelalterliche Philosophie die konstitutive Funktion des menschlichen Denkens?"

Imbach has also tended to endorse Flasch and follow his lead in interpreting the respective arguments of Dietrich and Thomas on the separability of accidents.<sup>607</sup> For example, Imbach offers the following weak argument about the Church's doctrine of the Eucharist, which seems very much in line with Flasch's insinuations about the influence of medieval politics on Thomas' doctrine:

Since this sacrament can only be consummated by a duly ordained priest, and therefore a direct relation subsists between this classic interpretation of the Eucharist and ecclesiastical structure, a critique of the theological explanatory model of transubstantiation always also implied in the Middle Ages a critique of ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>608</sup>

To the contrary, however: Imbach's specific reference to the Middle Ages here seems otiose – why would this (alleged) link between sacramental theology and ecclesiology only apply in the Middle Ages? – and thus misleading<sup>609</sup>; and further, it is obvious that a critique of the theological doctrine of transubstantiation *per se* – that is, of the substantial conversion of the Eucharistic species and the separation of the accidents from their substances – need not have anything to do with a critique of doctrines regarding who is the legitimate minister of the sacrament or, more generally, with a critique of the hierarchical structure of the Church.

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<sup>607</sup> In footnote 34 of Imbach 1986 (p. 366), Imbach says that he finds Flasch's 1983 exposition of Thomas' account of separate accidents a convincing account of the difficulties faced by the 13<sup>th</sup> century philosopher-theologian in trying to integrate the reception of Aristotle with the separability of accidents.

<sup>608</sup> Cf. Imbach 1986, p. 365: "Da dieses Sakrament allein vom ordnungsgemäß geweihten Priester vollzogen werden kann und deshalb eine direkte Relation zwischen dieser klassischen Deutung der Eucharistie und den kirchlichen Strukturen besteht, implizierte eine Kritik am theologischen Erklärungsmodell der Transsubstantiation im Mittelalter stets auch eine Kritik an der kirchlichen Hierarchie." See also p. 394.

<sup>609</sup> Later Imbach claims (1986, p. 394): "The function of philosophy cannot be determined on the basis of so-called eternal problems. Through his work the philosopher answers the questions of his time." – "Die Funktion der Philosophie kann nicht anhand sogenannter ewiger Probleme eruiert werden. Durch sein Werk antwortet der Philosoph auf die Fragen seiner Zeit." Yet it seems that if one wants to do any credible history of philosophy, one must actually take up *in the present* the questions of other times. In any case, the actual philosophical issues in question here are only 'dead' at present insofar as people make the choice to regard them so (and philosophical views that are grounded only in contingent choice are, rationally speaking, inherently unstable and unreliable).

Imbach also voices his agreement with Flasch that in regard to Aquinas' explanation of transubstantiation it is appropriate to speak of a "disempowerment of reason of great consequence."<sup>610</sup> He notes, in connection with this claim, that in the 'contest' (*Wettstreit*) between Aristotle and Church – interchangeably also referred to as the 'harmonization' (*Harmonisierung*) of the two! – it should be no surprise that philosophy should not have the last word; but why this should constitute a disempowerment of reason, he does not say. For Thomas, this harmonization is rather an empowerment – grace builds on nature – since it integrates revealed truths with the just recognition (n.b.: not *ad hoc* postulation) of the natural limits of reason, in the pursuit of the truth *simpliciter*.<sup>611</sup> Imbach, however, tends towards a rather presumptive dismissal of St. Thomas' position on 'harmonization.' He follows Flasch on this point, without offering his own explanation of what Thomas' position is, or providing any objective analysis of what follows from it.

On the whole, however, it seems fair to say that Imbach is less dismissive than Flasch. While – like Flasch – he sometimes seems to incline towards the (rather *unphilosophical*) supposition that philosophical problems can be adjudicated by reference to whatever 'outcomes' are observable in a *res gestae*-style (not to mention gerrymandered) history of ideas,<sup>612</sup> it seems to me that his main line of philosophical interrogation concerns an

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<sup>610</sup> Cf. Imbach 1986, p. 367 (citing Flasch 1983, p. LIII); see also p. 383.

<sup>611</sup> Cf., e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *ST* II-II.8.1: "But since human knowledge begins from the senses, from the exterior, so to speak, it is clear that the stronger the light of the intellect is, the more it can penetrate to the inner reality of things. But the light of our intellect is of finite power, so that it can reach to a determinate point. Therefore man is in need of supernatural light so that he can penetrate farther to a knowledge of certain things which it is not strong enough to know through the natural light." – "Sed cum cognitio hominis a sensu incipiat, quasi ab exteriori, manifestum est quod quanto lumen intellectus est fortius, tanto potest magis ad intima penetrare. Lumen autem naturale nostri intellectus est finitae virtutis, unde usque ad determinatum aliquid pertinere potest. Indiget igitur homo supernaturali lumine ut ulterius penetret ad cognoscendum quaedam quae per lumen naturale cognoscere non valet."

<sup>612</sup> For example, in reference to the two supposedly conflicting views of God that can be found in Thomas' work, Imbach writes: "Taking precisely the example of transubstantiation, it proved that their opposition, soon after the death of Thomas, became insurmountable." - "Gerade am Beispiel der Transsubstantiation ließe sich nachweisen, daß ihr Gegensatz bald nach dem Tod von Thomas unüberwindlich geworden ist." (Imbach 1986,

important and relevant philosophical issue. Imbach highlights what he sees as an important inherent tension in Aquinas' thinking about God (which later leads to his reflections on the possible fruitfulness, for philosophy, of philosophical engagement with problems of theological origin<sup>613</sup>):

On the one side, the order of the world and its hierarchical gradation manifest the greatness and the goodness of God: the world as imitation of God; but on the other side, the lordship of God reveals itself in the suspension of the natural order and of the natural function of secondary causes: the world as presentation of the might of God. This dichotomy bears witness to the quest for a harmonization of two competing understandings of God.<sup>614</sup>

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p. 368) This theological conclusion Imbach draws – about the insurmountable conflict between two conflicting views of God – is evidently based on a *particular* selection from and interpretation of the history of philosophical polemics in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century: i.e., “these things were said and done,” *these* were the relevant *res gestae*, or, in Greek, τὰ γινόμενα (cf. Aristotle’s *Poetics*, 1451a36-b8). But one cannot establish (or refute) a philosophical-theological thesis simply by referring to facts about the reception of that thesis, namely, whether it came to be generally accepted (or disputed). (As Aristotle points out in the passage from the *Poetics* cited above, a mere history of ‘what happened’ (τὰ γινόμενα) concerns particulars, whereas a more philosophical view of things is concerned with ‘what would and could come about either probably or necessarily’ (οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἶδος ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον) and with universals.) And certainly one *could* choose to focus on figures who would tend to confirm Imbach’s thesis about the “insurmountable conflict” latent in Thomas’ doctrine; but it seems that one could equally choose to focus on figures who would tend rather to lend support to a thesis affirming the durability and coherence of Thomas’ position. And in either case, it would be actual philosophical-theological analysis which would ultimately have to decide the question.

<sup>613</sup> Cf., e.g., Imbach 1993, p. 193: “Forcing philosophy to consider what it dared not imagine, theology permitted philosophy to renew itself and to surpass itself.” – “Obligant la philosophie à penser ce qu’elle n’osait imaginer, la théologie a permis à la philosophie de se renouveler et de se dépasser elle-même.”

<sup>614</sup> Imbach 1986, p. 368: “Auf der eine Seite manifestiert die Ordnung der Welt und ihre hierarchische Stufung die Größe und Güte Gottes: die Welt als Nachahmung Gottes; auf der anderen Seite aber offenbart sich die Herrschaft Gottes in der Aufhebung der natürlichen Ordnung und der natürlichen Funktion der Zweitursachen: die Welt als Darstellung der Macht Gottes. Dieser Zwiespalt legt Zeugnis ab vom Bemühen um eine Harmonisierung zweier konkurrierender Gottesverständnisse.” Cf. Imbach 1998, p. 121: “On peut cependant se demander si cette possibilité divine de produire des miracles ne menace pas la conception thomasienne de l’ordre du monde. Ne sommes-nous pas en présence de deux conceptions de Dieu concurrentes qui entraînent deux conceptions du monde différentes : d’un côté Dieu comme principe de l’ordre, Dieu comme intellect absolu, de l’autre Dieu comme liberté absolue ? Dans un cas le monde serait la représentation de la bonté divine imitant Dieu par la beauté, l’ordre et la hiérarchie. Dans l’autre cas le monde serait le lieu de manifestation de la puissance divine. D’un côté nous assistons à un rehaussement des causes secondes, de l’autre on insiste sur la possibilité de se passer d’elles. Je crois que cette tension existe chez saint Thomas. Le problème de l’Eucharistie permet de l’articuler et de la manifester.”

In regard to this ‘dichotomy,’ however, first of all it seems just obvious that greatness and goodness, on one side, need not be in conflict with power (and freedom<sup>615</sup>), on the other – to the contrary, it seems appropriate to ask: why *shouldn't* greatness and goodness go together with power and freedom? In any case, this blunt supposition of conflict would seem to be in danger of either fundamentally misunderstanding, or simply ignoring, both the basic content of St. Thomas’ philosophical theology – which certainly denies any such conflict – as well as the fundamental nature of the concepts used by Aquinas therein for speaking about God. In particular, it is important to understand the way these concepts first originate from our understanding of God’s effects (creatures), and the specific way in which they are (subsequently) applied to God: That is to say, it is a necessary feature of our understanding of God that our positive conceptions of God originate from creatures and that we must understand their application to God to be analogical. It is fundamentally impossible to have any fully adequate conception of the divine essence on the basis of naturally understandable concepts. Imbach’s attempt to align, on the one hand, discourse on omnipotence and freedom with reasoning from revealed data, and on the other, discourse on the created order and on the gradation discoverable in things with natural reasoning about God, is first of all *ad hoc* and unmotivated (things simply don’t line up that way for Thomas); and secondly, it ignores the fact that for Thomas (as for Dietrich!) it is a demonstrable feature of the orderly gradation of things that lower grades of things participate in, and produce coordinately lower grade manifestations of, higher grade things. Accordingly, for Thomas, even if we had two (or more) competing conceptions of God – in this case, one expressing the divine reality underlying the orderliness of nature, the other that would express the plenitude of divine power – it could never be a legitimate goal of rational theology to discover the divine

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<sup>615</sup> Cf. Imbach 1998, p. 121.

essence, by rationally unifying these competing conceptions. There is no part of Thomas' philosophical-theological methodology which could allow for such a dichotomization of clear and *opposing* conceptions of God in the first place: what is really unified in God is necessarily distinct in our conceptions of God, insofar our conceptions derive from really differing effects of God. Imbach writes as if the historical failure to arrive at a singly-oriented, comprehensive conceptual expression of the being of the first cause – of pure act, of being itself – constitutes a problem in need of resolution in Thomas' theological system: In reality the intrinsic impossibility of discovering such a conceptual expression is an integral feature of the rigorously worked out conceptual articulation of that system.

Nonetheless, Imbach thinks that Aquinas does have two competing views of God, and he wants to extend this dichotomy into a dichotomy between reason (*Vernunft*) and authority (*Autorität*) – which in reality would seem rather to be the authority of certain interpreters of Aristotle vs. the authority of others. According to Imbach, what sets Dietrich apart in his embrace of rational (and generally Aristotelian) authority – as compared to that of figures like Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia – is that Dietrich is fully prepared to claim not just a certain methodological independence of philosophical reason (and its conclusions), but its right to overrule theological conclusions:

Does he really bypass theological discussions, as has been claimed [by Flasch]? Does he not rather criticize, in the name of philosophy, attempted theological explanations, without holding back in the face of magisterial decisions? Philosophy thus possesses a right to autonomous and uncompromising critique of theology.<sup>616</sup>

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<sup>616</sup> Imbach 1986, p. 394: “Geht er wirklich theologischen Diskussionen aus dem Wege, wie dies gesagt worden ist? [Cf. Flasch 1983, p. XLV.] Kritisiert er nicht vielmehr im Namen der Philosophie theologische Erklärungsversuche, ohne vor lehramtlichen Entscheidungen halt zu machen? Die Philosophie besitzt somit ein Recht auf autonome und rücksichtslose Kritik der Theologie.”

But we can mention three problems with this view: First, it contradicts Dietrich's explicit assertion – in his treatise on separability (*DA* 7(3)), no less – about the authority of the pope to determine true doctrine. Second, on the basis of a reasonable interpretation of the actual methodological principles that Dietrich cites, there in fact seems to be no way to rationally ground such a position: and the dichotomy doesn't even make sense, insofar as the theological explanation and the philosophical criticism, if they are to be genuinely relevant to one another, must in fact be united in a single conceptual framework so as to be comprehensible and evaluable in relation to one another by a single intellect.<sup>617</sup> The distinction between 'rational philosopher' and 'authority-bound theologian' would thus appear to be more a distinction of reason, rather than a real one. In this case, the notion that philosophy might really be uncompromisingly autonomous from theology turns out to be an illusion, even if the philosopher has solidified that illusion by artificially amputating theological claims from his field of inquiry.<sup>618</sup> Third, the claim is also hard to reconcile with a more general examination of Dietrich's doctrinal positions in his various works, which confirm that he is no more a staunch philosophical purist – against the authority of revelation and Church – than is Thomas.<sup>619</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> If one wanted advance the claim that 'philosophy' and 'theology' operate through simply incommensurable conceptual frameworks, one would presumably need to provide grounds for accepting that claim, and presumably these grounds would need to be expressed conceptually, and in terms that were commensurable to (and so capable of judging) both frameworks – thus (apparently) undermining the original claim about incommensurability.

<sup>618</sup> Elsewhere Imbach claims that "Dietrich put the authority of reason over that of faith." - "Dietrich setzt die Autorität der Vernunft über jene des Glaubens." (Imbach 1987, p. 45) But reason, being reason, can't simply *put* itself over faith, or simply *give* itself authority; reason, being reason, must have convincing rational grounds for doing so. It seems that such grounds would have to be found in some fundamental conception of the (human) intellect, but in spite of its idealistic tendencies towards a view of the intellect as 'constitutive' of reality (i.e., 'conceptual' reality), I do not think that Dietrich's theory of intellect can plausibly provide such a grounding (as I have argued in the preceding chapter).

<sup>619</sup> See Dietrich's *De subiecto theologiae*, for example, which advances a view of philosophy and theology that is quite clearly incompatible with Imbach's interpretation; or Dietrich's discussion in *De cognitione entium separatorum* (cc. 25-38) of Biblical accounts of miraculous movements of the sun, which presents a case for God acting in a 'dispensative' way (consistent with the Augustinian account of voluntary – not just natural –

In regard to the analysis of Thomas' arguments, Imbach follows Flasch in misleadingly indicating that the motivation for Thomas' articulation of the second and third parts of his account of separate accidents (respectively, that regarding the correct quasi-definition of accidents, and that regarding the special role of three-dimensional quantity) is to prevent the first part of his account (the appeal to the special prerogatives of divine omnipotence) from being "too scandalous for philosophy"<sup>620</sup> – as if to suggest that Aquinas did not regard this first part of his account as itself being philosophically tenable.<sup>621</sup> But the real reason for Aquinas not beginning and ending his account simply with the appeal to divine omnipotence is – as Imbach is surely well aware – obviously an entirely philosophical one: such a truncated account would simply fail to respond to the principal objection(s) to separability.

Regarding the relation of Thomas' teaching to that of Aristotle, Imbach is generally more sympathetic in tone than Flasch. Regarding Thomas' redefinition of accidents for example, he notes that Thomas' proceeding is "entirely coherent: he attempts to reconcile the ecclesial doctrine on the Eucharist with Aristotelian ontology."<sup>622</sup> But then, commenting on Thomas' treatment of the special role of quantity, Imbach claims that in fact Thomas 'corrects' Aristotle:

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divine providence found in *De subiecto theologiae*), and where Dietrich does not autonomously and uncompromisingly reject "attempted theological explanations," but, indeed, himself attempts one. For a discussion of Dietrich's general attitude toward theology vs. philosophy, emphasizing his respect for theology, see Kandler 1998. (Kandler's views, which are also problematic, are discussed below, §3.3.)

<sup>620</sup> Cf. Imbach 1993, p. 180; Imbach 1998, p.119.

<sup>621</sup> Wippel shows that Aquinas regarded his view of divine omnipotence as demonstrable on purely philosophical grounds. See Wippel 2007, ch. 8.

<sup>622</sup> Cf. Imbach 1993, p. 181: "La démarche de Thomas d'Aquin est donc tout à fait cohérente : il s'efforce de concilier la doctrine ecclésiale de l'eucharistie avec l'ontologie aristotélicienne." Cf. Imbach 1998, p. 119.

To arrive at this goal, Thomas Aquinas must correct Aristotelian ontology on yet another point. To do this, he affirms that in the absence of a substance in which the accidents ... inhere, quantity can – exceptionally – in the case of the Eucharist play the role of subject.<sup>623</sup>

The problem with this claim is that Thomas himself does not appear to think of himself as *correcting* Aristotle.<sup>624</sup> Rather, in his account of the Eucharist he takes himself to be working with a legitimate (and philosophically true) Avicennian interpretation of Aristotle<sup>625</sup>: His argument regarding the correct (quasi-) definition ('by addition') of accidents certainly purports to be Aristotelian<sup>626</sup> – in Maurer's view, Thomas' 'redefinition' aims to correct Bonaventure, rather than Aristotle<sup>627</sup> – and while Thomas himself does not indicate the connection, there are also strong suggestions of the doctrine of the privileged separability of dimensive quantity that can be found in Aristotle himself.<sup>628</sup> Of course it is possible to allow

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<sup>623</sup> Imbach 1993, p. 181-182 : "Pour parvenir à ce but, Thomas d'Aquin doit corriger l'ontologie aristotélicienne sur un autre point encore. Pour ce faire, il affirme qu'en l'absence d'une substance à laquelle les accidents – couleur, odeur, etc. – inhérent, la quantité peut – exceptionnellement – dans le cas de l'eucharistie jouer le rôle du sujet." Cf. Imbach 1998, pp. 119-120.

<sup>624</sup> This is a point which Kandler, too, most egregiously ignores; cf. Kandler 2010, p. 91.

<sup>625</sup> Cf. König-Pralong 2009, pp. 124-125. See Burrell 2012 for a nice summary of Aquinas' appropriation of Avicenna's views over those of Averroes. Fabrizio Amerini gives a helpful general assessment of the relation of various medieval accounts of accidents to Aristotle's own view: "Although it is especially (albeit not exclusively) the case of the Eucharist that compels medieval philosophers and theologians to rethink the nature of accidents, nonetheless ... different theological or philosophical explanations of accidental being are grounded upon different but quite legitimate readings of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. ... At the end of the day, no theological or philosophical explanation of accidental being really brings Aristotle's metaphysics into crisis; nonetheless every explanation excludes a particular version of it." (Amerini 2006, p. 97)

<sup>626</sup> On this point, it is worth mentioning a remark of Wallace regarding Thomas' global understanding of *Metaphysics* Book VII, namely, that Thomas understands the accounts (*rationes*) therein of substance and accident to be dialectical or probable in nature, that is, they are not properly demonstrative and do not yield full-blooded definitions – a point which, in any case, is granted (and insisted upon) by Dietrich; cf. Wallace 1959, p. 77.

<sup>627</sup> Cf. Maurer 1956, p. 193-194.

<sup>628</sup> See Aristotle, *Physics* IV, 2, 209b22-30 (trans. Hardie and Gaye): "But it is at any rate not difficult to see that *place* cannot be either of them [form or matter]. The form and the matter [i.e., the constituents of *substance* of the thing] are not separate from the thing, whereas *the place can be separated*. As we pointed out, where air was, water in turn comes to be, the one replacing the other; and similarly with other bodies. Hence the place of a thing is neither a part nor a state of it, but is *separable* from it. For place is supposed to be something like a vessel – the vessel being a transportable place. But the vessel is no part of the thing." – Aristotle's analysis of *place* is clearly very similar to Thomas' functional analysis of *dimensive quantity* in the Eucharist, which is like place in serving as the "proper and *per se* boundary (*terminus*) of a thing" (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *InPhys* IV.3 n.3). In regard to the further question whether God can supernaturally cause a dimensive quantity, apart from

that Thomas' reading of Aristotle might ultimately be untenable; or that, since he is not fundamentally concerned with whether or not he is entirely faithful to the Philosopher, his presentation of his argument as consistent with a sound reading of Aristotle might be somewhat contrived (in the more or less standard way in which medieval authors contrive to correlate their own positions with those of recognized authorities); but in any case, it is certainly misleading to simply definitively assert, as Imbach does, that Aquinas is and understands himself to be revising and correcting Aristotle in regard to his doctrine of accidents, and also that he modifies his own ontology in order to make it fit his theological data.<sup>629</sup>

In light of these points it should also be noted that Imbach refers his claim about Aquinas' theologically-driven philosophical concessions quite specifically and directly to his attempt to rationalize – or 'philosophize' – the doctrine of the Eucharist.<sup>630</sup> Now one could try, like Maurer, to emphasize the fundamental importance of the distinction between essence and *esse* as the doctrine dividing Thomas from Dietrich (and Aristotle), and one could further argue that this doctrine is in fact the product of a bending of philosophy under theological influence, so as to conclude, like Maurer, that the dispute over accidents is in fact somehow just a ramification of the prior (perhaps theologically-driven) disagreement over the reality

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substance, to serve as subject for the other accidents, it would seem that Aquinas cannot *correct* Aristotle on this point, since Aristotle never found occasion to *address* it.

<sup>629</sup> Cf., e.g., Imbach 1993, p. 184: "It remains, nonetheless, and here we touch on the nub of the problem, that Thomas Aquinas is led by the theological problem of transubstantiation to modify his ontology." – "Il ne reste pas moins, et nous touchons ici au nœud du problème, que Thomas d'Aquin est amené par le problème théologique de la transsubstantiation à modifier son ontologie." Imbach cites a number of Thomistic texts here, but, for various reasons which we have already discussed, none of them seem to actually substantiate his claim. We could say that Thomas' ontology is *modalized*, but this is very different from Imbach's (and Flasch's) claim that he *modified* it.

<sup>630</sup> Cf., e.g., Imbach 1998, p. 119: "Wanting to simultaneously maintain the doctrine of the Eucharist and Aristotelian ontology, he reformulates this ontology on an essential point in order to satisfy theological exigencies and so makes a significant concession." – "Voulant maintenir simultanément la doctrine de l'Eucharistie et l'ontologie aristotélicienne, il reformule cette ontologie sur un point essentiel pour satisfaire les exigences théologiques et fait donc une concession importante."

of the essence/*esse* distinction. For reasons indicated above (see §1 of the present chapter), the essence/*esse* distinction in fact seems not to be relevant to understanding the dispute between Thomas and Dietrich over the separability of accidents. But in any case, supposing that the foregoing remarks about the actual consistency of Thomas' account of transubstantiation with his understanding of (Aristotelian) ontology are just, Imbach cannot tie Thomas' supposed revision and correction of Aristotle (or of his own ontology) to the doctrine of the Eucharist, that is, directly in virtue of the doctrine of accidents contained in his account of transubstantiation. And were we to turn instead to an analysis of the possibly non-philosophical, theological provenance of the real distinction between essence and existence, there is at least no question about the fact that Avicenna did not have the Eucharist in mind when formulating the necessity for this distinction; and so in this case, at the very least a very different, very much more subtle and circuitous argument would have to be made in support of Imbach's contention that there are in fact important specifically Eucharistically-driven philosophical 'concessions' which constitute the crux of Thomas' metaphysical account of the separability of accidents.

### **3.2 Catherine König-Pralong**

Catherine König-Pralong has also devoted considerable attention to Dietrich's treatise on accidents. In regard to the primary philosophical analysis of Thomas' position and of Dietrich's critique thereof, however, she simply endorses the "precise" and "convincing" analyses of Imbach and Flasch, and thus sees no need to contribute a new reading of her own.<sup>631</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> Cf. König-Pralong 2005, p. 238; König-Pralong 2009, p. 108. The following summary statement bears clear marks of the influence of Flash and Imbach: "Against these compromises [of Thomas] accepted out of respect for dogma, Dietrich refused absolutely the hypothesis of the subsistence of an accident without its substance.

Instead, while taking for granted the cogency of these preceding analyses, König-Pralong's main concern – still following the precedents of Flasch and Imbach – is to understand the fundamental conceptions of philosophy and theology underlying Dietrich's work and to situate Dietrich historically in these terms: specifically, that is, as part of a reaction against the late 13<sup>th</sup> century trend at the university of Paris of embracing a “theology of omnipotence,” which emphasizes the realm of possibility – of that which can or could be, in consideration of the absolute power of God (*potentia Dei absoluta*) – as opposed to the actual nature(s) of things – that which exists in accordance with the ordained power of God (*potentia Dei ordinata*).<sup>632</sup> On this view, Dietrich's metaphysics seeks to entirely subsume the perception of the contingent, within the conception of the necessary. König-Pralong summarizes her view of Dietrich's philosophical programme thus:

This opposition [to Parisian theological trends] is itself linked to a radical enough philosophical opposition, the choice of an autonomous philosophy which expresses itself in the form of a total metaphysics. Dietrich's programme cuts the bridges between theology and philosophy, but also erases all traces of the contingent, of the accidental, of the harmful, from the field of philosophy. No chance of the will and no accidental process break up the coherence of metaphysics, since random and contingent events are simply not intelligible, so not integrated in the conceptual universe.<sup>633</sup>

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Like Eckhart, he strove to maintain the rational coherence of the collected fields of knowledge and refused to conform natural philosophy to the letter of dogma, despite the timidity of his illustrious Italian ancestor.” – “Contre ces compromis consentis par respect du dogme, Dietrich refusa absolument l'hypothèse de la subsistance d'un accident sans sa substance. Comme Eckhart, il s'efforça de maintenir la cohérence rationnelle de l'ensemble des savoirs et refusa de conformer la philosophie naturelle à la lettre du dogme, malgré les timidités de l'illustre ancêtre italien.” (König-Pralong 2005, p. 238)

<sup>632</sup> See König-Pralong's 2005, 2008, and 2009.

<sup>633</sup> König-Pralong, 2008, p. 57-58 : “Cette opposition est elle-même liée à une opposition philosophique assez radicale, le choix d'une philosophie autonome qui s'exprime sous la forme d'une métaphysique totale. Le programme de Dietrich coupe les ponts entre théologie et philosophie, mais gomme aussi toutes traces de contingences, d'accidentel ou de délétère du champ de la philosophie. Nul aléa de la volonté, nul processus accidentel ne fissurent la cohérence métaphysique, puisque les événements aléatoires et contingents ne sont simplement pas intelligibles, donc pas intégrés à l'univers conceptuel.”

To begin with, Dietrich's programme, as König-Pralong describes it here, in itself sounds rather nonsensical: it is precisely Dietrich's *choice* of an allegedly 'autonomous philosophy' that is supposed to produce a metaphysics that excludes any contingent influence of the will. Certainly we might well suspect that Dietrich himself might not be happy with such an intrinsically conflicted characterization of his metaphysical project. In addition, having recently analyzed in detail (see chapter 3 of the present work) Dietrich's metaphysical treatise on accidents, the claim that accidental processes are not integrated into Dietrich's conceptual universe should rightly leave us quite mystified. (Here König-Pralong possibly has in mind a misleadingly literal, absolute interpretation of the notion that there is no science of the contingent, which we discussed above in connection with Flasch's analysis of Dietrich's critique of Thomas (§2.2.3).)

But König-Pralong seems quite serious about pushing this necessitarian line of interpretation. She claims: "As for Dietrich of Freiberg, the internal constitution of his metaphysics makes of it a war machine<sup>634</sup> against the theology of omnipotence and of miracle." – But how so? König-Pralong admits that this characterization of Dietrich's position is not without its difficulties, especially in light of Dietrich's explicit endorsement of both natural *and* voluntary providence; she continues:

For Dietrich, the question of the difference between theology and metaphysics is *apparently* non-conflictual. There are two radically different providences, the one divine and voluntary, the other natural and intellectual, the first which is the object of theology, the second which

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<sup>634</sup> It seems clear that no reference is intended here to War Machine, the comic book super-hero (ally and sidekick of Iron Man).

the philosopher knows. And the *universitas entium* lets itself be described in totality by the one approach and by the other.<sup>635</sup>

For the most part, König-Pralong is correct here, except in regard to the last sentence cited, for which I see no grounds: In fact, Dietrich claims that the voluntary order of providence is the completion and consummation of the natural order of providence,<sup>636</sup> which is consistent with the more or less standard view of nature and grace embraced also by Aquinas. Also, if the distinction here alleged by König-Pralong, between two radically distinct descriptions of the universe, was actually operative in contextualizing Dietrich's arguments and conclusions in *De accidentibus*, it is strange that he neglected to mention it.

In any case, König-Pralong takes a divorce between intellect and will as a key to understanding Dietrich. She thinks that in the context of philosophical discourse Dietrich embraces a Proclian view of God as the One, from which being flows in a perfectly unified way, i.e., purely of necessity, such that there is no place for a 'personal' God who acts according to his will. In support of this view, she cites the following passage from Dietrich's *De cognitione entium separatorum*:

But of this unity or this one intention [by which the universe is one], it can be stated more explicitly thus: that it is the essence of the first principle, existing in itself in accordance with the property of its substance; but intentionally, in accordance with its power, diffused

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<sup>635</sup> König-Pralong 2009, p. 126: "Quant à Dietrich de Freiberg, la constitution interne de sa métaphysique en fait une machine de guerre contre la théologie de la toute-puissance et du miracle. Chez Dietrich, la question de la différence entre théologie et métaphysique est *apparemment* non conflictuelle. Il y a deux providences radicalement différentes, l'une divine et volontaire, l'autre naturelle et intellectuelle, la première qui est objet de la théologie, la seconde que connaît le philosophe. Et l'*universitas entium* se laisse décrire totalement par l'une et l'autre approche."

<sup>636</sup> Cf. *vis.* 4.3.2(4) (I 114).

throughout the universe of things; and on it the whole universe of things causally depends, not only as on a first causal principle, but also within itself, according to its parts.<sup>637</sup>

For my part, however, I can find no support in this passage for the necessitarian-emanation war-machine-against-omnipotence-and-miracles which König-Pralong wants to attribute to Dietrich. (Nor do I see in it anything to which Aquinas would object.) Rather, as far as I can see, it is perfectly compatible with Dietrich's explicit acknowledgement of the possibility (and reality) of miracles, as found, for example, in his treatise *De accidentibus*,<sup>638</sup> or in that very *De cognitione* (see chapters 27 and 38) from which, in the attempt to establish her 'war machine' thesis, König-Pralong quotes above. It is also compatible with the standard view, held by both Thomas and Dietrich, that it is a mark of perfection for intellect and will to be united, and that in God they are in fact identical, in which case it is nonsense to say that the order and necessity of the intellect (divine or otherwise) must somehow leave no room for the will (although we must of course always remember that there is no univocal predication of 'will' (or 'intellect') in the two cases – i.e., in the case where will and intellect are identical (in God), and in cases where they are not).

In the context of König-Pralong's thesis about the opposition of Dietrich's philosophy to theology, the separation of accidents is supposed to serve as a primary instance of something miraculous and wholly inaccessible to the intellect, and which can only be referred to the thoroughly inscrutable, anything-is-possible realm of the *potentia Dei absoluta* – to which Dietrich's 'total metaphysics' is supposedly opposed. But if König-Pralong had not bought into Flasch and Imbach's misleading analyses of the primary debate (over the separability of accidents in the Eucharist), she would more likely have noticed that

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<sup>637</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De cog. ent.* 79(3) (II 242). Cf. König-Pralong 2009, p. 126.

<sup>638</sup> Cf. *DA* 7; see above, ch.3, §3 for analysis.

there is no supposition, in the Thomistic account, that the separation of accidents, albeit miraculous, is a random, probabilistic affair, conceivable only in relation to a wholly indefinite conception of whatever is absolutely possible; rather the exercise of divine power in the sacraments expresses “a kind of second order ordained power,” to use Edith Sylla’s apt phrase,<sup>639</sup> one (arguably, at least) with its own perfectly well-conceivable, and well-conceived, order and necessity. It should be noted, accordingly, that, in relation to Thomas’ argument for the separability of accidents, König-Pralong’s attempted explanation of Dietrich’s opposition to Thomas in light of an alleged radical opposition between philosophy and the intelligible ordained power of God, on the one hand, and theology and the wholly inconceivable absolute power of God, on the other, would, in point of fact, appear to be idle vis-à-vis Thomas’ actual argument.

To her credit, König-Pralong does recognize that there is some ‘tension’ in (her reading of) Dietrich’s view. But she seems not to consider the possibility that this ‘tension,’ if not created, is at least greatly exaggerated by her reading of Dietrich’s view – to the point where the ‘tension’ amounts to outright contradiction, so that she attributes a fundamentally absurd position to Dietrich, without real textual foundation.

How did König-Pralong come to this pass? First, if there is, as I would suggest, a certain sense of complacency towards the intrinsic coherence and plausibility of Dietrich’s supposed views in König-Pralong’s analysis, perhaps this is because her approach tends to be essentially historical and incidentally philosophical. Further, her implausible reading of Dietrich’s position, again, results from trying to follow the misleading signposts erected by

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<sup>639</sup> Cf. Sylla 1975, p. 361.

the original interpretations given by Flasch and Imbach<sup>640</sup> – signposts which effectively create the need for implausible broader interpretations, in order to frame those original misinterpretations (namely, of the substantive arguments grounding the primary conflict between the views of Dietrich and Thomas). A more sympathetic appreciation of Thomas’ philosophical position, in contrast, which is developed in light of a necessary, fundamental harmony or consistency of all truths, including those of both reason and faith (or philosophy and theology; specifically, the metaphysics of accidents (and substance) and the revelation-grounded truth of transubstantiation), might have ensured that the inherent difficulty of trying to radically separate philosophy and theology, or intellect and will, would not have been passed over so lightly<sup>641</sup>; and consequently it would have been more apparent that in turn reading such views into Dietrich’s work would at least require better textual grounding and argumentative support. Perhaps the shortcomings in these recent expositions of Thomas’ position are in part the result of their primary concern being to contribute to a particular kind of historiography, the narrative of which tends to be too presumptively consistent with a

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<sup>640</sup> König-Pralong 2009 explicitly sets out to follow “une piste de lecture” indicated by Flasch 1983. She produces a technically dense and generally quite informative reading of Dietrich’s use of Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics* and *Metaphysics* VII in his *De accidentibus*. Where she runs into trouble, as I have argued, is when it comes to assessing the actual philosophical significance of Dietrich’s arguments and their relation to those of Thomas.

<sup>641</sup> Recall that for Thomas there can be no contradiction between (true) faith and (true) reason, since God is the origin of both. Accordingly, in the case of apparent conflict it is necessary to investigate further and to resolve the conflict by means of rational analysis. (For good general discussions on this subject, see (e.g.) Klima 1998 or Niederbacher 2012.) Thus while natural reason cannot strictly prove the *actual reality* of something like transubstantiation – which we can know about only by relying on divine revelation – if it is the case that *transubstantiation is indeed one of the things which is actually real* (this being a *theological* proposition), then it is one of the things which is *metaphysically possible*; and it cannot then be possible to give a sound demonstration of its *impossibility*. Rather, by a sound exercise of reason (i.e., *philosophically*), it will be possible, at least in principle, to show that any such pretended demonstration of its impossibility is unsound. From this perspective, at least, it is obvious that philosophical and theological discourse, respectively, cannot inhabit autonomous, mutually exclusive domains. Both must be exercised in the single domain of the knowledge-seeking, contradiction-excluding intellect – and it makes no difference whether one is attempting to discursively (philosophically) demonstrate the impossibility of some theological proposition (as in Dietrich’s case); or to discursively (philosophically) show the unsoundness of such an attempted demonstration (as in Aquinas’ explanation of transubstantiation in terms of what he takes to be sound (and soundly interpreted) metaphysical principles).

framework which implicitly confirms the superiority of a post-enlightenment philosophical (or ideological) perspective, rather than being primarily concerned with thinking through the (living) philosophical questions which are in fact under examination – questions which too often instead tend to be regarded as essentially belonging to another epoch (as ‘dead’).

### 3.3 Karl-Hermann Kandler

Karl-Hermann Kandler has the distinction of being the only author to emphasize the fact that despite the vociferous rejection of the separability of accidents from substance in *De accidentibus*, we see nonetheless in a later treatise, *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis*, that Dietrich of Freiberg does accept the theological doctrine of the ‘real presence’ of Christ’s body and blood in the Eucharist.<sup>642</sup> Dietrich accepts that Christ, certainly in virtue of the hypostatic union of his human with his divine nature, and also through the ‘spiritual’ property of his glorified human body, indeed has ‘privileged’ powers, which evidently pertain to a kind of supernatural agency, and that by the working of these supernatural powers, Christ’s body and blood are made truly present in the Eucharist (although Dietrich’s account is very brief, such that it is impossible to compare it in detail to Thomas’ far more complete account of what we should say happens to the substances and accidents of the bread and wine when the body and blood of Christ are made sacramentally present).<sup>643</sup>

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<sup>642</sup> One can accept the *real presence* of Christ in the Eucharist as a revealed theological datum, without this necessarily implying acceptance of the more particular doctrines of *transubstantiation* and *separate accidents* as the correct way to develop a speculative account of this datum.

<sup>643</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis spiritualibus et corporibus futurae resurrectionis*, esp. 31(5)-32(2) (II 334) and 37(7)-(9) (II 341-342). See also Kandler 2010, p. 97. Briefly, by Dietrich’s account, “the spiritual body of Christ can be in the sacrament under a corporeal appearance” – “*corpus Christi spirituale potest esse in sacramento sub specie corporali*” (*De substantiis spiritualibus* 31(5) (II 334)); “at the Supper, giving his body, it was at the same time *spiritual* and *under the property of corporeity*” – “*in cena dando corpus suum simul fuit spirituale et sub proprietate corporeitatis*” (*ibid.*, 32(2) (II 334)). By ‘spiritual body’ Dietrich means a glorified body, a kind of bodily substance which is *endowed* (usually only after the resurrection) with essential ‘spiritual’ properties, suited for a specifically ‘spiritual’ mode of existence, but which can also extrinsically assume

As mentioned above (in §2 of the present chapter), Kandler fully endorses Flasch's reading of Thomas' arguments for separability, and if anything misconstrues Thomas' position even more violently.<sup>644</sup> In regard to the secondary, methodological interpretation, however, Kandler rejects Flasch's reading according to which Dietrich wants to be just a philosopher, while disregarding theological propositions, or 'ethicizing' them.<sup>645</sup> And he also rejects Imbach's reading, whereby Dietrich wants to claim the rational right to an entirely unmitigated philosophical critique of theological theses. He most approaches König-Pralong's reading, according to which Dietrich wants to propose a radically dualistic account of reality, following upon the two radically opposed modes of divine providence, natural and voluntary. In Kandler, however, we do not find echoed König-Pralong's curious claims about the incompatibility, for Dietrich, between the intellectual and the voluntary being of God, nor the emphasis on the martially-oriented prerogatives of the intellectual, metaphysical side of the analysis.

Instead, on the basis of Dietrich's *Fragment on the subject of theology* (*Fragmentum de subiecto theologiae*), Kandler wants to attribute the ultimate priority and place of honor in

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accidental corporeal properties – i.e., in the ordinary, physical world of nature – 'dispensatively,' as appropriate for some particular use pertaining to such properties. As accidental, extrinsic dispositions *of* substances, 'spiritual' and 'corporeal' differ generically – as do, e.g., color and shape – so that the same subsistent thing can be both corporeal and spiritual (at least in this sense) without contradiction (*ibid.*, 37(8) (II 342)). Thus, through the exercise of God's omnipotence these properties can be constituted as "certain dispositions extrinsically supervening on a substance" – "quasdam substantiae supervenientes quasi ab extrinseco dispositiones" (*ibid.*, 37(8) (II 341-342)). Applying Dietrich's distinctions to the Eucharist, it would seem that he thinks of the *corporeal appearance* of bread in the Eucharist as (supernaturally) "super-induced" (*superinducta*) so that the corporeal properties (i.e., accidental physical appearances) are "extrinsically appointed" (*ab extrinseco indita*) to Christ's body, for Christ's use, and the spiritual substance of Christ's body, accordingly, is "extrinsically clothed over" (*ab extrinseco supervestitur*) by these corporeal properties. In this later, positive account, given his view on the utter impossibility of accidents without a subject it would seem that Dietrich would be forced to say that *Christ* is the subject of the accidents – even though he is so only 'extrinsically' (*ab extrinseco*). It is not clear to what extent Dietrich's rather hastily sketched position differs more than verbally from Thomas'. For further discussion, see above, ch. 3, §4.4.2; ch. 4, §4.

<sup>644</sup> See Kandler 2010, p. 94 (quoted above, Ch. 5, §2.1.1). In the passage referred to, Kandler claims that Thomas' view entails that God can at any time suspend the law of non-contradiction.

<sup>645</sup> Cf. Kandler 1998, p. 647.

Dietrich's global understanding of reality to what Dietrich refers to as "our divine science of the saints," "our science, which we truly and unqualifiedly call theology," and which he distinguishes from "the divine science of the philosophers," which he appears clearly enough to equate with "the divine science of the wise of this world," which, "after the end of this world," is destined to be destroyed (or, if one prefers, 'deconstructed'), as St. Paul declares in I Corinthians.<sup>646</sup> According to Kandler, Dietrich ultimately doesn't want to oppose revelation and science (as Imbach would have it); he just wants to distinguish them (as Thomas failed to do, Kandler thinks).<sup>647</sup> Kandler expresses his view of Dietrich's treatise on accidents as follows:

The upshot is that Dietrich, in the *De accidentibus*, sees the question about accidents as a philosophical problem (transubstantiation was, after all, grounded philosophically) and for this reason also treats it philosophically.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> Kandler emphasizes the significance of the way in which Dietrich chooses to use the first-person possessive pronoun here. Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *De subiecto theologiae* 3(8)-(9) (III 281-282):

(8) ...*our* science, which we truly and unqualifiedly call *theology*, is distinguished from the divine science of the philosophers. – (9) For the divine science of the philosophers considers the universe of beings in accordance with the order of natural providence, by which, namely, things stand in their nature and in accordance with their natural modes and properties are governed by the prince of the universe, and beyond this order of nature there is found no further end. But *our* divine science of the saints is found in beings according as they stand and are disposed under the order of voluntary providence, in which is found the intelligible character of merit and reward and those things which are connected with a good and holy life and the gaining of eternal beatitude and the arrival at the final end, whether in good or in evil, even after the end of this world, when the divine science of the wise of this world will be destroyed, I Cor. 13.

[(8) ...nostra scientia, quam vere et simpliciter theologiam dicimus, distinguitur a scientia divina philosophorum. – (9) Scientia enim divina philosophorum considerat universitatem entium secundum ordinem providentiae naturalis, quo videlicet res stant in sui natura et secundum suos modos et proprietates naturales gubernantur per principem universitatis, nec ultra hunc naturae ordinem aliquem ulteriorem finem attendit. Nostra autem divina sanctorum scientia attenditur in entibus, secundum quod stant et disponuntur sub ordine voluntariae providentiae, in quo attenditur ratio meriti et praemii et ea, quae attenduntur circa bonam et sanctam vitam et adeptionem aeternae beatitudinis et perventionem ad finem ulteriorem sive in bono sive in malo etiam post terminum huius mundi, quando scientia divina sapientium huius mundi destruetur, I Cor., 13.]

<sup>647</sup> Cf. Kandler 2010, pp. 96

<sup>648</sup> Cf. Kandler 2010, p. 107.

And he adds what he takes to be a handy slogan expressing the methodological stance underlying Dietrich's treatise on accidents: "Philosophical problems are to be treated philosophically and not theologically!"<sup>649</sup> In the later treatise, on spiritual substances, on the other hand, Kandler sees Dietrich as treating the doctrine of the Eucharist theologically, with the emphasis being on reliance on authority and scripture: Dietrich wants "to prove, in accordance with reason which agrees with the authorities, that which the Holy Scripture testifies."<sup>650</sup>

It is difficult, however, to make sense of Kandler's attempt to ground this interpretation, or of the way in which he connects it to his broader thesis about Dietrich's stance towards theology vs. philosophy. To begin with, his principal argument for the 'theological' nature of the later treatise consists almost entirely of a translated citation from Dietrich's *De substantiis spiritualibus*, which in fact seems to prove very little. In fact, Kandler's translation seems to be erroneous and in a way that suggests that he has substantially misunderstood the passage he cites. In the passage, Dietrich is describing and giving examples of the way in which a being which is essentially spiritual can take on an accidental disposition of corporeity (insofar as it takes on a relation to a place or bodily position), or a being which is essentially corporeal can take on an accidental disposition of spirituality (insofar as it abstracts from every place and bodily position). Dietrich explains that such accidental variability is indeed possible,

as when the same body, which was made spiritual from the condition of the resurrection simply by the power of God almighty [...], assumed corporeality for the sake of some cause, saving the property of spirituality it had already acquired, just as Christ did after his

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<sup>649</sup> Kandler 2010, p. 107: "Philosophische Probleme sind philosophisch zu behandeln und nicht theologisch!" Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>650</sup> Kandler 2010, p. 97: "...will Dietrich, ähnlich wie schon Anselm von Canterbury, gemäß der Vernunft, die mit den Autoritäten übereinstimmt, beweisen, was die Heilige Schrift bezeugt."

resurrection; and when the same body, saving the property of corporeity, assumed spirituality, as Christ did at the Last Supper, when he gave his body to the disciples.<sup>651</sup>

Kandler never explains the context of this passage. Instead he parses it halfway through the first clause, starting his citation at “just as Christ did...,” so that we are left with the following fragment of a thought, which really doesn’t make sense:

just as Christ did after his resurrection, and the same body, *through the special salutary manner of the corporeal mode of being* [emphasis added; this phrase ought to translate: *salva proprietate corporeitatis*] took on the spiritual, as Christ did in the Last Supper, when he gave his body to his disciples.<sup>652</sup>

Kandler uses this odd ‘translation’ to advance his own broad interpretation, which seems to be that Dietrich isn’t trying to make or apply conceptually rigorous, ‘philosophical’ distinctions here, but simply wants to refer the Eucharist to the essentially opaque – i.e., conceptually and philosophically speaking – workings of God’s voluntary, ‘theological’ providence. And so, after interjecting “and now comes the justification,” Kandler continues his quotation and (mis-) translation. First, here is what I take to Dietrich to actually say (my translation):

Which [assumption of spirituality] could not reasonably be the case, unless that blessed body was at the same time corporeal, and spiritual, through that spirituality which was, as it were,

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<sup>651</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis spiritualibus* 37(7) (II 341): “ut idem corpus, quod ex condicione resurrectionis, saltem virtute Dei omnipotentis, est factum spirituale, ut supra aliquotiens allegatum est ex Apostolo, assumat corporalitatem propter aliquam causam salva proprietate spiritualitatis iam habitae, sicut Christus fecit post resurrectionem suam, et idem corpus *salva proprietate corporeitatis* assumat spiritualitatem, ut Christus fecit in cena, quando dedit corpus suum discipulis.”

<sup>652</sup> Kandler 2010, p. 97: “so wie Christus nach seiner Auferstehung verfuhr, und derselbe Körper *durch die besondere heilsame Art der körperlichen Seinsweise* die geistliche annahm, wie Christus im Abendmahl tat, als er den Jüngern seinen Leib gab.”

extrinsically inscribed or assumed, not by that which was contracted by nature, which [prior to the resurrection] it did not have except in accordance with his divinity.<sup>653</sup>

And I translate Kandler's mistranslation of the same passage as follows:

...because he could not do this in a way accessible to reason, except that that blessed (or also: changed, *benedictum*) body was at the same time corporeal and spiritual by means of the spiritual nature (*spirituale ea spiritualite [sic]*), (that nature), which was, as it were, imparted and assumed from outside, which has nothing but its divinity.<sup>654</sup>

Assuming that my translation of Kandler is accurate, then considering Kandler's poor translation in itself, it is not at all clear what Dietrich would be trying to say. But the point that Kandler apparently wants to get from it is that there is nothing that natural reason, with reference to a naturally knowable, intellectual, philosophical, metaphysical understanding or account of the nature of things, can say about such an event as the Eucharist: it must simply be accepted – if it is accepted – as a function of pure reliance on revelation (i.e., scripture) and the divine authority of the Church and the saints.<sup>655</sup> Again, however, such a claim simply does not at all appear to follow from the actual passage that Kandler cites.

In addition to these problems with basic translation and exegesis, the second, more serious problem with Kandler's argument is that it is crucially dependent on the bad old misreading of Thomas' original argument, and it inherently makes no sense. Regarding

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<sup>653</sup> Dietrich of Freiberg, *De substantiis spiritualibus* 37(7) (II 341): "Quod rationabiliter esse non potuit, nisi corpus illud benedictum simul esset corporale et spirituale ea spiritualitate, quae fuit quasi extrinsecus indita vel assumpta, non ea, quae fuit per naturam contracta, quam non habuit nisi secundum suam divinitatem."

<sup>654</sup> Kandler 2010, p. 97: "weil er das nicht auf die Vernunft zugängliche Weise (*rationabiliter*) tun konnte, außer dass jener gesegnete (oder auch: verwandelte, *benedictum*) Körper zugleich körperlich und geistig mittels der geistigen Natur (*spirituale ea spiritualite [sic]*) war, (jene Natur), die gleichsam von außen verliehen und angenommen war, die nichts hat als ihre Göttlichkeit."

<sup>655</sup> This is how Kandler characterizes the view shared by Duns Scotus and William of Ockham (cf. Kandler 2010, p. 92), to which view he claims that Dietrich's view in *De substantiis spiritualibus* approaches (cf. Kandler 2010, pp. 97-98).

Thomas' argument and Dietrich's response to it, Kandler chides Thomas, from the supposedly Dietrichian perspective:

One cannot simply ground dogmas with the help of the suspension of otherwise acknowledged philosophical theorems [that is: as Thomas allegedly did]. Not even a theologian can make things so simple for himself. It is necessary to take heed: Dietrich's *De accidentibus* is a philosophical work. It is argued by Dietrich exclusively philosophically and not theologically. ... The problem of accidents must, if one wants to apply Aristotelian categories, also be resolved within their framework.<sup>656</sup>

The last claim is true, no doubt. But Kandler doesn't explain how the simple verbal distinction, between exclusively philosophical and exclusively theological discourse, is supposed to be possible in reality: Either philosophical discourse speaks to theological problems – in which case one can't very well speak of arguing exclusively philosophically and not theologically – or it does not – in which case it would not be possible to philosophically prove the unqualified impossibility of theological propositions, as Dietrich quite unambiguously attempts to do in the *De accidentibus*. As for the canard that bobs up once again here, that Thomas simply abandons the Aristotelian framework whenever that framework becomes inconvenient, we must once again note that by our analysis this bald claim appears to be groundless: there should be no question about the fact that St. Thomas takes his solution to be compatible with (the only truly, philosophically tenable version of) a fundamentally Aristotelian framework. One is of course free to disagree with Aquinas'

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<sup>656</sup> Kandler 2010, pp. 98-99: "Man kann nicht einfach Glaubenssätze mit Hilfe der Suspendierung sonst anerkannter philosophischer Theoreme begründen. So einfach darf es sich auch kein Theologe machen. Es gilt zu beachten: Dietrichs *De accidentibus* ist eine philosophische Schrift. Es wird von Dietrich ausschließlich philosophisch und nicht theologisch argumentiert. ... Das Problem der Akzidentien muss, wenn man die aristotelischen Kategorien anwenden will, auch in ihrem Rahmen gelöst werden." These comments make me wonder whether Kandler has actually read either Thomas' or Dietrich's actual arguments.

reading of Aristotle, and provide arguments against it, but the charge that he simply defects from Aristotle whenever theological convenience demands it has no foundation.

Nonetheless, Kandler does call attention to an interesting puzzle when he points out Dietrich's apparently high regard for theology – 'our divine science of the saints' – and his apparent view that philosophy, or 'worldly' science, is destined for destruction. Certainly it might be helpful if it were possible to examine the remainder of the fragment in which Dietrich expresses these views. But if one really wanted to make much of these brief statements, then they would need to be interpreted in relation to Dietrich's better known and indisputably 'philosophical' views, in particular his apparently profoundly 'theological' philosophical view of the intellect, wherein Aristotle and Augustine are supposed to have a common account of the intellect (Aristotle's *intellectus agens* is identical to Augustine's very Trinitarian *abditum mentis*), and according to which the (decidedly theological, everlasting, *not* destined-for-destruction) beatific vision, no less, is necessarily achieved through this agent intellect, or *abditum mentis*. In any case, it is not reasonable to affirm that Dietrich systematically separates philosophical from theological discourse in the way which might seem to be indicated in the fragment *De subiecto theologiae*, without also providing both an intelligible methodological account of how such a separation is supposed to be made and some systematic corroboration of its actual presence in his works, and Kandler does not deliver on either count.<sup>657</sup>

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<sup>657</sup> Flasch sharply rejects Kandler's interpretation of the fragment *De subiecto theologiae* as the key to understanding Dietrich's own understanding of the ultimate significance of his various works (cf. Flasch 2007, pp. 499-514). On this point I think Flasch is well justified.

## 4 Conclusion

Barry Brown offers what I take to be a just overall assessment of Thomas' metaphysical position on the separability of accidents:

[Thomas] does not say that the accidents in the Eucharist are given a new being, but rather that the distinct accidental being which they had all along, which "was being conserved" secondarily by their substance and primarily by the First Cause, is subsequently conserved by the First Cause alone. The *esse* remains the same *esse*. Only the mode in which it is exercised is different. Formerly exercised by the subject, as being in another, it is afterwards exercised by the accident itself, as being only from another...

Such an event is, for Aquinas, of the same kind as other miracles. It is an intervention of divine power in the order of secondary efficient causes. Thus, his treatment of this problem is completely consistent with the same philosophical doctrine of accidental being and the same general doctrine of primary and secondary causality as he maintains throughout his works.

No special exception has been made to accommodate a theological problem; no appeal [i.e., no *ad hoc* appeal] to miraculous power is made as if reason, at this point, had failed.<sup>658</sup>

Armand Maurer, in contrast, held that for Thomas the accident's act of being (*esse*) was truly identical to that of the substance (rather than immanently related to it in the order of efficient causation and conservation); and instead of focusing on Thomas' general doctrines of causality and accidental being, he thought that the key to understanding Dietrich's opposition to Thomas was their different conceptions of the distinction between act of being (*esse*) and essence. Maurer never undertook to actually evaluate the opposing arguments offered by Thomas and Dietrich, but his suggested interpretive approach at least has some plausibility, and further exploration along these lines could well yield some useful insight

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<sup>658</sup> Brown 1985, p. 114.

into the systematic differences between Thomas and Dietrich; but it would be difficult to make the case that the ‘real distinction’ in fact constitutes the *sine qua non* of their dispute over separate accidents.

Kurt Flasch sets the tone for subsequent investigations of Dietrich’s *De accidentibus*. What he tries to do in his work on this treatise is somewhat complex: It seems to be a guiding presumption of his historiographical narrative to present Aristotelian metaphysics and gnoseology as untenable. In making good on this presumption he praises the methodological consciousness and rigor of Dietrich, which he claims is based on a substantially correct and consistent understanding of how Aristotelian science is supposed to work. At the same time, he makes it plain enough that he doesn’t think that this Aristotelian view of scientific method, or Dietrich’s associated metaphysical doctrines, are tenable in themselves. He thus praises Dietrich, but only for his supposed consistency; and ultimately, beyond their value for, I suppose, a certain aesthetic appreciation of the historical and dramatic evolution of ideas (where the ‘comedy’ – or whatever be the genre – is presumed to be strictly secular, and not at all divine), he seems to think that Dietrich’s views are primarily useful for skewering the Thomistic appropriation of Aristotle.

But the adequacy of Flasch’s own understanding of the basic nature of Aristotelian science is highly questionable. At times he talks as if there is some momentous potential bound up with Aristotle’s doctrine of *per se* definitions and with the notion, which is ‘conceded’ by Thomas, that a defined thing cannot be ‘separated from’ its definition – and which ‘concession’ is – whether sadly, or happily – immediately ‘neutralized’ by Thomas’ *ad hoc* contrivance of a definition by ‘aptitude.’<sup>659</sup> But I can’t see what ‘definitional

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<sup>659</sup> Flasch 2008, p. 15: “All the significant masters had admitted that the defined-thing could not be separated from its definition. ... But Bonaventure, like Thomas, immediately neutralized the potential of this concession,

potential' Flasch is thinking of in relation to this 'concession': Is it the potential to conclude beyond one's premises, as Wallace thinks Dietrich did in *DA*?<sup>660</sup> Is it thus the potential to embrace a degree of certitude that surpasses the bounds of one's evidence? In fact, I would guess that this might well be Flasch's ultimate view of 'Aristotelian science.' But Flasch mis-identifies the crucial methodological issue. He writes:

According to this thesis [of definition by *aptitudo*], it pertains necessarily to an accident to be susceptible to belonging to a substrate, but as essential as it might be, this ordered relation is only in principle, and says nothing about the fact that a determination should pertain *de facto* to a thing. ... And so the relation between definition and thing-defined is put into question *in the real world*.<sup>661</sup>

What Flasch effectively presumes here is that the essential belonging-together of definition and thing-defined was supposed to somehow have had the 'potential' to nullify the essential discontinuity – *in the real world* – between the (direct) sensory cognition of an individual and the (indirect) intellectual cognition of that individual *sub specie universalis* – that is in terms of its essential, defining principles. But in fact he seems never to consider the crucial importance of this essential discontinuity, which is to say, he fails to give due consideration to understanding the basic nature of Aristotle's theory of cognition, as appropriated by Thomas and Dietrich, wherein there is a fundamental distinction between modes of cognition: as relative modes of cognition, sensory cognition is material, and rational cognition is formal. There is a real distinction between the material and formal elements in

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adding that the necessary relation between the thing and that which belongs to it refers to an aptitude (*aptitudo*).” -- “... tous les maîtres importants avaient admis que le défini ne peut être séparé de sa définition. ... Mais Bonaventure comme Thomas ont aussitôt neutralisé le potentiel de cette concession, ajoutant que la relation nécessaire entre la chose et ce qui lui revient se réfère à une aptitude (*aptitudo*).”

<sup>660</sup> Cf. above, §1, footnote 11.

<sup>661</sup> Flasch 2008, p. 15: “Selon cette thèse, il revient nécessairement à l'accident d'être susceptible d'appartenir à un substrat, mais, tout essentiel qu'il soit, ce rapport ordonné n'est que principiel et ne dit rien sur le fait qu'une détermination revienne *de facto* à une chose. ... Ainsi la relation entre définition et défini est remise en question *dans le monde réel*.” [emphasis in original]

the cognition of a singular thing. The material image of the thing (its *species sensibilis*, its sensible appearance, which is produced by its accidents) can never be fully assimilated to a formal concept of it (its essence, quiddity, substance). This is what it means to say that human intellection relies on (is mediated by) phantasms, or particular images – as Dietrich, too, holds.<sup>662</sup> From an Aristotelian point of view, since sensory and conceptual cognitions have different immediate objects, no direct assimilation of a universal formal definition to the sensory perception of an individual is possible.<sup>663</sup> Even if, as Dietrich believes, man’s agent intellect – an intellect which is in act through its essence (and so does not depend on material images, i.e., phantasms) – possesses the “super-exceeding actuality” of the divine mode of cognition, in which the material-sensory and formal-conceptual elements of cognition are gathered and united in a “simple and incomparably more eminent way,”<sup>664</sup> it remains the case that his actual discussion (and supposed demonstration) in *De accidentibus*

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<sup>662</sup> Cf. e.g., Dietrich of Freiberg, *Quaestio utrum in Deo sit aliqua vis cognitiva inferior intellectu* 1.4.2.1(7) (III 299): “understanding is impossible without phantasms, according to the Philosopher” – “impossibile est sine phantasmate intelligere secundum Philosophum.”

<sup>663</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III.76.7: “I respond, it must be said that the eye is twofold, namely corporeal, properly speaking; and intellectual, speaking by similitude. But by no corporeal eye can the body of Christ be seen as it is in this sacrament. Firstly, because a visible body through its accidents changes the medium. But the accidents of the body of Christ are in this sacrament through the mediation of the substance, in such a way, that is, that the accidents of the body of Christ do not have an immediate relation either to this sacrament, or to the bodies which surround it. And therefore they cannot change the medium, so as to be able to be seen by any corporeal eye. Secondly, because, as stated above, the body of Christ is in this sacrament by the mode of substance. *But substance, as such, is not visible to the corporeal eye, nor is it subject to any sense, nor to imagination, but only to the intellect, the object of which is the ‘what it is’,* as stated in *De anima* III. And therefore, properly speaking, the body of Christ, according to the mode of being which it has in this sacrament, is perceptible neither to the sense nor to the imagination, but only to the intellect, which is called the spiritual eye.” – “Respondeo dicendum quod duplex est oculus, scilicet corporalis, proprie dictus; et intellectualis, qui per similitudinem dicitur. A nullo autem oculo corporali corpus Christi potest videri prout est in hoc sacramento. Primo quidem, quia corpus visibile per sua accidentia immutat medium. Accidentia autem corporis Christi sunt in hoc sacramento mediante substantia, ita scilicet quod accidentia corporis Christi non habent immediatam habitudinem neque ad hoc sacramentum, neque ad corpora quae ipsum circumstant. Et ideo non possunt immutare medium, ut sic ab aliquo corporali oculo videri possint. Secundo quia, sicut supra dictum est, corpus Christi est in hoc sacramento per modum substantiae. *Substantia autem, in quantum huiusmodi, non est visibilis oculo corporali, neque subiacet alicui sensui, neque imaginationi, sed soli intellectui, cuius obiectum est quod quid est,* ut dicitur in III *de anima*. Et ideo, proprie loquendo, corpus Christi, secundum modum essendi quem habet in hoc sacramento, neque sensu neque imaginatione perceptibile est, sed solo intellectu, qui dicitur *oculus spiritualis*.” (emphasis added)

<sup>664</sup> Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg, *Qu. utrum in Deo* 1.2(3)-(4) (III 295).

of the inseparability of accidents evidently proceeds in terms of rational definitions (which are composed of formal parts), and not on the basis of any kind of divine, direct, essential insight into the *per se* essence of the directly observable Eucharistic accidents<sup>665</sup> – which essence would necessarily ground, besides their subsistent natural being, both their sensible species and their formal definition or quiddity, i.e., what it is that they ultimately are.

In regard to the relation between philosophy and theology, Flasch champions Dietrich's "methodological rigor" and the overriding thrust of his analysis is towards a view of Dietrich, where philosophical and theological propositions are separated methodologically. By this reading, Dietrich recognizes that there is a legitimate sphere of theological claims which are philosophically inaccessible, but at the same time he insists on a rigorous development of philosophical questions on their own terms, without mixing in considerations of properly theological claims.<sup>666</sup> But this artificial separation of faith and reason, as I have argued, is in fact highly problematic.<sup>667</sup>

In contrast, Ruedi Imbach wants to establish a view of Dietrich as a more radical and bold philosopher (in particular in comparison to Siger of Brabant), one who doesn't just separate the discourses of faith and of reason, but uses reason to correct faith (as exemplified in *De accidentibus*). Writing as an "historian interested in the relation between philosophy and

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<sup>665</sup> Thomas points out that it is not only *through the intellect*, but necessarily also *through faith*, that *homo viator* – the human being in the midst of his earthly journey – can perceive the body of Christ in the Eucharist. Cf. *ST* III.76.7: "But it is perceived in diverse ways by diverse intellects. For since the mode of being by which Christ is in this sacrament is thoroughly supernatural, by a supernatural intellect – namely the divine – it is visible by itself; and consequently by a blessed intellect, whether of an angel or of a man, which according to the participated radiance of the divine intellect sees those things which are supernatural, through the vision of the divine essence. By the intellect, however, of the man on the journey, it cannot be gazed upon except by faith, just as in the case of other supernatural things." – "Percipitur autem diversimode a diversis intellectibus. Quia enim modus essendi quo Christus est in hoc sacramento, est penitus supernaturalis, a supernaturali intellectu, scilicet divino, secundum se visibilis est, et per consequens ab intellectu beato vel Angeli vel hominis, qui secundum participatam claritatem divini intellectus videt ea quae supernaturalia sunt, per visionem divinae essentiae. Ab intellectu autem hominis viatoris non potest conspici nisi per fidem, sicut et cetera supernaturalia."

<sup>666</sup> Cf., for example, Flasch 2007, pp. 192-193; 237-238.

<sup>667</sup> See above, ch. 5, §2.2.1, as well as ch. 4, §6.

theology,” Imbach suggests an interesting connection between Dietrich of Freiberg and Spinoza: According to Spinoza, miracles are impossible. When something occurs which surpasses our comprehension, this may be regarded as a ‘miracle.’ But a genuinely ‘miraculous’ or ‘supernatural’ event would simply be an absurdity: “it would contradict the necessary order which God has established for eternity in nature by the means of universal laws of nature. It would thus be contrary to nature and to its laws and consequently faith in a miracle would make us doubt everything and would lead us to atheism.”<sup>668</sup> Certainly there is a real enough resonance here with Dietrich’s rejection of appeals to supernatural power and with his claim that his opponents’ position uproots the foundations of art and of science, the principles of which are grounded in the eternal unchangeable truth which is God himself (*DA* 22(5)).

But to say only this much about Spinoza’s position is misleading. In reality, Spinoza does not want to claim that we have a perfect (a fully adequate) understanding of the necessary order that God has established<sup>669</sup> – just as neither Aristotle, nor Aquinas, nor Dietrich, would want to claim. And so in Thomistic language, strictly speaking all Spinoza’s argument amounts to is the claim that, from the perspective of God’s perfectly comprehensive knowledge, nothing that happens can possibly fall outside the ordering of his providence – a claim which is of course perfectly concordant with a Thomistic (or Dietrichian) belief in miracles.<sup>670</sup> And for Thomas, the highest form of human science is based on accepting principles which are not provable by any human science, into which we have no intuitive

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<sup>668</sup> Cited from Spinoza’s *Theological-Political Treatise* (cited in Imbach 1998, p. 116-117).

<sup>669</sup> For Spinoza, a fully adequate understanding would entail having a full comprehension of the thoroughgoing necessity grounding all things. Dan Neshier provides a compelling account of Spinoza’s theory of knowledge, which recognizes that there is always a break between “infinite nature” and its representation in “finite human modes”; cf. Neshier 1994, p. 171: “There are no ultimate true ideas in human cognition, only less or more perfect ideas, according to the extent that infinite nature can be represented by finite human modes.”

<sup>670</sup> Hunter 2005 (pp. 96-101) gives an elegant and concise presentation of Spinoza’s view of miracles in relation to St. Thomas’.

insight, which cannot be known *per se* by us, that is, in virtue of the natural light of reason.<sup>671</sup> This understanding of the intrinsic limitation and methodological subordination of human knowledge and understanding is not denied by Dietrich, nor can it be, in light of his understanding – or, I would argue, any plausible understanding – of the concrete powers and operation of an intellect which is in the process of becoming and does not already understand everything through its own essence (as Dietrich supposes to be the case for the blessed in the *eschaton*).

From Aquinas' perspective,<sup>672</sup> it is clear that philosophy – i.e., the natural light of the human intellect – can only take us so far; it cannot prove doctrines of faith. But philosophy can still be of assistance to theology in coming to more fully understand revealed truths.

But can theology be of assistance to philosophy (considered as an autonomous discipline)? Can theologically motivated questions, in particular the one about the separability of accidents, stimulate innovation and promote the progress of philosophical inquiry (as Imbach suggests)? Or are the philosophical (metaphysical) distinctions St. Thomas develops in relation to Eucharistic theology only of real interest to theologians (and specifically those who are interested in understanding the Eucharist)? It would seem, first of

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<sup>671</sup> Cf., e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *ST I.1.2*: “I respond: it must be said that sacred doctrine is a science. But it must be known that the genus of the sciences is twofold: For some are such that they proceed from principles known by the natural light of the intellect, just as arithmetic, geometry, and the like are. But others are such that they proceed from principles known by the light of a higher science, just as optics proceeds from principles known through geometry, and music from principles known through arithmetic. And in this way sacred doctrine is a science, since it proceeds from principles known by the light of a higher science, which is, namely, the science [i.e., *the knowing*] of God and of the blessed. Whence just as music believes the principles given to it by arithmetic, likewise sacred doctrine believes the principles revealed to it by God.” – “Respondeo dicendum sacram doctrinam esse scientiam. Sed sciendum est quod duplex est scientiarum genus. Quaedam enim sunt, quae procedunt ex principiis notis lumine naturali intellectus, sicut arithmetica, geometria, et huiusmodi. Quaedam vero sunt, quae procedunt *ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae*, sicut perspectiva procedit ex principiis notificatis per geometriam, et musica ex principiis per arithmetica notis. Et hoc modo *sacra doctrina* est scientia, quia procedit *ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae*, quae scilicet est *scientia Dei et beatorum*. Unde sicut musica credit principia tradita sibi ab arithmetico, ita doctrina sacra credit principia revelata sibi a Deo.”

<sup>672</sup> Cf., e.g., the discussion in Davies 1992, pp. 190-191.

all, that in general one's answer to this question will crucially depend upon the particulars of the historical narrative within which one frames one's conception of actual philosophical 'progress.' It may seem, nonetheless, that there is not much that is directly interesting to philosophers, at least insofar as, outside the context of the Eucharist (or perhaps, more generally, of the miraculous), Thomas' distinctions simply don't apply.

But we should not simply dismiss the 'philosophical interest' of the present question. By way of analogy, consider, say, the average engineer: He likely needs to be very much interested in understanding the phenomena associated with the classical physics of Newtonian dynamics; but when it comes to effects of relativity, or quantum mechanical phenomena, these are almost certainly irrelevant to his work and so of no interest to him – that is, as an engineer, working on the particular projects that he happens to work on. But as a scientist, or philosopher, that is, as someone who is essentially concerned with seeking after a true, general understanding of reality, of the way things actually are, it's hard to imagine someone pretending that the nature of reality beyond the most familiar and easily understandable context of medium-sized, low-velocity physical objects is simply of no interest to him (regardless of what he is paid to do to earn his living). And the same applies to the philosopher who is inclined to assume that modal questions about the necessity of the natural order and about what can be conceived as possible (and may possibly be actual) beyond the natural order are of no interest to him. Of course, philosophers are (largely) products of academic institutions, and academic institutions, more or less inevitably, institutionalize particular habits of thought – possibly this is their most important function – including habits of dismissing – whether explicitly or implicitly – particular lines of thought as being unworthy of serious consideration. I don't suppose that this is avoidable, or even a

bad thing in itself; nonetheless, it remains the case that it would be unreasonable to dismiss the seriousness of a question simply by relying on the fact that one has been born in an ‘enlightened’ age,<sup>673</sup> or is a member of an ‘enlightened’ class, wherein it happens to be the general practise to ignore this question.

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<sup>673</sup> I think here of Kierkegaard’s striking analogy: “If someone who wanted to learn to dance were to say, “for centuries now one generation after another has learned the positions; it is high time for me to profit by it and without further ado begin with quadrilles,” then people would no doubt laugh at him a little, but in the world of spirit it is highly plausible. What then is education? I thought it was the curriculum the individual runs through in order to catch up with himself, and whoever will not go through this curriculum is helped very little by being born in the most enlightened age.” (*Fear and Trembling*, translated by Sylvia Walsh (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 39.)

## General Conclusion

To sum up the gist of the foregoing analyses, it seems that Dietrich's argument against Thomas' account of the separability of accidents fails simply because Dietrich does not present a coherent argument, and one can see this in terms of Dietrich's own professed views, in *DA* and elsewhere. Almost all of the modern-day commentators on the *DA* (with the exception of Wallace), however, have either more or less endorsed Dietrich's critique, or, stopping short of this, suggest that it is a fundamental difference in perspective which grounds the opposition between Thomas and Dietrich on the question of separability. But it seems to me that there is in fact no radical opposition in principles between Thomas and Dietrich (at least not in relation to the nature of substances and accidents, or even of God and creatures), and these historians of philosophy have posited such radical opposition without seeing that it is not fundamentally Dietrich's principles (i.e, his fundamental conceptions of substances and accidents, or of divine causality, or of sound scientific or philosophical methodology) which drive his conclusion in *DA*, but his arguments (which we have reviewed in ch.3 and analyzed in ch.4); and so they have given untenable readings of his principles in order to try to save his arguments; and they have generally ignored the weaknesses of these arguments, because they have paid insufficient attention to understanding the Thomistic position which they attack.

In regard to the question, as such, about the separability of accidents, I think it is undeniable that there is an institutionalized tendency to dismiss the question as the mere adjunct of a queer theological view, which might interest the adherents of that queer

theological view, but which has no intrinsic philosophical interest. After all, it is hard to see how this particular debate could have been motivated, so as to actually have taken place, apart from the doctrine of transubstantiation; and this might seem to suggest that the question shouldn't be regarded as a real 'philosophical' question at all. I will offer a couple of responses to this worry, or objection.

First, we should consider precisely what is actually in dispute between Thomas and Dietrich (and what is not). To begin with, as I have attempted to demonstrate in the foregoing thesis, there is certainly a rational structure to Thomas' argument for the separability of accidents. He has a series of rationally elaborated conceptions grounding his account: of substances as primary, self-referential, complete entities; of accidents as secondary, instrumental, incomplete entities, among which quantity and quality have primary, essentially ordered roles; of abstraction and definition, and of science in relation to its coming to be and its object; of divine omnipotence and of the differentiated – natural and miraculous – ordering of the effects of this kind of power. One is free to argue with Thomas on any of these points about nature or God or our knowledge thereof, but the fact remains that all of these conceptions appear to be undeniably 'philosophical' – that is, no one who is genuinely interested in pursuing a philosophical understanding of the world can simply dismiss the questions associated with such conceptions as 'philosophically uninteresting' –; and it seems that Thomas is not being unreasonable in thinking that the separability of accidents – as in the case of transubstantiation – is a possibility that is consistent with and follows from these conceptions of his.

And when we turn to Dietrich we find that Dietrich in fact broadly agrees with Thomas on all fundamental premises: he does not reject divine omnipotence, nor the possibility of

miracles; he regards substances and accidents, and quantity and quality in particular, very much as Thomas does; and while his theory of intellect may be rather different from Thomas', it does not provide him with any systematic grounds for asserting that his 'scientifically'-grounded essential definitions of substance and accident can in fact be used to exclude from the realm of possibility the supernatural occurrence of separate accidents (as in the Eucharist). The one thing he clearly does disagree with Thomas about is just the conclusion: the separability of accidents. This fact provides a substantial ground for recognizing that the question about the separability of accidents is indeed a philosophical one: the answer to it depends on the validity of argumentation from premises which are themselves legitimate subjects of philosophical inquiry, and that purport to be philosophically established (and should, at the very least, be considered legitimate subjects of philosophical dispute).<sup>674</sup>

As a second response to the worry about the 'philosophical' nature of the question about the separability of accidents, we can consider what the objection presupposes – unreasonably – about the nature of philosophy. To begin with, we can note that perhaps philosophy would be much simpler if it were not, in one way or another, related to the history of philosophy - i.e., to its own history. However, one can plausibly argue that philosophy is in fact essentially related to its own history. This is not to say that wisdom (or theoretical knowledge) is essentially related to history (I think it is not – I think its object is essentially

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<sup>674</sup> Vijgen reaches a similar conclusion. He writes: “although the acceptance of Eucharistic accidents ‘sine subiecto’ by a Christian medieval thinker was undoubtedly occasioned on the basis of his religious faith, nevertheless this prior belief does not exclude a philosophical discussion on the possibility and intelligibility of the existence of such accidents. In such a discussion philosophy does not necessarily have to become theology, *even though it reasons from a revealed premise.*” (Vijgen 2013, p. 4, emphasis added) The last phrase here, which I have italicized, in fact seems misleading, but is corrected later in Vijgen’s conclusion to his discussion of Thomas’ position: “We have noted throughout that nowhere in the concrete argumentation for the possibility of accidents existing ‘sine subiecto’ does Aquinas accept as true a revealed premise but instead argues for the philosophical reasonability of accidents ‘sine subiecto.’” (*ibid.*, p. 259)

abstracted from the real flow of history), but the search for wisdom – which I am taking as the essence of philosophy – is certainly historically-bound.<sup>675</sup> And so the actual prosecution of philosophy is necessarily in large part embodied in the appropriation of its own history.

But what (else) is signified by ‘the history of philosophy’? Philosophy is essentially related to its own (real) history; but this real history, which is recognized as belonging (specifically) to philosophy, is surely also essentially related to what we might call ‘cultural’ history more generally – i.e., to whatever cultural capital is available (i.e., is made available) within the diverse and ever-changing societies of intelligent human beings of which philosophers are members. Thus, it may well often happen that a typical(ly) educated person is inclined to ask a rather loaded question: Is this question (about the separability of accidents) really a philosophical question; or is it not rather a theological one, occasioned as it is by a theological doctrine? And this question has a more general form: Is the question about *X* really a philosophical question; or is it not rather a *Q*-type (i.e., ‘non-philosophical’) question, occasioned by something related to *Q* (i.e., some ‘non-philosophical’ domain of culture or thought)? The problem then becomes the general one of assigning criteria by which to judge that any given question (about *X*) should be judged to be ‘not philosophical,’ on the grounds that it bears some relation to *Q*-type questions and would be of no interest

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<sup>675</sup> And it is clear that Aristotle and Thomas and Dietrich all recognize this, even though none of them tends to dwell on it. A particularly striking passage can be found in Thomas’ *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, I.11: “In those things capable of being discerned through study, time seems to be a kind of discoverer or good co-operator (co-worker): not indeed that time accomplishes anything in this regard by itself, but rather as following upon those things which are done in the course of time. For if someone, as time goes by, gives himself to the study of investigating the truth, he is assisted, from [that] time [spent], towards the discovering of the truth, both as regards a single, identical man, who afterwards will see what before he saw not, and also as regards diverse men, as when someone has insight into what was discovered by his predecessors and adds something onto it. And in this way are made advances in the arts: of which in the beginning something modest was learned, and afterwards through diverse men gradually progressed into a great quantity; for it pertains to anyone whomsoever to supply for that which is deficient in the consideration of his predecessors. But if, to the contrary, the training of study is passed over, time is more a cause of oblivion, ... both as regards one man, who, if he give himself over to negligence, will forget what he knew; and as regards diverse men. And so we observe many sciences or arts which flourished among the ancients, with the gradual cessation of their study, to have passed away into oblivion.”

except in relation to *Q*. But whatever *Q* happens to be - whether sacramental theology, or natural science, or mathematics, or food production, or penal institutions, or Freudian psychology, etc. – it would seem difficult to maintain that there are particular cultural domains which are intrinsically contrary to philosophy, allergic to philosophical inquiry; and in particular, that theology (or specifically Christian theology or Roman Catholic theology) is one such domain. And this remains the case, we may presume, regardless of how much attraction there may happen to be in this or that time and place for the view that a question like the question regarding the separability of accidents is in fact not a philosophically interesting one.

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