

## Untrammeled Approaches Contradicts the Goal of Maritain's Intellectual Quest

John C. Cahalan

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Maritain says that what motivated his post-Bergson philosophical quest was Bergsonism's inability to justify the role of "concepts and conceptual propositions" in revealed truth. So the goal of his entire quest was to defend "the ontological value" of conceptual propositions, their ability to "transmit the real to our minds," for the sake of revelation. (1)

Accordingly, the third chapter of *The Degrees of Knowledge* says the first issue epistemology must settle is that of truth. For the job of epistemology is to evaluate (2). In *The Degrees of Knowledge* he completes his earlier defense of conceptual propositions by adding the thing-object identity theory of truth, which is then refined in *Existence and the Existent*.

Until *Untrammeled Approaches*, the thing-object-identity theory of truth in *The Degrees of Knowledge* was the culmination of his defense of conceptual truth. He reaffirms it as late as *The Peasant of the Garonne*. He leaves no doubt about its importance to his quest by calling thing-object "the crux of the problem of realism." (3)

But *Approaches'* treatment of the intuition of being in Chapter IX presents a new theory of judgment that contradicts the thing-object account. By undercutting thing-object, *Approaches*, consciously or not, undercuts what is *most personally significant* to Maritain in his earlier epistemology: the very "crux" of his defense of propositional realism. Nor does *Approaches* offer an alternative defense, only a new theory of judgment that leaves him without his final defense.

Unfortunately, Maritain uses "object" in two different senses. He sometimes seems to imply that he uses it only to mean formal objects. (4) But his arguments against idealism use a more basic, broader sense without which he couldn't call material objects "material

**objects.”** In that basic description, an “object” is any object of cognition, any term of a relation: cognition-of **(5)**:

We must distinguish between the thing as thing—as existing or able to exist for itself—and the thing as **object—when it is set before the faculty of knowing.**

The object is inseparable from an ontological “for itself” **which precisely takes the name “object” from the fact that it is presented to the mind.**

So to be an epistemic object is to be describable by predicates like “seen,” “known,” “meant,” “named,” referred to,” etc. The meanings of such predicates have the structure shown in **(6)**; they are epistemically reflexive meanings, referring the cognized back to cognition. As such, they presuppose meanings without that reflexive structure, meanings that are not something’s relation to cognition. What cognitions first relate to is something known, and so related to, as red, moving, oblong, etc.; it is not first something known as “seen,” “touched,” “heard,” etc. From the viewpoint of the meanings of predicates, nonreflexive meanings are epistemically primary. If not, we would be in an infinite series **(7)**. So, relying on this more basic sense, Maritain summarizes his critique of idealism this way **(8)**:

The *cogitatum* of the first *cogito* is not *cogitatum*, but *ens*. We do not eat what has been eaten; we eat bread.

The fact that our first judgments bear on extra-objective existence follows from this. Maritain (or perhaps Simon) was the first philosopher to see that we cannot know the conformity of mind and reality by comparing conscious states to things; for we have no access to things, by which to make the comparison, except through conscious states. **(9)** We know truth by comparing different *objects* of conscious states, which are by hypothesis different formal objects, to each other. But we do not compare formal objects with respect to their status as objects since they differ as objects. We compare them as at least possible *things*, material objects, and so we compare them with respect to their possibly having **(10)** a status that is not-just-being-a-term-of-a-cognitional-relation, not just being an “object” in the basic sense. We call that status real existence. Once we have reflected on cognition, we

can call that status metalogical existence (11). So the correspondence theory of truth **needs** the thing-object identity theory.

Some judgments compare objects of concept with objects of external sensation to know the actual existence of things. Others compare one object of concept with another as possible metalogical existents. A judgment like "Roses exist" bears on metalogical existence explicitly. A judgment like "Roses bloom in summer" also bears on metalogical existence though not explicitly. For its truth requires the identity of the object of concept *rose* with the object of concept *something-that-blooms-in-summer*. Those objects are not identical as objects. So the identity that makes the judgment true must be identity in their state as possibly *not-merely-objects*, their state as possible metalogical existents.

*Existence and the Existent* adds that in explicitly judging metalogical existence, we form a concept of it, a concept of the existence that is not-just-an-object-of-cognition. (p. 23) The analyses of *Degrees* and *Existence and . . .* are meant to apply to everyday judgments and judgments about purely physical matters as well as what transcends the physical. Maritain uses examples like "The lion eats the antelope," "Lions are carnivorous," "Bernard Shaw is dramatist," and "The earth revolves around the sun" (12) as judgments in which we know metalogical existence. And he says that judgment **(13)**:

corresponds to the existence exercised or possessed by that other itself **in the particular field of intelligibility** which is its peculiar possession.

But in *Approaches* he explicitly contradicts this analysis for judgments at the first degree of intelligibility, "on which man's thought moves ordinarily and in the first place" (221).

**(14)** When we speak of the existence of something on this particular level . . . . being **(which is not considered in itself)** is in this case *put in relationship* (to the **sensible** world), it is taken *in its relation* to the **sensible** world.

And he constantly says judgments of existence and the corresponding concept of existence on this level mean **presence** in **our** or **my** world, words which describe the object of

cognition as related to consciousness and to the conscious subject's *reflexive* awareness of herself. **(15)** He adds **(16)**:

I do not think that *presence* can be defined without appealing to the senses . . . to the possibility of exercising our senses.

He even gives a detailed explanation of how consciousness of the self enters our first concept of existence (17).

Other frequently repeated formulas speak of being-*there* and could appear to mean spatial presence rather than presence to consciousness grasped reflexively. But Maritain explicitly subordinates "presence's" spatial connotation to its reflexive relation to the senses. **(18)**

*Approaches* says that all of these descriptions apply to the first concept expressed by the word "existence" since our original judgments are on the first level of abstraction, and it says that *all* such judgments express presence in our sensory world as opposed to the existence exercised outside the mind. That directly contradicts the teaching of *Degrees* and *Existence and . . .* (19) By doing so it contradicts the culmination of Maritain's quest for a theory of truth that would justify the ontological value of conceptual propositions. For it directly contradicts the thing-object theory of truth which was what ultimately provided the sufficient justification for realism about truth. Judgments must concern metalogical existents, not as objects—they are distinct as objects—but as at least possible *things*, as objects must be cognized to be before we reflexively call them "objects."

*Approaches* does assert the ontological value of propositions on the third level of abstraction, where the theological truths Maritain's quest was meant to defend reside. But by contradicting **the argument** showing that our first knowledge of existence must be knowledge of an *ens*, not a *cogitatum*, Maritain leaves himself without his justification for his assertions about realism on the third level.

Can we defend Maritain by relying on *Approaches'* statements that on the first level of abstraction the act of existing is **implicitly** known by the intelligence (20)? No, for *Existence and . . .* uses the same word, "implicit," to explain how the opposite concept of existence, existence as not just related to cognition, is included in our first concepts **(21)**. So Maritain

owes us an explanation of how implicit knowledge can, in *Existence and . . .* , justify one theory of judgment's relation to existence but, in *Approaches*, justify the opposite theory.

Another serious problem with *Approaches'* theory is that it contradicts crucial doctrines of Aquinas. The first article in *De Veritate*, "What is Truth," says that being is what is first known and is that to which all other concepts are reduced. There Aquinas is certainly talking about truth in general, not just truth on the third level of abstraction. For Aquinas says our **first** concept is that of being, *ens*, and that the concept of *ens* includes the concept of **esse**. The concept of *esse* included in *ens* cannot be Aquinas' concept of "the *esse* that signifies the truth of propositions." (22) The existence referenced in the concept of being is existence as possessed by beings extramentally because that existence is what makes them extramental. And (23) shows that thing-object is what explains how all other concepts are **reduced** to *being* and how *being* is **implicit** in them. But in *Approaches* Maritain is explicitly denying that existence in that sense is included in our first concepts. There, our first concept of existence is a reflexive relation to the knowing subject in explicit opposition to existence as belonging to the things which are first known, in themselves.

*Approaches* even implicitly contradicts the fundamental Thomistic doctrine that truth is convertible with being; for thing-object identity follows necessarily from it, as (24) shows. And despite any appearance to the contrary, *Approaches* contradicts Cajetan's clarification that being as first known is concrete being with a sensible quiddity. (26) explains that and several other cases where *Approaches*, at a minimum, **seems** to contradict important earlier positions of Maritain or Aquinas.

But most directly and explicitly, *Approaches* contradicts Aquinas' repeated assertions that judgment concerns *esse rerum*, where nothing justifies interpreting Aquinas to mean only third level of abstraction judgments. (25)

Can we avoid these problems by interpreting *Approaches* as describing, not what is actually the case for judgments on the first level, but what idealist philosophers must say is the case. That is, this is how idealist philosophers must misunderstand pre-philosophical judgments. No, Maritain twice says that (27):

In the conversations of everyday life, even those who have had the intuition of being ("the greatest of metaphysicians," p. 227) also use, in the "vulgar" sense I just indicated, the concept of existence. (pp. 221)

The new theory of judgment comes up in a new account of the intuition of being that contradicts his earlier account in a way directly relevant to thing-object. Maritain had said that in that intuition being is "attained . . . at the summit of an **abstractive intellection**" (28). *Approaches*, however, repeatedly says that the intuition of being does not originate in an "abstractive operation." (29) He references Gilson, and no one else, in this connection. So (30) examines the possibility that the contradictions of Maritain's earlier views come at least in part from a desire to respond to Gilson. **(30)** notes a crucial difference between two meanings of "abstraction" that most Thomists have not noticed and that would have allowed Maritain to use thing-object to justify still holding that the intuition is abstractive even though it is based on judgment.

Later editions of Maritain's *An Introduction to Philosophy* add thing-object to the section on *De Ente et Essentia*'s solution to the problem of universals (31), which earlier editions had already named "the first and most important philosophical problem" *quoad nos* (32). (The most important *in se* is the distinction between essence and existence outside of God.) *De Ente* showed that the differences between properties pertaining to objects of concept as objects and properties pertaining to them as things do not prevent those objects from being, but are actually what permit them to be, identical with what metaphysical things are. *De Ente* distinguishes to unite. The thing-object identity theory of truth is Thomism's most mature development of *De Ente*'s defense of conceptual realism. (33)

The problem of universals is the most important relative to us because the intuition of being is not sufficient for metaphysics. Maritain always said we must properly **conceptualize** that intuition to do metaphysics. Metaphysics' biggest problem with conceptualizing it has been to differentiate the properties of being in its metaphysical state from the logical properties being must acquire for its metaphysical properties to be known. Most philosophers have been unable to handle that distinction to simultaneously save (1) the truth about being in its metaphysical state and (2) the truth about it in its state as an object of cognition.

The history of philosophy is mostly the story of great minds unable to untangle contradictions that are only **apparent**. Unlike other philosophies, Thomism can both untangle them and explain where they come from, mainly from two sources. (34) mentions one source. The other source is the conflict between attributes of things as things and things as objects, like those analyzed in *De Ente*. (35) Even many modern Thomists have been unable to appreciate *De Ente*'s thing-object distinctions. (36) gives some examples. Thomists would have understood *De Ente* better if we had appreciated thing-object more.

So it is crucial, not just for Maritain's goals but for the entire Thomistic revival, that *Approaches*' new theory of judgment doesn't confuse us further about thing and object.

### Notes/Appendix

#### Support for "Untrammeled Approaches Contradicts the Goal of Maritain's Quest"

**N.B.** The following are not just endnotes. They started out to be PowerPoint slides for display on a screen. Instead, I wound up handing them out and asking the audience to read some of them as part of the paper.

*Italics* are in Maritain's original. **Bold** indicates my added emphasis. (p. ) references pages in the Scribner's edition of *The Degrees of Knowledge*. { } references pages in the Notre Dame Press edition. The more significant items below are indicated by \*\*.

1. What motivated his post-Bergson philosophical quest:

*Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism*, pp. 16-17.

2. The job of epistemology is to evaluate:

*An Introduction to Philosophy*, (Rowman and Littlefield edition), p. 111, n. 1.

3. *Distinguish to Unite or The Degrees of Knowledge*, p. 107 {114}, translation corrected.

4\*\*. Read casually, *Degrees* can seem to say that he uses "object" exclusively to mean formal objects, to the exclusion of material objects. But those very statements use "object" in its original and broader sense for material objects and formal objects **both**, and in a stricter sense for formal objects only. He acknowledges this duality of meanings by referring "In **this**

*Untrammeled Approaches Contradicts Maritain's Goal*, p. 7

case” to “the **strictest** scholastic sense” (p. 91, n. 1) {96, n. 48}, but if you blink you can miss it. (When you read Maritain, you **have** to read the footnotes.) His reason for emphasizing “object” in the derived and stricter sense of formal object is that his context is propositional truth, which requires knowing that distinct formal objects are each identical with the same thing. But if they are, the same thing twice becomes an object (original and broader sense) of cognition, though not a twice the same formal object. These different meaning of “object” are an instance of Simon’s **ordered** analogical sets. See Yves R. Simon “The Conformity of Knowledge with the Real: On the Relation of Objects of Cognition and Things,” ed. John C. Cahalan, n. 12. At [www.foraristotelians.info](http://www.foraristotelians.info), click on *Primary Sources*.

**5\*\*.** *The Degrees of Knowledge* on the basic meanings of “thing” and “object”:

We must distinguish between the thing as thing—as existing or able to exist for itself—and the thing as **object—when it is set before the faculty of knowing.**” (p. 91) {96-97}

The object is inseparable from an ontological “for itself” **which precisely takes the name “object” from the fact that it is presented to the mind.** (p. 93) {99}

**6.** The meanings of such predicates (“seen,” “known,” “meant,” “named,” etc.) have the relational structure:

a-relation-to-a-conscious-state, to-a-conscious-act, or to a-conscious-subject.

**7\*\*.** Infinite series argument that reflexive descriptions presuppose nonreflexive:

For X to be an object is for there to be a relation (1), cognition-of-X. For a cognitive relation to be itself an object of cognition is for there to be a second relation (2), cognition-of-relation (1). So when relation (1) exists, something other than relation (1) must be known. And is the object of relation (1), cognition-of-X, the fact that X is an object of some prior cognitive relation, as the object of relation (2) is the fact that X is the object of relation (1)? If so, the object of cognitive relation (1) is the fact that X is object of cognitive relation (1 ~ 1), and the object of relation (1 ~ 1) is that X is the object of relation (1 ~ 2), etc. ad infinitum. For if our first information has that reflexive structure, there is nothing objectified as something other than the term of a cognitive relation. So there is no non-reflexive object, no object that is not a relation to a term, to start the series of objects that are relations to terms, [This is not the backward series: cognition of X, cognition of cognition of X, etc, but the forward series cognitive relation (1), whose



object must be cognitive relation (1 ~ 1), whose object must be cognitive relation (1 ~ 2), etc.]

- 8\*\*.** The *cogitatum* of the first *cogito* is not *cogitatum*, but *ens*. We do not eat what has been eaten; we eat bread. (p. 108) {115}

And the paragraph of *Degrees* that introduces thing-object says:

The tragedy of modern noetic began when the scholastics of the decadent period—with Descartes in their wake—separated the *object* from the *thing*; from that point on the *thing* became a problematical “lining” concealed behind the *object*. (p. 91) {97}

The tragedy is not to confuse concepts, in the psychological sense, with the *quod* that is known rather than the *quo* by which it is known. The tragedy concerns the *quod*, the objective concept. Skeptics don’t doubt that consciousness has **objects**; they doubt the **value** those objects.

- 9.** *Degrees*, p. 97, n. 2 {103, n. 61}. Yves R. Simon, *Introduction to Metaphysics of Knowledge*, trans. Vukan Kuic and Richard Thompson, pp. 144.

- 10.** a status that is not-just-being-a-term-of-a-knowledge-relation

- 11.** “Metalogical existence,” *Degrees*, p. 91 {97}.

- 12.** The first two examples are from *Degrees*, p. 86 {91}; the third from *ibid.*, p. 97 {103}; the fourth from *Existence and . . .*, p. 12.

- 13\*\*.** [judgment] corresponds to the existence exercised or possessed by that other itself **in the particular field of intelligibility** which is its peculiar possession. *Existence and . . .*, p. 11.

- 14\*\*.** *Approaches* explicitly says our first concept of “existence” is relational and reflexive:

When we speak of the existence of something on this particular level . . . being (**which is not considered in itself**) is in this case *put in relationship* (to the **sensible** world), it is taken *in its relation* to the **sensible** world. (p. 227)

**15.** He constantly says judgments of existence and the corresponding concept of existence on this level mean **presence** in **our** or **my** world, words which describe the object of cognition **as related** to consciousness, to the conscious subject's **reflexive** awareness of herself:

- the concept of existence . . . has, as long as the mind moves on the level of the first degree of abstraction, the sole meaning of *presence to my world*, . (p. 221)
- At this point the intelligence says: That rose *is there*, or that rose is *present* to **me**; it **does not say**: That rose *is*. This is because the concept at this moment does not yet signify anything more than **presence to my world**. To be there means only to be **declared present, to be given to me as present**. And this is **why** a philosophy of the *Dasein* remains open to idealism. (pp. 223-224)
- it is formed on the level of the first degree of abstraction and subsequently remains enclosed within the sphere of **sensible** experience and of the world in which we live; it is its belonging to this world or its presence in this world that is designated here. It follows from these two facts that the assertion of existence here is in reality a copulative assertion in which a subject is declared *present to my world*. (p. 227)
- *to be there* is to be *present to our world*, to the **sensible** world . . . the concept of existence . . . is no longer anything except the concept of **presence to my world**; (p. 227)
- So there are two different meanings to the word *ens* or *étant*. In the first sense, it refers to the *Dasein* and to the level of the first degree of abstraction, where the assertion of existence is reduced to the copulative assertion "that thing is *present to my world*," "that thing *is there*." (p.228)
- on the level of the first degree of abstraction, existence is no more than *presence to my world* . . . connoting the act of existing *only by implication*, and because of this, *thought is dispensed from thinking "to exist,"* . . . the word **being in no way and on no account signifying the act of existing**, (p. 229)
- the concept of existence, which is analogous in itself as well as for the metaphysician but which **in this case is no more than the substitute-concept** of presence to **my world**, (p.229)
- for it is no more than the concept of presence to **my world**; (p.233)

Note that words used here like “**declared present**” and “**given to me**” relate the described to a subject reflexively aware of her conscious acts and states.

**16.** Maritain explicitly defines “presence” in this way:

I do not think that *presence* can be defined without appealing to the senses . . . to the possibility of exercising our senses. (pp. 364-365)

**17.** He even gives a detailed explanation how consciousness of the self enters our first concept of “existence”. The following is taken from three successive paragraphs of

*Approaches*:

The intelligence seizes upon this perception of the sense . . . ; it becomes conscious, not only of the color of the rose . . . , but it also becomes **conscious of its seeing the rose**, . . . **The cognitive act itself** of the external sense. . . . **is there along with the object** it perceives. . . . The **cognitive act of sense** is also there, along with the rose’s *act of existing*, made present in the sense of sight (though not grasped by this sense) . . . and it is made present to the intelligence (in a *totally implicit* way without being grasped by it as of yet) as implied in *the rose* . . . which it knows that **I see**: the thing that **I see** . . . .

Here the intelligence is found at the first degree of abstraction, where it says . . . : “that rose is **present** to **me**; it does **not** say: That rose *is*. This is because the concept at this moment does not signify anything more than **presence** to **my** world. . . . This is **why** the philosophy of the *Dasein* remains open to idealism.

. . . At this degree, what about . . . the rose’s *act of existing* itself? It is **not** perceived by the intelligence. . . The intelligence *explicitly* seizes on the rose **as seen by the eye** and, . . . in a *completely implicit* way, seizes upon the rose’s *act of existing*, according as . . . the intelligence itself declares **that I see the rose** . . . . The *esse* . . . of the rose is . . . in the intelligence, but in an entirely implicit state, according as it is implied, **without the intelligence knowing it**, in the rose which my intelligence knows **that I see**, or that the rose is present. . . . The rose’s *act of existing* . . . . *can* be made visible to the intelligence and be seen by it. But it is not yet so; it remains **hidden to the intelligence**. (pp. 223-224)

**18\*\*.** Maritain expressly subordinates “presence”’s non-reflexive spatio-temporal connotation to the relation to the senses:

. . . . What is **essentially implied** in the notion of presence is a condition of space-time, *to be there (Dasein)*. (pp. 364-5).

Since the spatio-temporal reference is **implied**, it is not explicit. What is **explicit** is the notion of presence as a relation to the senses, a conscious power of which we are reflexively aware. Maritain’s explanation of the principally sensible, as opposed to spatio-temporal, character of the notion of presence continues:

The presence with which we are concerned, that presence which brings it about that during the Mass . . . I become really present **at** the Sacrifice on Calvary . . . without my being able in any way to attain that event through my senses, . . . is an analogue of the **sensible** presence I just mentioned. (p. 365)

Maritain is here talking about the real presence, spatio-temporally, of the sacrifice on the cross at Mass. The problem he is addressing is that this presence is **non-sensible**, but he doesn't see how "presence" can be defined except in relation to the senses. His solution? "Presence" is analogous. The non-sensible but still spatio-temporal presence at Mass is one analogate. But the **primary** analogate is "the **sensible** presence I just mentioned." (P. 365)

Even existence in "God exists" becomes, by way of the *via negativa*, an analogate of presence first defined as sensible:

In their method of thought, ["such philosophers"] do not rise above . . . the first degree of abstraction . . . They can affirm the existence of God. Once again this existence is a *Dasein*, but this time alienated or extrapolated from the sphere proper to it, which is the world of **sensible** experience,—a sublimated *Dasein*. "God exists" now means "God is **there** in the **invisible**" (p. 230-231)

So what the *via negativa* negates, when the meaning "existence," i.e., being-**there**, *Dasein*, comes from the first level of abstraction, is presence in the sense of **visible** presence, not explicitly spatio-temporal presence.

**19.** Quotes from *Degrees* and *Existence and . . .* that judgment concerns real existence:

- Thus, the proper function of judgment consists in making the mind pass from the level of simple essence or simple object signified to the mind, to the level of thing or subject possessing existence (actually or possibly) . . . . If it is not admitted that our objects of thought are aspects (or "inspects") of actual or possible things; if it is not admitted that each of them contains, if I may say so, an ontological or metalogical charge, then the proper function of judgment becomes unintelligible. (*Degrees*, p. 97) {103-104}
- Judgment restores to the transobjective subject the unity that simple apprehension . . . has shattered. That unity . . . held precedence outside the mind, in existence (actual or possible). . . . In order that judgment may proceed in that way, it is necessary that every object set before the mind be set there as something able to exist outside the mind (or, if it is a matter of an *ens rationis*, as if it could exist outside the mind). (ibid., p. 98) {104-105}
- Judgment does not rest content with a representation or apprehension of existence; it affirms it; it projects into it, as effected or able to be effected outside the mind, objects of concepts that have been apprehended by the mind. In other words, when the intellect judges, it sees in an intentional manner and through an act proper to it the very act of existing that the thing exercises or can exercise outside the mind. (It might even be said that in the judgment the

transobjective subject is known as subject; I mean that in its role as subject, the transobjective subject is "lived intentionally" by the mind.) That is the new factor in the intellectual order which is introduced in judgment, and it is an important factor concerning, as it does, the *esse rerum*. (ibid., p. 98, n. 3) {104-105, n. 64}

- Whether the judgment comes to bear on rational truths or on truths of fact, on the "ideal" or the "real" (actual), it is irreducibly realistic. (ibid., p. 99) {105}
- **Every act of knowledge tells us this is so . . . .** Indeed, being (the being enveloped in sensible things) is the first object attained by our intellect. And what is signified by the name "being," if not *what exists or can exist*; and what is thereby first and immediately presented to the intellect, if not what exists or can exist for itself outside the mind? All anyone has to do is to take counsel with himself and experience within himself the absolute impossibility in which the intellect finds itself: how can it think the principle of identity without positing the extramental being (as at least possible) whose behavior this first-of-all-axioms expresses? A prime object, intelligible extra-mental being without which nothing is intelligible: that is the irrefutable factual datum that is thrust upon the intellect in the heart of its reflection wherein it becomes aware of its own movement towards its object. That apprehension of being is absolutely first and is implied in all other intellectual apprehensions. (ibid., p. 94) {100}
- True knowledge consists in a spiritual super-existence by which, in a supreme vital act, I become the other as such, and which corresponds to the existence exercised or possessed by that other itself **in the particular field of intelligibility which is its peculiar possession.** (*Existence and . . .*, p.11)
- . . . restore them to existence by the act in which intellection is. completed and consummated, I mean the judgment pronounced in the words *ita est*, thus it is. When, for example, I say: . . . 'The earth revolves round the sun,' **what I am really saying is that . . . the earth exists in physical existence** as characterized by the movement described. The function of judgment is an existential function. (ibid., p.12)
- I said a moment ago that the function of, judgment was an existential function, and that judgment restored the essences (the intelligibles, the objects of thought) to existence or to the world of subjects—to **an existence that is either necessarily material**, or merely ideal, or (at least possibly) immaterial, accordingly as we deal with **physical**, mathematical, or metaphysical **knowledge**. (ibid., p.16)
- The Intellect envelopes itself and is self-contained, is wholly present in each of its operations; and **in the initial upsurge of its activity out of the world of sense, in the first act of self-affirmation accomplished by expressing to itself any datum of experience**, it apprehends and judges in the same instant. It forms its first idea (that of being) while uttering its first judgment (of existence). (ibid., p.23)
- Thus existence is made object; but, as I pointed out earlier, in a higher and analogical sense resulting from objectising of a trans-objective act and referring to trans-objective subjects that exercise or are able to exercise this act. Here a concept seizes upon that which is not an essence but is an intelligible in higher and analogical sense, a super-

intelligible delivered up to the mind in the very operation which it performs **each time that it judges, and from the moment of its first judgment.** (ibid., pp. 23-24)

- This is the first of all concepts, because it springs in the mind at the first awakening of thought, **at the first intelligible coming to grips with the experience of sense by transcending sense.** All other concepts are variants or determinations of this primary one. (ibid., p. 25)
- **At the moment when sense apprehends an existent sensible,** the concept of being and the judgment, 'this being exists,' which condition each other, arise simultaneously in the intellect. (ibid., p. 26)
- The intellect itself exercises upon the notion of this subject an act (the act of *affirming*) by which it lives intentionally the existence of the thing. This affirmation has the same content as the 'judgment' of the aestimative and the external sense (but in this case that content is no longer 'blind' but openly revealed since it is raised to the state of intelligibility in act); and it is not by reflection upon phantasms that the intellect proffers the affirmation, but by and in this 'judgment' itself, and in this intuition of sense which it grasps by immaterialising it, in order to express it to itself. It *thus* reaches the *actus essendi* (in judging) as it reaches essence (in conceiving) —by **the mediation of sensorial perception.** (ibid., p. 27, n. 13)
- The metaphysical concept of being, **as earlier the common sense concept formed by the intellect upon its first awakening,** is an eidetic visualisation of being apprehended in judgment, in the *secunda operatio intellectus, quae respicit ipsum esse rei.* (ibid., p. 28, n. 14)

**20.** *Approaches'* assertions that on the first level of abstraction the act of existing is **implicitly** known by the intelligence; e.g., see number 17, above.

**21.** In *Existence and . . .* Maritain cites implicit knowledge to defend the account of our first judgments' relation to existence opposite to *Approaches'* account:

There are primitive languages that do not possess the word 'being.' But the idea of being is **implicitly** present in the mind of the primitive men who use those languages. The first idea formed by a child is not the idea of being; but the idea of being is **implicitly** present in the first idea which the child forms. (p. 25, n. 12)

**22\*\*.** Aquinas recognizes a concept of existence that expresses a reflexive relation to the conscious subject, the *esse* that signifies the truth of propositions, and in so doing he anticipates the entire post-Fregean tradition. But that sense of existence is not the sense that is included in *being* as that which is first conceived. If it was, *De Veritate's* account of

truth would be circular, explaining the concept of truth in terms of the concept of being but explaining the concept of being in terms of truth. Instead, *De Veritate* immediately uses the other meaning of *esse*, existence as said of substances and accidents.

**23\*\*.** How all other concepts are **reduced** to *being*, and *being* is **implicit** in them:

According to Aquinas, a genus, and so a non-generic common *ratio* like *being*, is only **logically** distinct from its species, or analogates. This means there is no **real**, extracognitional distinction between these objects, only a difference in the way we objectify them. We can conceptually objectify one and the same sensed object as *red*, *a color*, *a quality occupying space*, *a quality*, *an accident*, *a being*. (Objectification here concerns the meanings of predicates; relative to cognition at the level of predicates, sensory properties are **extra**-cognitional. So we don't have to deal with the ontological status of "phenomenal" properties to use this example.) The information communicated by "red" includes that communicated by "color," "quality of a surface," etc. There is no extracognitional difference between the redness of a rose and the color of a rose, only a difference in properties of objects as objects: more or less detailed, more or less general, more or less abstract (in the logical sense), more or less precise or vague, etc.. This is one of the *sine qua non* messages of *De Ente*. If we do not yet have the higher objective concepts, the information they will contain is still contained in the lower but only **implicitly**. That is the way *being* is implicitly present in the minds of children in *Existence and . . .*, p. 15, n. 12. In the same way, *being* is implicitly present in **all** our primary objective concepts as what they must first include, since all other primary information is conceptually objectified to be capable of being known, by subsequent judgment, as identical with something that actually has the more-than-just-cognitional state we call real existence:

In order that judgment may proceed in this way, it is necessary that every object set before the mind be set there as something able to exist outside the mind . . . . Our . . . intellectual perception . . . must necessarily put us in the presence of an object

encountered on all sides and everywhere varied—being itself. . . . The unity . . . of transcendental being, not the unity of “transcendental apperception,” is the basis of the possibility of judgment. (*Degrees*, pp. 98-99) {pp. 104-105}

So the potentiality for existence must be included in all our primary objective concepts as *color* is included in the information we objectify by the word “red.” That is what *De Veritate* I, 1 means by saying all other concepts are **reduced** to *being*. When we judge “Something is red” by comparing an object of concept to an object of sense, we are aware that in addition to the identity between what is conceived and what is seen, what is seen also has a state or condition that is not included in the concept *red*, actual existence. By sensation that state is in our awareness and available to the intellect prior to the judgment “Something red exists.” Making that judgment requires forming **simultaneously** a new psychological concept to grasp the object, *existence* (as Maritain says in *Existence and . . .*, p. 23, but denies in *Approaches*, p. 220). Explicitly having the objective concept of existence allow us to recognize at the same time that the information expressed by “red” always included the information we can now express as “something capable of existing,” the objective concept, *being*. And we are now also now\\ capable of recognizing that “Something is red” implicitly asserts “Some existent is red” or “Something exists in a red way.” By contrast, we can grasp the logically higher objective concept, *color*, not by judgment but by conceptually objectifying the information communicated by “red” and/or “green” in a logically less precise way and more general way. In all of this, properties of things as objects as opposed to things as things are again the crux of the issue. On being as first known and the ontological status of sensory qualities, see my “Wittgenstein as a Gateway to Analytical Thomism,” in *Analytical Thomism: Traditions in Dialogue*, ed. Craig Paterson and Matthew S. Pugh, pp. 196-202 and 208-211, respectively.

**24\*\*.** The thing-object-identity theory of truth follows necessarily from the doctrine that truth is convertible with being:



Truth is convertible with being because the predicate “known” is a being of reason and so adds nothing real to what it is predicated of. But that means that describing something as an object of knowledge uses a reflexive, relational predicate that must have a non-reflexive, non-relational term, since what is expressed by such a predicate can add nothing real to what it is predicated of. *Voilà*, the **thing** (something with a status that is actually or possibly not-merely-something-**known**)/**object** (something **known**)-identity theory of truth.

**25.** Aquinas’ repeated assertions that judgment concerns *esse rerum*, e.g.:

- *Prima quidem operatio respicit ipsam naturam rei, secunda operatio respicit ipsum esse rei. (In Boet. de Trin., q. 5, a. 3)*
- *Prima operatio respicit quidditatem rei; secunda respicit esse ipsius. Et quia ratio veritatis fundatur in esse, et non in quidditate, ut dictum est, ideo veritatis et falsitatis proprie invenitur in secunda operatione. (In I Sent., d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7)*
- *Cum in re duo sint, quidditas rei, et esse ejus, his duobus respondet duplex operatio intellectus. Una quae dicitur a philosophis formatio, qua apprehendit quidditates rerum, quae etiam dicitur indivisibilem intelligentiam. Alia autem comprehendit esse rei, componendo affirmationem, quia etiam esse rei ex materia et forma compositae, a qua cognitionem accipit, consistit in quadam compositione formae ad materiam, vel accidentis ad subjectum. (In I Sent., d. 38, q. 1, a. 3)*

**26\*\*.** Cajetan . . . and several other cases where *Approaches*, at a minimum, **seems** to contradict important earlier positions of Maritain or Aquinas:

- *Approaches* contradicts Cajetan’s welcome clarification that being as first known is concrete being with a sensible quiddity. Cajetan’s reference to the sensible might seem to make his concept reflexive. But what Cajetan in all probability means, and certainly should mean, is that our first concepts have contents like *something-red*, *something-moving*, *something-three-sided*, etc., where “something” indicates that a concrete being is first known and the adjectives indicate that this being has a sensible quiddity.
- *Approaches* (p. 220) cites “The soul communicates to the body its own existence” as an example of grasping existence exercised in act, as opposed to existence as signified. But

in Maritain's previous discussions of that distinction, which are not only philosophically correct but consistent with its source, Cajetan, existence as exercised would only be known by (1) contingently true assertions of actual existence (2) the assertion of God's necessary existence proven by causal argument from the contingently existing. The concept of existence as signified is precisely meant to describe how the other necessary truths of philosophy objectify existence. And by disowning that concept, *Approaches* forsakes Maritain's critique of the ontological argument for God. See *The Dream of Descartes*, pp. 130-133, *Degrees*, p. 98, n. 3 {104, n. 64}, and *Existence and . . .*, p. 33.

- *Approaches* (pp. 227) rejects the copulative analysis of authentically existential judgments that Maritain held, from *Formal Logic*, pp. 51-54, on in agreement with the Aquinas. And that analysis was central to his interpretation of Aquinas' explanation of why the assertion "God exists" is not knowledge of God by his essence. (*Degrees*, p. 427-428) {451-452}.
- In *An Introduction to Philosophy* (p. 138, n. 1), *The Dream of Descartes*, (p. 132), and *Existence and . . .* (p. 33), he says metaphysics deals with existence conceived in the manner of an essence or a *quiddity*. And how could it be otherwise? When we ask a question about existence in general, e.g., "Is existence the act of all acts?" we are not using the word "existence" to assert a contingent truth about the actual existence of any particular thing. Existence there is the object of a concept that "abstracts from," i.e., does not include information about, the peculiarities of this existence or that. That is what it means to treat existence as an essence. And if the proposition that claims to answer the question does not use the word "existence" in the same way, it does not answer the question asked but some other question. We are asking questions about existence as a *what*, asking "What is existence?" But *Approaches* criticizes Aristotle saying:

He will teach in vain that *esse* is distinguished from *essentia* . . . , since he continues to conceive *esse* itself . . . in the manner of a *quid* or of an essence. (p. 234)

- And at a minimum, *Approaches* **seems** to disregard Aquinas' important thing-as-thing/thing-as-object distinction concerning "understanding a thing otherwise than it is." (ST I, q. 13, a. 12, ad 3) If that phrase describes assenting to a proposition saying that something is otherwise than it is, it describes falsehood. But if it describes the mode in which things exist in the understanding in order to be known, saying that we understand things otherwise than they are is true. We understand material things immaterially, but do not assert them to be immaterial. We understand simple things complexly, but we do not use our complex concepts and propositions to assert complexity of simple things; we assert the opposite. *Approaches* ignores this thing-object analysis when criticizing Aristotle who:

does not say that *esse* is an essence . . . . But even though he contrasts it in a certain way to any order of essences . . . , he . . . cannot not think of it in this way—because it is presented to him by a concept of abstractive origin. . . . Visualized in this way, *esse* becomes an act just like any other. (p. 234)

But not only did the earlier Maritain know that there is nothing wrong with “thinking” of *esse* in this way as long as we **affirm** that *esse* is not an essence or an act like any other act, his own thing-object analysis, which *Approaches* undermines, gives us the philosophical instrument necessary for untangling **apparent** contradictions like the facts that in knowing “Existence is not an essence” we must treat existence as an “essence,” that “Existence is the most actual of all acts” is a statement about existence as “possible,” that in “Existence is concrete, not abstract” *concrete* is an “abstract” objective concept. In each of these examples, the quoted propositions express information about what existence is *transobjectively*; the quoted single words express another kind of information, *cisobjective* logical information concerning the former kind of information, the transobjective metalogical information that we know.

If Maritain had noticed that his new position appears to contradict earlier ones, he should have at least mentioned it to his readers, whom he would have known could be confused on points that were once crucial to him and/or Aquinas.

27. Maritain denies that *Approaches* only describes what idealist philosophers would say:

In the conversations of everyday life, even those who have had the intuition of being (‘the greatest of metaphysicians,’ p. 227) also use, in the ‘vulgar’ sense I just indicated, the concept of existence. (p. 221)

28. In *Existence and . . .*, the intuition of being is

attained . . . at the summit of an **abstractive intellection** (p. 20)

29. *Approaches* repeatedly denies that the intuition of being is an abstractive operation:

- It is of supreme importance to understand here that this concept is of entirely different origin in the mind than the concept, expressed by the word existence, which is produced in the mind, not from a judgment, but from the **abstractive** operation, in the same way as all the ideas drawn from phantasms by this operation: a concept of existence which in this case is abstractive origin, not of judicative origin, and which I will call our first concept of existence. (p. 220)
- This other concept of existence is of **abstractive** origin, not judicative, and, yes, it precedes the intuition of being. But such a concept plays no role in the intuition of being, and is in no way an integral part of it. It remains completely foreign to it. (p. 221)
- Whereas others, who have formally experienced the intellectual intuition being, will make use of the concept of existence as a concept of judicative origin, not **abstractive**, following upon the intuition of being. (p. 222)
- Existence grasped by the intuition of being is an intelligible which is not drawn from phantasms by the **abstractive** operations. (p. 222)
- Although the object of the first concept of existence is evidently not an essence (but then

at this particular level the metaphysical notions of essence and existence have not yet been clearly separated out), it is nevertheless, like every concept of **abstractive** origin, grasped and conceived by mode of essence. (p. 226)

- In the preceding section I spoke of two concepts of existence: . . . the second, which is due to a return of simple apprehension to the judicative act in which the intuition of being is produced, and which is the concept par excellence of being in the register of the Sein: a concept . . . which itself is in no way of **abstractive** origin (its origin is judicative). (p. 233)

**30\*\*.** In *Being and Some Philosophers* (pp. 203-204), Gilson famously contrasted the roles of the “**operations**” of abstraction and judgment in knowing existence. *Approaches* puts its denials that the intuition of being originates in an abstractive **operation** in the context of the degrees of abstraction that distinguish the sciences. But for both Aquinas and Poinot, sciences are not distinguished by psychological acts but by properties of their **objects**. Aquinas says:

*Sciendum tamen quod, quando habitus vel potentiae penes obiecta distinguuntur, non distinguuntur penes quaslibet differentias obiectorum, sed penes illas quae sunt per se obiectorum in quantum sunt obiecta. Esse enim animal vel plantam accedit sensibili in quantum est sensibile, et ideo penes hoc non sumitur distinctio sensuum, sed magis penes differentiam coloris et soni. Et ideo oportet scientias speculativas dividi per differentias speculabilium, in quantum speculabilia sunt. (In Boet. De Trin., q. V, a. 1)*

And Poinot says:

Here (in distinguishing the sciences) abstraction does not designate the act of the intellect which disengages something from something else, but the abstractability of the object or its immateriality. (*The Material Logic of John of St. Thomas*, p. 554)

"Abstraction" does not designate, in the present connection, the act by which the intellect performs an abstraction . . . Abstraction" signifies objective abstractability . . . a foundation in the object for bringing it to diverse stages of immateriality and presentation. (ibid., p. 557)

“Abstraction” in this sense is a **logical** property of an object and logical properties are properties pertaining to objects as objects. Abstraction a **negative** logical property, the non-inclusion of certain information that pertains or can pertain to the object in its status as a thing (ibid., pp. 94-102):

This nature does not exist in the real in a state (a property; or “mode”, p. 96) of universality and **abstraction**, but as a result of the abstraction performed by the intellect (“abstraction” in

*Untrammelled Approaches* Contradicts Maritain’s Goal, p. 20

the sense of a psychological act, whose “result” is by hypothesis something distinct from the act from which it results), it (“this nature,” not the psychological act grasping it) is so related to the nature existing in the (material) object as **not to include** singularity, or as to include the superior predicates **without including the inferior ones**. (p. 94)

To such a concept something corresponds on the part of the known (material) object, yet this **objective term (the formal object) of the concept** does not, **as such**, possess every mode found in the real; and not everything with which it is conjoined (in the real) is perceived by the intellect. (p. 96. The positive and negative senses of “abstraction” mentioned on p. 127 are psychological acts grasping formal objects that are logically abstract.)

Thus, to know Socrates’ humanity, we must start by objectifying it in a way that does not include information peculiar to Socrates’ individual humanity. I have elsewhere discussed the significance of abstraction as a logical property, not a psychological act, for the degrees of abstraction distinguishing the sciences, “The Problem of Thing and Object in Maritain,” *The Thomist* (1995), p. 35; “Metaphysics and Immateriality,” *The New Scholasticism* (1983), pp. 532-533.)

I know of no place where Maritain cites abstraction as a logical relation, not an operation. (Simon did; *Material Logic*, p. 629.) But **nothing** Maritain had said before *Approaches* was inconsistent with it. So if Maritain had been aware of this distinction between meanings of “abstraction,” *Approaches* might not have responded to Gilson as it did. Maritain could have used thing-object to hold that the intuition of being is abstractive knowledge even if it takes place through judgment. And *pace* Gilson, Poinset explicitly states that judgment can objectify objects to be **logically** “abstract” (ibid. pp. 26, 591, n. 25).

**31.** *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 148, n. 2.

**32.** Ibid., pp. 111 and 139.

**33\*\*.** The thing-object identity theory of truth is Thomism’s most mature development of *De Ente*’s defense of conceptual realism. Recall the opening broadside of *Degrees*:

*Untrammelled Approaches* Contradicts Maritain’s Goal, p. 21

A deep vice besets the philosophers of our day, whether they be neo-Kantians, neo-positivists, idealists, Bergsonians, logisticians, pragmatists, neo-Spinozists, or neo-mystics. It is the ancient error of the *nominalists* . . . . They all blame knowledge-through-concepts for not being a supra-sensible intuition of the existing singular. (p. 1) {1}

The vice of his contemporaries is not skepticism. Most were trying to overcome skepticism, but do so without admitting that the abstract and universal objects of psychological concepts can be identical with what concrete, individual things are in themselves. Conceptual realism requires thing-object distinctions like those of *De Ente*.

**34\*\*.** Simon showed how a source that Aquinas calls *non-generic* common *ratios* generates paradox in "On Order in Analogical Sets," *Philosopher at Work*, ed. Anthony O. Simon, pp. 135-171. See also John C. Cahalan, *Causal Realism: An Essay on Philosophical Method and the Foundations of Knowledge*, pp. 427-467; "How Yves Simon Trumps Cajetan on Aquinas," pp. 1-15 at [www.foraristotelians.info](http://www.foraristotelians.info), click on *Secondary Sources*; "Analogy and the Disrepute of Metaphysics," *The Thomist* (1970), pp. 387-422; and Simon "The Conformity of Knowledge with the Real," n 12.

**35\*\*.** I have discussed how the necessary combining of identity and diversity between things and objects of cognition generates apparent contradictions in "Thing and Object in Maritain," pp. 28-34, *Causal Realism*, pp. 453-456, and in editor's note 12 in Simon, "The Conformity of Knowledge with the Real."

**36\*\*.** For example, Gilson and Joseph Owens downplayed *De Ente*'s crucial epistemic concept, **the nature absolutely considered**. They ask where it exists as such (Gilson, *Being and Some*, p. 75; Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence*, p. 58). In the mind the nature is universal; outside the mind it is individual. Nowhere can it exist in a so-called absolute or unqualified state. But that is precisely why we need to be able to talk about the nature absolutely considered, namely, to expressly communicate that what exists in and

outside of the mind is the very same ontological content. Unless we can expressly say that, we can't defend the ontological value of objective concepts. A nature absolutely considered, for example, the nature of a horse, is a capacity for existence, a potency for existence, first an existence outside the mind and secondarily inside the mind. And does the fact that pure potency nowhere exists as such diminish its importance for our understanding of, and for the **existence** of, substantial change?