

Chapter One

THE PRIMORDIAL PHENOMENON OF REALITY: KNOWLEDGE OF ITS ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE AS THE INDUBITABLE FOUNDATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL REALISM

1. What are Reality and Real Existence? ⁵

The unique priority and excellence of being, which can be found only in the real world of individual things and their properties, this primordial phenomenon of reality, cannot be explained by anything else. Its essence can be grasped only intuitively, and it can be understood that here we find what is “being” in the most actual sense and that here we touch real being, in comparison with which the purely intelligible objects, even the most sublime ideas, possess only a “thin” reality. The “idea” of justice or mercy as such cannot be compared in “reality” with the really existing just prophet Daniel, who saves Susanna from death; the idea of mercy lacks the reality of an act of merciful forgiveness like that of St. Stephen who forgives those who stone him.

This assertion must not be interpreted as denying that superiority of intelligibility and timelessness which we find in the “ideal essences,” especially in the eīdh, the necessary timeless essences, which are the subject of mathematical and philosophical cognition. A fortiori, we shall not speak here of the *real infinite divine justice* called “justice itself.” It, of course, possesses a whole reality infinitely superior to any human real justice. We speak here only of the ideas and the eīdh as such and say that they are inferior in their reality to any just person and her deeds or even to a fly or a piece of wood. Let us remember that being can stand out from non-being or nothingness in three completely different ways and directions: ⁶

First, by its intelligibility (level of inner meaning and cognizability), and in this respect, the general “essences” (eīdh) are, of course, incomparably superior to any finite realization of them, not to speak of the fly, a superiority which implies other ontological predicates such as timelessness, at least in the case of the necessary essences.

Secondly, a being in the most profound sense can stand out from nothingness by its value (and by its ought to be), whereby the being not only is but is something that

⁵ This text was originally written as a contribution to the workshop “*The Phenomenon of Reality*,” September 22, 2022.

⁶ For a detailed account of these three “directions of being,” see Josef Seifert, “Die verschiedenen Bedeutungen von ‘Sein’ - Dietrich von Hildebrand als Metaphysiker und Martin Heideggers Vorwurf der Seinsvergessenheit,” in Balduin Schwarz, ed. *Festgabe für Dietrich von Hildebrand zum 80. Geburtstag* (Regensburg: Habel, 1970), pp. 301-332.

ought to be and is, as it were, confirmed and enthroned in its being. In this sense, many real things that ought not to be, such as a concentration camp, lack the *raison d'être* and thus the most profound meaning of their being, even though they exist in a very real way, and all kinds of real atrocities occur in them. In the axiological sense of the word, even purely ideal or intentional objects like Imogen in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* or Cordelia in Shakespeare's *King Lear* can stand out much more positively from nothingness than trivial or evil real things.

In a third sense, however, which is of particular interest to us here, mountains, flowers, lions, or human beings stand out from non-being by virtue of their being real, by virtue of their reality, and we want to penetrate this dimension of being in what follows.

2. Husserl's Twofold Error in the Characterization of "Reality"

Even among the great phenomenologists, we find various attempts to attribute this primordial phenomenon of reality to something else or to define it too vaguely by certain features that do not belong to the core of its essence. Thus, Husserl asserted in the *Logical Investigations* that the only, or at least a sufficient, characteristic of reality is its temporality: everything temporal is real, and everything real is temporal. Husserl expresses this alleged basis of dividing the world into ideal units of meaning and the real world with striking directness: "For us temporality is a sufficient characteristic of reality. Real being and temporal being are not identical concepts, but they coincide in their extension."⁷

⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, II, 1, ii, ch. 2. This text in its context reads thus: As a characteristic feature of reality, temporality is sufficient for us. Real being and temporal being are not identical, but concepts of equal extension [B124]. Of course, we do not mean that psychic experiences are things in the sense of metaphysics. However, they also belong to a material unity if the old metaphysical conviction is right that everything temporally existing is necessarily a thing or co-constitutes things. But if the metaphysical is to remain wholly excluded, one defines reality exactly by temporality. What matters here alone is the contrast to the atemporal "being" of the ideal. (Husserl, Edmund. *Logical Investigations* volume 1, International Library of Philosophy, p.520. Taylor and Francis. Kindle version.) Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl cites and interprets, in her monumental and impressive work *Edmund Husserl. Temporality and Intentionality*. PHENOMENOLOGY, Texts and Contexts. Edited by Karl-Heinz Lembeck, Ernst Wolfgang Orth, and Hans Rainer Sepp, II CONTEXTS, vol. 8, (Freiburg-Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2000), many of Husserl's texts on reality, but not this text (although it is the only one in which Husserl gives a brief answer to the question of what reality is, even if only by naming an alleged essential feature of reality). Husserl also addresses the question of reality in other works, e.g., *Cartesian Meditations* III, § 24, 25, where he claims that every claim and right to such modes of being as reality derives from ourselves or from the transcendental ego:

In all the hundreds of *passages in which Husserl speaks of reality*, one does not *find* a single one in which Husserl presents a systematic analysis of the primordial phenomenon of reality or a revision of his cited very brief but - relatively - most detailed Husserlian characterization of reality in terms of temporality in LU. This thesis of Husserl's also influenced Heidegger's metaphysics and shaped his philosophy.⁸ He less clearly formulates Heidegger's thesis of the radical temporality of Being than in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. Still, it is especially drastically stated with respect to the "salience" of Being (in the future), which is inherent in temporality and without which Being would fall into nothingness: "But as soon as the Dasein "exists" in such a way that nothing more is outstanding at it, then it has already become one with the no longer being there."⁹

However, Husserl's thesis of temporality as an essential feature of reality, which he posits without closer investigation and rather flippantly, is doubly false.

A. That not everything temporal is real is already evident from the fact that even purely intentional objects, such as the events and occurrences in a novel that takes place in a fictional time, are very much subject to temporal changes and that a "before" and "after," "sooner" and "later" are part of their essence. To be sure, this temporality in the literary work of art is so profoundly modified by the fictional time

It is clear that truth or true reality of objects is to be drawn only from evidence, and that it is it alone, by which really being, true, rightfully valid object, whatever form or kind, has sense for us, and with all the determinations belonging to it for us under the title of true being. Every right originates from it, originates from our transcendental subjectivity itself, every conceivable adequation originates as our proving, is our synthesis, has its last transcendental ground in us.

Husserl also distinguishes from the real "as if" reality that also corresponds to Ingarden's fourth layer of the Literary Work of Art, this sphere of purely intentional objectivities in a literary work. (Cf. Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art*, translated by George G. Grabowicz, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

See also Edmund Husserl, *Nachlass*, IV, *Phenomenology and Epistemology* (1917), § 24, XXV169: "But this is its essence, that what it makes objectively conscious is not characterized as a real object, but as "as it were" real, e.g. the fantasized centaur as "as it were" being there, "floating ahead" in the mode of a reality-as-if, if we want to use Vaihinger's expression. (Cf. also Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, *Prolegomena*, ch. 7, 32 ff, 8, 46, 51.

⁸ Cf. M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Second Section, Dasein and Temporality, where he makes temporality the basic determination of an "original existential interpretation" of man (Dasein) and thus of being in general. According to Heidegger, the structure of temporality culminates in "Being to Death" (ibid., § 46 ff., ch. 1) and in historicity (op. cit., §§ 72 ff., ch. 5).

⁹ The elimination of being - standstill means the extinction of its being. As long as Dasein is a being, it has never reached its "perfection." But if it gains it, then the gain becomes the loss of the being in the world par excellence. As being it becomes then never more experienceable...The obstacle stands on the side of the being of this being. (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 46, p. 236.)

and the fictional characters and events that it even makes sense to ascribe timelessness in a sense to the derived purely intentional objects in the work of art, insofar as they timelessly represent the layer of represented objectivities in a work of art. The time of the events in a novel in which they take place is not real-time.¹⁰ Nevertheless, fictional temporality is also a kind of temporality.

B. More importantly, the derived purely intentional and non-real objects in a literary work of art can also enter time in the form of original purely intentional objects and events¹¹ that take place in real-time, such as when the work is read, or a drama or opera is performed: They follow each other in the same real-time in which we read the work of art or watch a performance on stage. In this case, the purely intentional objects and events take place in real-time, no less than the conscious acts themselves in which they are given. Nevertheless, they are clearly not real but purely *intentional objects*. The same is true of the objects of the dream: just as the various phases of a dream take place in real-time, the purely intentional objects of the dream experience unfold in real-time. This is not to deny that the real-time in which dream images and events follow one another can be much shorter than the dreamed contents, times, and events themselves.

However, this applies to dreams, not fictional events that take place in real time on stage or in movies, although even in theater or film, represented a time in the world of represented objectivities makes it possible to experience 30 days of fictional time in one real hour. Such a “rushed time” is possible because purely intentional and imagined or dreamed events fill real-time in a substantially different way than real events occupy the time. Moreover, real and fictional time “overlap” here.

With regard to the opposite side of Husserl’s assertion that all real processes and events are temporal, it is also obvious that real “being-in-time,” like a human life with its fleeting present (which, despite its fragile and fleeting character, constitutes the *actus of* temporal reality) cannot be regarded as real in an exclusive or even

¹⁰ The most thorough investigation of this can be found in Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art. An Inquiry into the Limits of Ontology, Logic, and Linguistic Theory*. Translated by George G. Grabowicz. Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1979).

¹¹ A distinction made by Ingarden in Roman Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie, Logik und Literaturwissenschaft* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1931), 3rd ed., 1972, and in Roman Ingarden, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 13, *Vom Erkennen des literarischen Kunstwerks*, eds. Rolf Fieguth and Guido Küng (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1997). Ingarden refers to “original purely intentional objects” as all objects that “live” entirely from being the object of conscious acts, while “derived purely intentional objects” are those objects that are not the object of conscious acts but correspond to word meanings, even if the objectivities described in a literary work are not actually the object of intentional acts.

primary sense; a fortiori, the no-more-being of the past and the not-yet-being of the future are not primary, and even less exclusive examples of the real. Thus, even the real “being in real time” does not simply coincide with reality but entails an enormous lack of reality, which led Augustine to say that being in time is only through the movement towards *nothingness*. Thus, since temporal beings entail a tremendous limit of “reality” in their past and their future, but also in their fleeting present, being-real does not coincide at all, as Husserl and Heidegger claim, with “being in time”; rather, being in time entails a very profound lack of full reality that brings it closer to nothingness than to supreme reality.

This leads both to the realization that the only fully real being, which not only was or will be, but in the fullest sense IS, cannot be temporal, but must be eternal, since in the mirror of the structural nullity of temporal being as well as the impossibility that temporal being is beginningless,¹² it is obvious that exclusively the simultaneous and never disappearing being and the possessing of an eternal now, in which there is no no-more-being of the past and no not-yet-being of the future, can possess the full reality of being and life.¹³ Only the eternal, never the temporal, can be the reality *par excellence*. Husserl's and Heidegger's equation of reality with being in time either implies an untenable processualist conception of God, such as that of Whitehead or Hartshorne,¹⁴ or it is (namely, if a temporal God is contradictory by its very nature, which can be proved), at least in the last analysis, atheistic.¹⁵

¹² I have presented, defended and developed Bonaventure's proof of this in Josef Seifert, *Bye-bye Dawkins and Darwin. Divine Creation of the World and Man out of Nothing: Philosophical Evidence*, chs. 1-3. (Aachen-Mainz, Patrimonium Verlag 2021).

¹³ I have discussed this with extensive reference to Plotinus' *Enn.* III,7 and Augustine's phenomenology of time in Book X of the *Confessions* and Bonaventura's metaphysics of time in detail in Josef Seifert, *Essere e persona. Verso una fondazione fenomenologica di una metafisica classica e personalistica*. (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1989), ch. 10. This text was published in an expanded version in English: *From Finite Person to the Infinite Divine Person, Being, and Person*, Volume IV, (Irving, TX, Gaflei, FL, Santiago de Chile, Granada, Spain, Gaming, Austria: IAP Press, 2023), ch. 1.

¹⁴ Whitehead and Hartshorne, in their process philosophy, interpret it within the framework of a “neoclassical theism” whose God is himself conceived as temporal.

¹⁵ Besides *Essere e persona*, ch.10, see Josef Seifert, *Bye-bye Dawkins und Darwin. Göttliche Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen aus dem Nichts: Philosophische Beweise*. (Aachen-Mainz: Patrimonium Verlag 2021). 2nd, substantially enlarged and improved edition *Bye-bye Dawkins and Darwin. Divine Creation of the World and Man from Nothing: Philosophical Evidence*, op. cit. ch. 1-14. (The English edition has not yet been published.) Even if Whitehead and Hartshorne interpret God in their process philosophy in the context of neoclassical theism, whose God is himself temporal.

3. Scheler's Incorrect Assertion about Reality and its Primary Criterion and Form of Cognition.

Just as it is not possible to defend Husserl's thesis that the concept of reality has the same extension as the concept of temporality, so it is not possible, with Scheler (or even Kant in one of his arguments for the existence of the "thing-in-itself") to regard *resistance to the sense of touch or drives, expressions of will, and desires as the sole criterion, let alone the innermost essence, of the real*. For not only in touch hallucinations and in psychic phenomena of the perception of purely subjective intentional objects as if they were real, there can be resistances of unreal objects, but there are also many ideal laws of essences and other non-real objects which resist our imagination and volition without therefore being real in the strict sense of the *primordial phenomenon of reality*. Even if that special and deep resistance against the senses and against the real acts that characterize reality and which Scheler has in mind is a *consequence of reality*, it is neither its exclusive criterion nor its innermost core. Of course, no human being could perceive the reality of things as perfectly as an angelic or divine spirit, but reality would by no means resist them as it often resists us. However, the experience of reality by man is by no means primarily a kind of "running the head against a wall."

The clear and evidential experience of the reality of our own mind has none of this, nor can the realization of the reality of other persons with whom we are united in friendship or love be reduced to, or primarily be identified with, their resistance to our whims and desires. It would be nonsensical to claim that the immediate inner experience of the reality of our own mind or the quite different perception of other persons consists primarily or even only in such resistance.¹⁶

¹⁶ Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl offers an excellent analysis of Husserl's texts in which he assumes, at least ostensibly, an immediate inner perception of the reality of the conscious self. See Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl, Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl, *Edmund Husserl. Temporality and Intentionality*. PHENOMENOLOGY, texts, and contexts. Edited by Karl-Heinz Lembeck, Ernst Wolfgang Orth, and Hans Rainer Sepp, II. CONTEXTS, vol. 8, (Freiburg-Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2000), pp. 512 ff. There she quotes a text by Husserl about the immediate and unquestionable cognition of the *reality of the ego cogitans*, in which there is no experience of the "resistance" of reality at all: "...in order to know that the pure I is and what it is, no accumulation of self-experiences, however great, can teach me a better than the single experience of a single simple cogito. It would be a nonsense to think that I, the pure I, is really not or is something completely different than the one functioning in this cogito. Everything appearing, everything somehow representing itself, manifesting itself can also not be, and I can deceive myself about it." "The I, however, does not appear, does not present itself merely one-sidedly, does not manifest itself merely according to individual determinations, sides, moments, which, moreover, appear merely for their part; instead, it is given in absolute selfhood and in its unshakeable unity, is to be adequately grasped in the reflective turning of

However, even if the experience of obstacles and resistance to our drives or movements is an excellent way to grasp reality, the reality of the wall itself, against which we bump our heads, is something other than such resistance: it is, among other things, the condition of the possibility of really bumping our heads against it and suffering harm, but therein does not consist its reality. My critique of Husserl's and Scheler's attempts to grasp the primordial phenomenon of reality does not deny that many or most temporal beings are real and that their resistance to our sense of touch and desires is an essential feature of reality and a critical path to its knowledge.

4. The Irreducible and Indefinable Primordial Phenomenon of Reality Enables its Grasp through its Opposites and Essential Features

When all attempts fail to explain the primordial phenomenon of reality by something else, like temporality or resistance to our senses or desires, one is led to the insight that reality belongs to those primordial data such as being, consciousness, cognition, etc., which cannot possibly be explained or defined by anything other than themselves but must be taken seriously in their self-givenness. The primordial datum of reality can only be unfolded by analyzing its properties, on the one hand, by delimiting it also from its opposites and from all that it is not, and on the other hand, by refuting those attempts of determination which do not do justice to the primordial phenomena as reality.¹⁷ Despite the character of reality as an original reality, what G.E. Moore says about the good is not true: "If I am asked, 'What is the good?' my answer is that the good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked, 'How is goodness to be defined,' my answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it." There are various possibilities open to the philosopher to say more about the indefinable primordial phenomenon of reality than "reality is reality, and that is all we can say about it," some of which we will explain and apply in the following.

the gaze back to it as a functional center. As pure I, it holds no hidden inner riches; it is absolutely simple, absolutely exposed; all richness lies in the cogito and the way of function that can be adequately grasped in it. (Id/II, p. 104 f., emphasis. S. R.). *I cannot discuss here Sonja Rinofner's extremely sophisticated discussion of Husserl's early and his later Cartesianism (in the Cartesian Meditations). See also Josef Seifert, 'Critique of Relativism and Immanentism in E. Husserl's Cartesian Meditations. The Aequivocations in the Expression 'Transcendental Ego' at the Basis of Any Transcendental Idealism.'* Salzburger Jahrbuch für Philosophie XIV, 1970."

¹⁷ In this—and not in a skepticism mistakenly but often attributed to the Socratic "I know that I do not know" - I also see the positive philosophical value of the many aporetic and negative endings of the Socratic dialogues. They refute definitions of primordial phenomena and any form of reduction to what they are not.

(i) The ideas refer to reality, which alone can be or possess that of which they are ideas

The unique advantage of “being” that only real things or persons possess over everything else is understood only when one realizes that many “ideas,” intelligible and necessary “plans of being” (*rationes*) - because they determine what real things (if they exist) are, can be, or cannot be – and thus are necessarily related to, or ordered to, the real order of things. These intelligible “essences,” when they refer to real beings, are related to the world of real things in that they contain, as it were, the principles and timeless “rules” or at least the “possibilities” and “meaning” of the real beings that correspond to them or rather which they are “called” to be realized in. The intelligible timeless ideas of substances, animals, or persons are realized and “fulfilled” *only* “in” the real world. For example, although the “ideal content” of justice “contains” a much loftier value than can ever be realized in a human act, the “idea of justice” does not embody this value in itself; instead, the goodness of justice *exists* only in real just acts or persons. Only these can *be* just: It is not the idea of justice as such that possesses justice or can even possess it; rather, it lies in the eternal idea of justice that exclusively real persons and acts can realize the value of justice, just as they alone can *be* just.

(ii) Some kinds of beings are themselves only when they are real

Another access to the primordial phenomenon of being real, which is not definable by anything else, can be gained by the insight that it belongs to some modes of being that possess their nature as living, conscious, thinking, or free beings *only* if they really exist.

a. Such an affiliation of being real to the essences of certain beings could be shown, e.g., for every (first) substance (*proth ousía*), to whose “being-in-itself in being” (*inseitas*) also its self being in the sense of its reality belongs.

b. Similarly, all material movements through space claim an autonomous real existence independent of mere possibilities, ideas, or intentional objects. However, in their case, Berkeley's thesis that their being is only a being perceived (*esse est percipi*) is far less absurd and contrary to their essence than a similar notion of other persons who *can never be what they are, can never be persons unless* they really exist. Without this autonomy of reality and its difference from the purely intentional object of another conscious subject, they would not be themselves.

c. Just as much could it be shown that living beings claim an independent real existence according to their essence. They live only if they are not only imagined as living but if their life possesses selfhood in the sense of a full reality. The autonomy and selfhood of the real are necessary ontological conditions of the living, as well as of all nutrients and fluids, without which no living being can survive on earth.

d. And even more, yes, in a much higher sense, reality belongs to the essence of a person and to her unique, unrepeatable being; she lives her life consciously. Only really existing beings can be persons, and purely intentional or possible persons are not persons but only conceived as such or conceptions of persons. Likewise, all personal acts and experiences, being deceived or dreaming, are only what they are if they possess reality in the primal reality of actually being the real, which is the subject here.

e. All this applies in the highest sense to God: a God who exists only as an object of intentional acts, as a fiction, is no God at all, cannot be meaningfully addressed in supplications, and still less in acts of worship.¹⁸

(iii) *Opposita per opposita cognoscuntur* - Reality is known by its opposites and by what it is not

The “real,” even if it is not definable by anything else since it is an ultimate and *eo ipso* undefinable phenomenon, can be further “defined” - in another sense of definition - by its opposites:

a. The real forms an opposition to the *merely* possible, which is determined both by the fact that it *can be* real and by the fact that it is not real.¹⁹

b. The real possesses an even stronger contrary opposite in the impossible since the latter is not only factually not real but, due to its contradictoriness or other “material” (content-related) impossibilities, necessarily excludes being real. Through this being excluded from the real, which we encounter in the impossible, the impossible in a kind of “creative negation,” as William Marra calls it, opens up the

¹⁸ This elementary and unquestionable insight would be a major criticism I would make of Kant's philosophy of religion and his conception of the postulates of practical reason, as well as of the essay “Glauben, als ob. Religion as Fiction and Narrative” by Sebastian Gäb, so far published only on his academia.edu homepage. Some philosophers, such as Robert Spaemann, believe that this is the main reason for Anselm's claim in his *Proslogion 2* that God is not that beyond which nothing greater can be thought, if he exists only “in the mind” and not also in reality. Cf. Robert Spaemann, “The Question of the Meaning of the Word ‘God’” in *Communio* 1 (1972), pp. 54-72, reprinted in R. Spaemann, *Einsprüche* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1977), pp. 13-35, contradicting Hermann Lübbe's claim in *Religion nach der Aufklärung* (Graz: Styria, 1986) that, after Kant, we can speak of God and religion only in terms of a fictitious God who allows us to cope with our death and other evils. This “existentialist-functional” conception of religion has much in common with Rudolf Bultmann's program of *demythologizing* religion.

¹⁹ Of course, everything real is and was also possible. So the possibility can be proved by reality: *ab esse ad posse valet illatio*. But this is not “*merely possible*.”

meaning and the essence of the real, which is clearly given in the contrast to being of the impossible that is excluded from the real.²⁰

c. The real also forms an opposition to the merely imagined or to purely intentional objects, be it that these are imagined in real acts, be it that they are objects of mentally determined or linguistically expressed meaning units, for instance, in a literary work of art. Here, it is, above all, the merely “assigned being” that accrues to purely intentional objects through acts of consciousness and the meaning of texts in contrast to the selfhood of the real, which stands in contrast to the self-possessed being of the real.

d. Also, in purely ideal essences and forms (ideas in the Platonic sense) or the various kinds of ideal „essences, “ we encounter a special opposition to the real. Although the timeless forms (the “ideas”) possess their own being and autonomy from all our acts, they lack, as it were, the innermost moment of reality: That unique actuality of the *actus* essendi to which we will turn in the following.

This brings us to perhaps the most profound way the philosopher can fathom the essence of a primordial phenomenon like reality: namely, through an analysis of the various essential moments of the real.

(iv) The inwardness of real being phenomenon closely related to reality is the *inwardness of the being of* real beings, in contrast to all beings, such as purely intentional objects, to which their being is bestowed only from without, without belonging to them inwardly

5. The “Final Being” of the Real Beings

The autonomous selfhood and the ontic interiority of the real, which reality has in common with purely ideal beings like the *éldh* is to be distinguished from another essential moment of the real: from the moment of the “in itself completed” final being of the real being, which consists of the the fact that the objective being does not (like the possible or the purely intentional or even the purely ideal being) refer to something else that, alone, would become real. As a real being, a being possesses a specific “final character” in that it does not, like purely intentional objects or ideal essences, stand in an essential relation to something else to which it refers and in which alone its whole reality would lie. It is precisely in this “*self-containedness*” and being the final thing, the endpoint that there lies a certain primacy of reality, which does not at all coincide with an alleged closedness of real being assumed in Leibniz’s dictum that monads have neither doors nor windows, of their fundamental

²⁰ See William Marra, “Creative Negation,” in B. Schwarz, ed., *Wahrheit, Wert und Sein*, Festschrift für Dietrich von Hildebrand zum 80. Geburtstag (Regensburg: J. Habel, 1970), pp. 75-85.

capacity to go beyond themselves, to transcend themselves in knowledge,²¹ value-responses, and other ways.

(i) Being in Itself of and in All Real Beings - The Incompatibility of Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology and a Transcendental Idealism with Realism

Nothing can be real, respectively the last foundation of appearances and aspects of reality, which does not have a being-in-itself - which is not a "thing-in-itself." The An-sich character of the "primordial phenomenon of reality" cannot result from any transcendental constitution. Therefore, I would like to emphasize the absolute incompatibility of Husserl's and any transcendental idealism with a knowing and a cognition of reality: A transcendental constitution and an origin of "reality" in the intentional consciousness of man is a *contradictio in adjecto*. First of all, the term "ideal existence," of course, does not mean what the term "transcendental idealism" means in Kant, Fichte, or the late Husserl, but rather what Plato means by "ideas."

Based on transcendental idealism, it would even be impossible to speak of "ideal existence" in our sense, for this implies an objective, unchanging, timeless necessity of essence, incomparable intelligibility, apodictic and infallible certainty about the eternal *rationalities* of things transcendent to human understanding and to the contingent entities whose "primordial plans" they are. In transcendental idealism, only a "necessity" related to and constituted by human consciousness could be found.

Still, less would transcendental idealism grant that we can know the *really real* existence and essence of things, for this implies that we are capable of knowing "things in themselves," which can only be a reality if it is independent of being a purely intentional object of the human mind or transcendental consciousness. According to transcendental idealism, however, "real" beings and "real existence" would also exist only "in the mind," namely as *noemata* constituted by our conscious intentional life (*noesis*). This view was held by Husserl after 1907 and is incompatible with realism even at a more fundamental level of his philosophy. However, Husserl repeatedly speaks of "actual reality" and "true reality." However, his view that all "*reality*" is constituted by transcendental consciousness as the object of consciousness contradicts real reality and the in-itself closure of the real of which we have spoken. Existence in this sense is attributed to beings that "exist," for example, as purely intentional objects of human creativity (the scholastic or a scholastic meaning of "existence in the mind").²²

²¹ See Josef Seifert, *Erkenntnis objektiver Wahrheit. Die Transzendenz des Menschen in der Erkenntnis* (Salzburg: A. Pustet, 1976).

²² Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie (1913)*, IV, § 135, [278 ff.] p. III310 ff. Cf. Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl: *Edmund Husserl. Temporality and Intentionality. PHENOMENOLOGY, Texts and Contexts*. Edited by Karl-Heinz Lembeck, Ernst Wolfgang

Many of the contrasts with reality that we have discussed show that real beings necessarily have the fundamental character of existing in *themselves*; they exist *in themselves*. A purely intentional object, something that exists only as the object of consciousness, can never be real - even though some forms of aspects that do not belong to a being in itself participate in reality insofar as they are the human or personal "aspect" under which, for example, my person is experienced by me as "I" but presents itself to every other person as "you." That every person exists in herself is also shown in the fact that she is experienced by herself as "I" but by me as "you." She can only be you for me because she is real in herself. Its you-character belongs to a person only from my point of view of the second person but manifests her own being in herself, just like its I-aspect, which belongs inseparably to the experience of my person. At the same time, the you-aspect is constituted only when another person encounters the person. Nevertheless, the being-in-itself of a person is presupposed by both aspects and given in them.

(ii) The Actus Essendi of the Real

While the ideal being of *eīdh* and other ideal essences lack self-enclosure because they refer to something else *of which they are ideas* and are already thereby clearly distinguished from the real, they differ from the latter in an even more fundamental way in that they lack another essential moment of the real: namely, the moment of actuality, that dynamics of being which the scholastics described very well by speaking of the *actus essendi* (the *act of being*). Moreover, precisely this decisive

Orth, and Hans Rainer Sepp, II. CONTEXTS, Vol. 8, (Freiburg-Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2000), p. 173: The phenomenologist, like the Pyrrhonian skeptic, does not judge the knowability or non-knowability of a phenomenon-transcendent reality. Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl, Edmund Husserl. (Footnote to this text: Cf. e.g. Hua VIII, p. 109. This claim, which turned skepticism into negative dogmatism, presupposed that the question would be decidable according to a criterion of truth, which, according to the skeptical objections to the dogmatists' claims to knowledge, does precisely not exist. Cf. Sextus (1993). For a more thorough critique of Husserl's transcendental turn, see Josef Seifert, "Critique of Relativism and Immanentism in E. Husserl's Cartesian Meditations. The Aequivocations in the Expression "Transcendental Ego" at the Basis of Any Transcendental Idealism." *Salzburger Jahrbuch für Philosophie* XIV, 1970. See also my *Back to Things in Themselves. A Phenomenological Foundation for Classical Realism* (London: Routledge, 1987, 2013); by the same author, *Discours des Méthodes. The Methods of Philosophy and Realist Phenomenology*, (Frankfurt / Paris / Ebikon / Lancaster / New Brunswick: Ontos-Verlag, 2009). I think that philosophical science, contrary to Husserl's view, can favor realism without a dogmatic position in the struggle between realism and idealism. On Husserl's view, see Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl, *Edmund Husserl. Temporality and Intentionality*. PHENOMENOLOGY, Texts and Contexts. Edited by Karl-Heinz Lembeck, Ernst Wolfgang Orth, and Hans Rainer Sepp, II. CONTEXTS, vol. 8, (Freiburg-Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2000), pp. 204-205.

moment of the real, namely its *actualitas*, distinguishes the real from the possible and from other modes of being. In other words, the real existence, the *actus essendi*, constitutes the being real of the real. For the real is never real only by its essence, but consistently also by its real existence, by its *actus essendi*. The real is thus never a pure form or essence, but the real comes to a being only by its existence. This *esse*, therefore, belongs inseparably to the real being as long as it is real.²³

Now that we have briefly examined the meaning of *reality*, we can critically examine Kant's assertion that 100 real thalers are not distinguished from 100 possible ones and that, therefore, existence is not a predicate at all, at least not a real predicate: Many of the following insights about existence can also be applied to ideal or purely intentional existence; in essence, however, the following statements apply to the primordial phenomenon of *real existence*.

(iii) Real Existence is not a Predicate of the Essence of Real Beings (at least of no Contingent Being)

Indeed, existence is not a predicate of the whatness or essence of a real being, at least in the case of contingent beings. What we mean by the existence of something belongs neither to "what" the being is (to its *ti einai*), nor to "how" it is (to its *poion einai*), whereas what we mean by "substance" or "accidents," "personal" or "impersonal being," "just" or "unjust," etc., constitutes or belongs to the essence of a thing. Predicates of this latter kind might be called "essential" predicates since they determine or constitute *what* or *how* a being is.

By "existence," however, we mean *that* a being is, without adding a determination of essence to the thing as such. By existence, we are pointing to something much more fundamental than just another determination of the *what* of a being: existence is not just one among many determinations of the whatness of a being, nor is it identical with the most critical dimensions of this "what a being is," let alone with the totality of what a contingent being is.

Accordingly, we can also understand very well *what* something is or could be without knowing its real existence. What a hundred possible or imagined thalers will correspond precisely to what they actually are if they really exist? However, the exact sense of this "correspondence" of the object *as possible with what* it is as *real* must be clearly understood. This, however, requires a prior investigation of the sense in which existence is a predicate. This investigation will show that the correspondence at issue does *not* imply *an identity of the possible with the real being of something*.

²³ Not absolute, which applies only to God, but if and as long as it is real.

(iv) Although existence is not a “predicate of the essence” in contingent beings, it is a real predicate, an “existential” predicate. There are ten ways to understand this and in what sense existence is a real predicate

The following consideration will show that the partial truth contained in Kant’s second objection to Anselm’s ontological argument, namely, that existence is not a predicate of the essence, by no means implies that his first and most radical objection is correct, according to which existence is not a predicate at all and in any case, not a real predicate. Existence is a unique and fundamental real predicate of a being, albeit a “predicate” in a very different sense than a predicate that determines its essence.

What we mean by “predicate” when we say “existence is a predicate” can be explained in two ways - in an ontological sense and a logical sense:

1) Something is “added” to a being or to what is possible if actual existence is given. Alternatively, even more clearly, *not* nothing is added to a thing, as Kant claims, but something immeasurably important is given to it when given existence. In this sense, “existence” is the primary, real-ontological predicate.

2) Also, logically, “existence” is a predicate: If we say “this or that being exists,” we form a meaningful judgment using the term existence. Something is “added” to the subject term when we attribute existence to the thing meant by it. If a proposition about existence is accurate, we learn something about a being. Something is said about it when we say “it exists”: this baby lives and exists now, while before, it was a mere possibility that it would exist.

The claim that existence is a predicate in these two ways (ontologically and logically) radically contradicts Kant’s assertion that existence is not a predicate and is also contrary to most of Gilson’s theses about the *esse*.²⁴ That existence in these

²⁴ See Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), p. 34: “It is not enough to say that essence is conceivable independently of existence; in a certain sense, we must say that essence is always conceived by us independently of existence. ... There is nothing we can add to a concept to make it represent its object as existing; what happens when we add something to it is that it represents something else.” In this passage, Gilson, like Kant, seems to ignore the double meaning of existence as a real predicate and the multiple ways a concept of “existence” can be recognized and formulated as such, as we will show below. Gilson sees clearly with Kant that a general concept can never express the necessarily individual concrete existence of a being. We will return to this problem later. See also John M. Quinn, *The Thomism of Etienne Gilson. A Critical Study* (Villanova University Press, 1971), pp. 54 ff. Some of Quinn’s criticisms are consistent with those I have made, although Quinn’s investigation came to my attention only after I had completed this text. Quinn convincingly suggests that existence can be understood and is repeatedly captured by Gilson. He also shows that the opposite view leads to irrationalism. He convincingly shows that existence is a predicate and sharply criticizes Gilson’s response to Régis’ critique. Quinn’s critique, however, does not take into account the *unique* sense in which existence is a predicate; his critique does not do justice to the way in

two ways is really a *real* predicate of a being can be shown above all in ten ways, by which it can also be shown that being in the sense of existence is by no means identical with the meaning of the “is” of the copula, as Kant claimed.

(v) The sense of many existential questions and judgments can only be explained if one admits that existence is a predicate in the two senses defined above

Let us imagine, for example, that we are listening to a conversation in which a person’s personality is being described and passionately discussed. As long as we are unsure whether it is a character from a play or a really existing person, it is very useful to ask: “Is this person you are talking about just a fictional character from a play, or is he or she a real existing person?” This question is often asked and is obviously meaningful, but the very fact that it is meaningful necessarily implies that judgments about existence are also meaningful. It implies that existence is a predicate, in that something important is obviously “said” when the predicate’s real existence is ascribed to a thing, for example, when one says, “Your first assumption was correct. The person of whom we speak is Empress Maria Theresa.” Such a question and answer can have meaning only because existence is actually a predicate - both in a logical and ontological sense. This is confirmed by the fact that we could just as easily get the opposite answer: “You must know that the person we are talking about is just a character in a Shakespearean tragedy: Ophelia. She does not really exist, but Professor O. here says he would swear she was a virgin, while Professor John believes she had sexual relations with Hamlet.” (I refer here to a real conversation that actually happened). Very astutely, this point is explained by G. E. Moore in terms of the negative answer to an existential question.²⁵

When thinkers like N. Malcolm deny that existence is a perfection and a real predicate, it is easy to see that they speak of situations in which existence is already tacitly presupposed. Thus, Malcolm speaks of a king who, seeking new ministers, would name “existence” as one of the desirable qualities. What makes this so

which predicates of essence are radically different from existence as a predicate, although he does articulate this fact in a few places, for example on page 61: “Actual existence is not a final addition to essence: it is the surplus of determinateness, the extra-essential act which essence cannot give, the determinant which, in the realization of essence, makes the whole true.” Overall, -however, -Quinn’s investigation (not to mention the contributions of some of his successors, such as John D. Beach in *The New Scholasticism*, Autumn 1976, Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 522-528) is - characterized by a very polemical tone and spirit (despite the compliments he pays to Gilson at the beginning and end of his work) that keeps him from learning from Gilson and following what Gilson sees. Still, it is very valuable. We cannot incorporate all the beautiful insights it contains on our subject.

²⁵ G. E. Moore, “Is Existence a Predicate?” in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* XV (1936), reprinted in *The Ontological Argument*, ed. by A. Platinga (New York, 1965), pp. 71 ff, esp. pp. 77 ff.

surprising in a job posting is not the supposed fact that existence is not a predicate but the tacit presupposition of existence, for it is clear that the king presupposes existence from the outset when he describes his future ministers. No king wants to fill his position with non-existing or merely possible persons.²⁶

However, this does not prove in the least that there are a few situations (like the conversation reported above) in which it is unclear whether a person we are talking about really exists. So, in such cases, questions and judgments about existence are quite reasonable.²⁷ This questioning and judging of existence take us one step further:

(vi) The metaphysical insight into the reality of the “predicate” existence

We must consider that the “what” we or any other contingent being are, or what infinitely many possible contingent beings would be and could be, has “existed” as a possibility from eternity. Nevertheless, no one would say that, in reality, “nothing happens” when such possibilities are realized by divine creation or by human action. No one would say that nothing is “added” to a being at the unique moment it receives existence. When we consider this, and especially when we gratefully acknowledge the gift of our own existence, we see that real existence is not just one among other real predicates, but that it is *per eminentiam* a real predicate. This metaphysical fact explains precisely why existential questions and judgments, as we have just seen, have meaning.

(vii) The two truths and arguments just mentioned (1 and 2) can be seen even more profoundly if we realize that the essence of a being also gets a completely new “meaning” if this being exists

Actual existence radically influences and changes the “essence” (as merely possible).²⁸ One can describe this change even in innumerable “essential judgments.” The possibility of a being (i.e., what the being is - its essence - as merely possible) has completely different essential predicates than the real being (i.e., *what* “the same” being is as really existing). If we take a woman as an example, we could say that a

²⁶ See Normal Malcolm, “Malcolm’s Statement of Anselm’s Ontological Argument,” in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society XV* (1936), reprinted in *The Ontological Argument*, ed. A. Plantinga (New York, 1965), esp. pp. 139-141.

²⁷ In many disciplines, such as in the science of history, where it is precisely a matter of distinguishing between merely falsely reported events and real events, judgments about the real existence of things play a decisive role. The same is true in jurisprudence when it is a matter of distinguishing the real facts of a crime from a false accusation or in geography.

²⁸ This has been excellently pointed out by Ingarden. See R. Ingarden, *The Controversy about the Existence of the World, I*, “Existential Ontology,” p. 69 ff, esp. p. 7273.

merely possible woman cannot think, while a real existing woman can think; a possible woman (or the possibility of a woman) cannot will, is not free, cannot cause states of affairs, cannot be happy, cannot repent or build a palace; a real existing woman is capable of all these. This proves the radical difference between the possibility of a being and the real being. Real hundred thousand or 100 gold pieces are radically different from possible ones. Consequently, Kant's assertion that what are 100 real thalers is identical to 100 possible ones is false, if not absurd. One could say that existence is not only *a* real predicate but the real predicate par excellence insofar as all predicates of essence become real through it and receive a new and their own proper meaning.

(viii) The tremendous event that takes place when a possible being receives an existence is shown in many human acts that prove that not nothing, but in a certain sense, everything is added to a being when it receives real existence

The tremendous transition from mere possibility to reality, represented, for example, by the creation of a great work of art, is a justifiable cause for celebration. The unique role and ontological significance of existence are also evident in the act of gratitude - for the conception or the healthy birth of a longed-for child - or even when we become aware of the overwhelming gift character of our own existence or that of a loved one. The same results also from the opposite of such gifts of existence. There are also existential situations in which existence is something negative or is subjectively experienced as such. Such a negative judgment about existence underlies our struggle against crimes and sufferings whose existence is evil and which we want to end or prevent.²⁹

In despair, we turn against our own existence and wish not only to cease to live but to cease to *exist altogether*. In despair, we experience the tremendous reality of the predicate of existence and wish - albeit powerlessly - for this: the abolition of our existence.³⁰ S. Kierkegaard describes in a grandiose text the terrible dichotomy of real and total despair of those persons (in hell) who reject the self they are and want to be a self they cannot be:

The despairing man cannot die; just as „the dagger can kill the thoughts,“ so despair can consume the eternal thing, the self, which is the cause of despair,

²⁹ Sometimes we may even perceive the existence of goods as negative, either because resentment or hatred arouses in us a revolt against all harmony, beauty, or peace around us, or because false compassion or despair moves us to destroy existing goods, as when we end human life through euthanasia and suicide. Whether such judgment is right or wrong, it shows that existence is a real predicate.

³⁰ Socrates alludes to one form and reason for this despair in the *Apology* when he says that unjust persons want to get rid of their lives and injustice simultaneously, but this is neither possible nor a noble way to eliminate injustice.

whose worm does not die and whose fire is not quenched. Nevertheless, despair is precisely self-consuming, but it is a powerless self-consumption, which is not able to do what it wants; and this powerlessness is a new form of self-consumption, but in which the despairing person is again not able to do what he wants, namely to consume himself. This is the despair raised to the higher potency, or it is the law of potentiation. This is the hot mainspring or cold fire of despair, the gnawing cancer that moves ever deeper inward, in impotent self-consumption. That despair does not consume him is so far from being a comfort to the despairing person that it is just the opposite, that comfort is just the agony, just that keeps the gnawing pain alive and keeps life in pain. This is precisely the reason why he despairs - not to say is in despair, because he cannot consume himself, cannot get rid of himself, cannot become nothingness. This is the potentized formula for despair, the rising of the fever in the sickness of the self.³¹

Regardless of whether or not hell and such despair exist, the very idea of it reveals the tremendous reality of the predicate of real existence.

(ix) The clear insight that existence is a real predicate can also be gained if we consider the different modalities in which existence can be encountered. Something can actually exist with necessity, or it can be completely impossible that it exists at all

³¹ Here is the full text: "The despairing man cannot die; just as „the dagger can kill the thoughts,“ so despair can consume the eternal thing, the self, which is the cause of despair, whose worm does not die and whose fire is not quenched. Nevertheless, despair is precisely self-consuming, but it is a powerless self-consumption, which is not able to do what it wants; and this powerlessness is a new form of self-consumption, but in which the despairing person is again not able to do what he wants, namely to consume himself. This is the despair raised to the higher potency, or it is the law to the potentiation. This is the hot mainspring or cold fire of despair, the gnawing cancer that moves ever deeper inward, in impotent self-consumption. That despair does not consume him is so far from being a comfort to the despairing man that it is just the opposite, that comfort is the very agony, the very thing that keeps the gnawing pain alive and life in pain. This is exactly why he is desperate - not to say despairing - because he cannot consume himself, cannot get rid of himself, cannot become nothing. This is the potentized formula for despair, the rising of the fever in the disease of the self." "A despairing person is despairing about something. So it seems for a moment, but only for a moment; in the same moment the true despair reveals itself, or the despair reveals itself in its true character. For by despairing of something, he is really despairing of himself, and now wants to get away from himself. So when the ambitious man, whose slogan was: "Either Caesar or nothing," does not become Caesar, he despairs about it. But this means something else, namely that precisely because he has not become Caesar, he cannot bear to be himself. So he is actually not despairing about not becoming Caesar, but he is despairing about himself because he has not become Caesar. (Soeren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, Wiseblood Classics of Philosophy Book 6, p.10. Jovian Press. Kindle version."

The “*possibility of existence*” (which is implied and presupposed in every assertion of existence) is an “existential” predicate that stands in contrast to the “impossibility of existence.” *Contingency* and *necessity of existence* are also modalities of both ideal and real existence: this shows even more clearly that existence is a predicate. Not only can it be meaningfully asserted that something exists, but also that it has a certain mode of existence. Moreover, ethics also makes it clear that existence is a predicate when it examines the fact that some actions *should be* performed from a moral point of view, that they should exist, while other actions *should not* exist. Implicitly, this shows not only that the predicate “real existence” is to be distinguished from the predicate “possibility” but also that the question of whether something that ought to exist actually exists and whether something exists that ought not to exist is perfectly meaningful. In order to be able to ascribe modalities to existence at all, it is not only necessary that it be a predicate, but the various existential “modalities” and, above all, the difference between what ought to exist and what ought not to exist also show the abyss that exists between merely possible and actually existing beings. At the same time, they show the fundamental weight and meaning that comes with a judgment about existence.

(x) Even if Kant does not clearly grasp the sense in which existence is a real predicate but rejects it without closer examination, he nevertheless presupposes it at an important point of his system, namely when he rightly asserts that every existential proposition is synthetic³²

How could this be the case if existence is not a real and logical predicate? For if existence were not a real predicate, any judgment that something exists could, at best, be an analytic judgment, in which nothing is “added” to the concept of a subject beyond what is already contained in it from the outset.³³ In other words, Kant's two claims - on the one hand, that existence is not a real predicate and that nothing is added to the concept of a thing when existence is attributed to it, and on the other hand, that any judgment about existence is synthetic a posteriori - are in stark contradiction.³⁴

³² On the other hand, if you admit, as every reasonable man must admit, that every proposition of existence is synthetic, how will you maintain that the predicate of existence cannot be abolished without contradiction? This advantage is peculiar only to the analytic propositions since their character is based on it. (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 626)

³³ If existence were *absolutely not a predicate*, how could it be contained in the subject term at all to allow for a tautology?

³⁴ That Dasein, in Kant's philosophy, can only be known through experience, i.e., a posteriori, is stated, for example, in his *Critique of Pure Reason* B 629. Kant does not see the glaring contradiction between the two above-mentioned statements about existence at all; indeed, for him, there is not even the problem of how they could be thought of as compatible

(xi) The already discussed fact that there are other kinds of existence besides the real existence (e.g., the ideal existence) and the correct insight into the nature of the “exact coincidence” between real and possible existence show clearly that (real) existence is a predicate

The preceding remarks in no way deny the truth, which Kant sees when he says that there is an exact coincidence between the possibility of a being (the being as it is conceived in its possibility) and its reality or that the possible can become real only if it is not another thing, but the same thing that was first possible and now exists: “Because otherwise not exactly the same, but more would exist than I had thought in the concept, or better said, than was contained in the possible being X, and I could not say that only the object of my concept existed...., but something else than was possible before (than I thought) would exist. ”³⁵ It is true (though subject to the above remarks about the radical change of essence from the merely possible to the actual) that we do not think a determination of essence more or less in a being when we think it as possible and when we say that it now exists. However, this exact “correspondence” between each feature of the “possible being” and each feature of the existing being does not imply an identity between a given being and its possibility. “*What the possible being is and what the real being is are not at all identical*”; the properties of the possibility as such and the properties of the real being corresponding to the possibility are not at all the same. Yet the two coincide exactly. How can these two seemingly contradictory statements be reconciled?

There are many forms of exact correspondence without identity. The image in a mirror can *reflect* a face - eyes, a look, a smile, etc. - but (as such) that image of the face can neither see nor have eyes nor possess any of the other features of the real face it reflects. Similarly, our knowledge (cognition) of an animal can correspond exactly to it and grasp it as it really is, but without possessing any of the animal's characteristics; neither does the cognition live, nor leap, nor sting us nor say “mäh” nor “bah” nor resemble the nature of the goat or flea that we know in any other way.

with each other; however, as a matter of fact, the denial that existence is in any sense a real predicate, as well as logically speaking a predicate in that it, used as the predicate in a proposition, “adds something” to the subject concept, is in direct contradiction to the nature of synthetic judgments, which add precisely to the “concept of a thing” a new predicate not yet explicitly contained in the subject concept. We can even go one step further: If existence were not a predicate at all (not only a “new” predicate in comparison to the “essential predicates”), then an existential judgment would not be an analytic judgment either, but no judgment at all.

³⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* in Kant's Works, *AkademieTextausgabe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1968), vol. III, B 629 (my translation).

But the animal is grasped in cognition; adequate cognition corresponds to every aspect of its object in a self-transcending receptive intentional act.³⁶

Similarly, the exact correspondence between the “essence” of the possible and that of the real must be interpreted not as an identity but as a different kind of relation. The possibility of essence is entirely different from the essence of the real, yet it corresponds exactly to it. A possible being is by no means “essence minus existence.” Still, there is nevertheless not a single property of a real being that would not find a correspondence in its “possibility.”

(xii) There is a crucial difference between “is” in the meaning of “exists” and “is” as a copula

Kant identifies “is” as being with “is” as a copula.³⁷ If Kant were right with his assumption that “to be” (exist) and the copula “is” are synonymous, then also his rejection of Dasein as a predicate would be justified because the copula “is” is indeed no predicate. This becomes clear when we consider the double function of the copula. On the one hand, the copula exercises the function of relating S to P: Both in the sentence and in the question, the “is” of the copula relates the property meant by the predicate term (or whatever other determinacy may be meant by a predicate term) to the being meant by the subject term (or to its presence, absence, etc.); on the other hand, the judgment *affirms* by means of the copula that the predicate *belongs to or does not belong the subject*.³⁸

In doing so, it posits or affirms a state of affairs: that is the case that P belongs to S in any sense whatever (that it is a predicate of it, an opposite to S, similar to it, etc.) These two copula functions are unmistakably different from the predicate “existence.” This becomes immediately clear from the fact that as long as “is” is meant in the sense of the copula, any judgment containing only a subject term and

³⁶ Cf. The Criticism of False Model Conceptions of Cognition in *Erkenntnis Objektiver Wahrheit*. The transcendence of man in cognition, ch. I,3.

³⁷ Neither Gilson nor Régis makes the fundamental distinction between “to be” as “to exist” and “to be” (“is”) as a copula. See Gilson pp. 3 ff. where such a distinction is missing in his discussion with Kant; see also pp. 190-202 and 217-218.

³⁸ Cf. The masterly exposition of the nature and meaning of the copula in Alexander Pfaender's *Logik*, p. 38 ff. “Is” in its function as “copula” does not mean a predicate, as Kant rightly remarks, but has the function of ascribing a predicate to a subject, e.g. “ripe” to the subject “apple.” In the question, “Is this apple ripe?” we relate ripeness to apple by means of the copula “is” (and by means of the terms that form the meaning of the words “apple” and “ripe”). This function of the copula “is” is also present in the question, “Is this apple ripe?.” In the judgment, however, we encounter a second function of the copula “is,” namely the assertive function. This function of the copula is not only to relate the predicate to the subject but to assert the predicate of the subject, to assert the state of affairs in question and thus the reality of the predicate.

the copula “is” would not be a judgment. For example, “This apple is....” cannot be a judgment because the exact predicate is missing here, which the copula is supposed to ascribe to the subject and assert from it.³⁹ Even in a complete judgment, the copula “is” can at most (in connection with its double function) ascribe “being” to a state of affairs in the broadest sense of the word. This broadest sense of being refers not only to all beings possessing the transcendental property of being but also to “be” non-existent - (for the non-existence of a thing can be asserted in a judgment), to “being” in the second sense of the word according to Aristotle and Thomas of Aquinas, which corresponds to every true proposition.⁴⁰

³⁹ In an analysis significant not only for logic but also for metaphysics, Pfänder shows that in a judgment where the copula would stand without a predicate, the predicate “existence” would not remain but only a *fragment of the judgment*. He shows convincingly that “to be” in the sense of “to exist” has a quite different sense from the copula and that it is “a predicate determinacy sui generis.” Cf. p. 59 in his *Logic*.

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas refers in the following text to Aristotle, *De Ente et Essentia*, cap. 1, 1 ff, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 3, p. 584: “Sciendum est igitur quod., sicut in v metaphysicae philosophus dicit, “ens per se dicitur dupliciter, uno modo quod dividitur per decem genera, alio modo quod significat propositionum veritatem,” ...secundo modo potest dici ens omne illud, de quo affirmativa propositio formari potest, etiam si illa in re nihil ponat, per quem modum privationes ET negationes entia dicuntur...sed primo modo non potest dici ens nisi quod aliquid in re ponat...” Thomas attributes an essence only to the essence that is distinguished by falling into one of the ten categories; the being that is only the object of true propositions and that can be purely negative or consist of privations does not necessarily possess an essence as such. (Cf. also Pfänder, *Logik*, p. 60.) Pfänder says basically the same thing in his argument against Brentano’s view that the copula “is” means “to exist.” Since the copula “is,” when completed by a predicate different from it, postulates or asserts a state of affairs, it could be said of it in a certain, very general sense that it “postulates” “being.” Pfänder, however, shows that the “is” of the copula does not mean “existence” in the sense of real existence. When we say: “A hundred merely possible talers differ from a hundred real talers,” by “are” we certainly do not mean “exist.” With the copula “are,” we do not ascribe existence to the possible talers, not even in the analogous sense in which we speak of the existence of the “ideal being” of mathematical objects, nor do we imply the weak kind of existence which, radically different from real and ideal existence, objects of human imagination possess (e.g. the imagined Mr. Brown whom we imagine living on a chicken farm in South Africa). The being or “reality” that corresponds to each copula “is” (e.g., when we say, “That which you are talking about right now is unimportant, is absurd,” etc.) is not even the esse that everything that “exists” in any sense of the word has, i.e., the esse *transcendentale* (in an even broader sense than Thomas Aquinas grasps this concept when he applies it to “being divided by the ten categories”). But when we speak of reality and being as the object of every proper judgment, we do not even imply this kind of being; for the proposition “I was nothing before I was conceived” is true; but the reality of my “not-being” (which corresponds to the truth of this and which is meant by the copula “was”) is not a “being” that has unity, intelligibility, etc., but just “nothing.”

Since the copula as such does not refer to any real being, not even to a “being” that carries the most general transcendental properties of being, it must be clearly distinguished from both. Once the necessity of this distinction becomes clear, it also becomes clear at the same time that the meaning of the copula “is” cannot serve as a starting point for a metaphysical investigation of being qua being.

This “being” which Hedwig Conrad-Martius, in her justified criticism of the inadequacy of Pfaender's determination of the sense of the copula by its double “pure function” in the judgment, calls “pure Sachverhaltssein” in her book *Das Sein, is* indeed postulated and implied whenever the copula “is” or “is not” is used in a judgment, but being in this sense is quite distinct from “real existence.” “Consider sentences like the following.” The possibility of something is distinct from its reality. The two functions of the copula (to refer to and to assert) are present in this judgment. We also find here the ontological meaning of “is” in the sense of pure *factual being*, the factuality of the existence of a state of affairs. But the “being” of the state of affairs is not, nor does it imply real existence; for the difference between possibility and reality cannot itself be called “really existing.” Or when we say, “The possibility of a man as such is incapable of thought,” we certainly do not mean that the possibility “exists” as incapable, etc.⁴¹

Even if we use “is” not only in the sense of copula but to ascribe “being” to a thing in a more actual sense, we by no means ascribe to that thing the unique predicate of real being. For example, when we ascribe to a being - such as a number 3 or even a mere object of our dreams - the properties of “*esse transcendentalis*,” when we say that they have been in that they are not nothing, are recognizable, have a certain unity, etc., we do not imply that the number 3 or the dreamed object have real existence. But “being” is not even understood in this most general sense when we use the copula, for example, in the following sentence: “Nothingness is not knowable.” Here, apparently, neither to nothingness nor to its unknowability being, even in the broadest sense, is ascribed-to.

This probably prompted the Mexican philosopher Agustin Basave, in his *treatise on metaphysics*, to introduce the Spanish term “hay” (that is, there is) and “habencia,” which is even broader than the most general concept of being because it also includes all possibilities, all non-being, all deficiencies, indeed in general everything that is “there” in any sense of the word; the German expression “alles was es gibt” probably comes closest to the term “habencia.”

⁴¹ The question of the form of existence of “pure objects” that do not really exist in any sense has been examined in *detail* by A. Millan-Puelles in his book *Teoría del objeto puro*. Millán-Puelles pushes this notion of a “pure object” with no being at all too far. Cf. Josef Seifert, “Preface” to Antonio Millán-Puelles, *The Theory of the Pure Object*, English translation by Jorge García-Gómez (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996), pp. 1-12. Cf. also Josef Seifert, *Back to Things in Themselves*, ch. 2 ff.

The distinction between “is” as copula and “is” as “really exists” becomes even clearer when we realize the many *different* kinds of existence that can be ascribed to different beings. For even the lowest one, which, for example, ascribes “being” to a pure object of intentional acts that have no extramental existence at all, surpasses the latter ontological meanings of the copula, in which only the pure “is there” (the pure “absentia”) is asserted. Yes, even when we say “the number 3 exists,” meaning a much higher ideal form of existence than when we ascribe existence to a merely dreamed object, we still do not assert real existence. We attribute existence to this entity only in a sense quite different from real existence, namely, in the sense of the most general features of the esse *transcendentale*, which we also find embodied in a purely fictitious object. When we say that the objects of geometry have an “ideal existence,” we are undoubtedly ascribing to them an existence, but certainly not a real existence (which is our main interest in this work and which we must distinguish from the “ideal existence” of the most diverse kinds of ideal “essences” and “essential plans” of things and “essential plans” of things). In addition, there are other cases in which we can speak of a kind of existence different from both “ideal” and real existence.

(xiii) The distinction between potential and actual being (being in potentia and being in actu)

When we speak of the actuality of a thing, we often contrast it with the potency or potentiality of the same thing. For example, we refer to the trained and practicing pianist as an actual pianist as opposed to a gifted person who is a potential pianist or the mature oak tree as opposed to the seed. Within the potencies, we could further distinguish with Aristotle between active and passive potencies. An active potency we find, for example, in the seed in relation to the fully grown tree or flower. In the seed, there is not only an “abstract,” indeterminate potency to become a tree but a real and, in essence, determinate tendency to become a very definite tree.

On the other hand, a passive potency is present in the marble stone in relation to the statue that can be made of it. In the case of such potency, the being in question has neither a soul nor an “entelechy,” an inner form and purpose that drives it (as in the organism) from within to the realization for which it has the potency. In contrast, a passive potency is realized “from without.” The form or actuality comes to the being in question as one among many possible realities.⁴²

⁴² The marble stone receives this actuality of form from the outside and, in a certain sense, by chance. A “passive potency” allows an inexhaustible wealth of formations and is presupposed for all art. (From another meaning of the “active potency” in Aristotle, we entirely refrain here; because this term can refer to a positive power, a “pure perfection,” which is entirely compatible with the highest - even with the absolute - actuality of an omnipotent being).

This Aristotelian distinction is very important. Within the active potencies, however, another important distinction must be made: namely, the distinction between those potencies that a being has an automatic, inevitable tendency to realize and those potencies that can be realized only by free will. For example, the potencies that a person realizes in moral virtues and good actions cannot be sufficiently characterized as “active potencies.” Still less can they be conceived as “passive potencies.” It is only through free action that they enter the real world at all; there is no intrinsic automatic or inevitable movement in a human person to become morally good as she grows into adulthood, but the human person is nevertheless called by her nature to realize the morally good; she has not merely a passive potency to do so.⁴³

With respect to all these potencies, but especially with regard to the active potencies, we can say that the term “potency” can refer to three interrelated but quite different realities. First, by the term “potency” we can mean the real capacities that actually exist in a particular being. The human person, for example, must have, from the first moment of his existence, the basic faculties of thought, will, etc., which constitute him as a rational personal being. Completely different from this are the various faculties which must be acquired and which involve a being having a certain activity at his disposal. For example, man acquires the ability to think - by virtue of the faculty of human reason - through free acts and developments. Still, he possesses the faculties underlying these from the beginning, as Crosby has shown.⁴⁴

In the other example of the seed, we also find the existing capacity to grow. When we call such presently existing abilities, capacities, or skills “potencies,” we mean that these abilities, capacities, etc., despite their indisputable existence and thus their actuality, are meant to be exercised and that through their exercise, they are

⁴³ It is quite different with the baby, who has a potency to grow up, which, under normal circumstances, inevitably tends toward its realization. The potency to become just, on the other hand, can only be realized through free decisions. One might, therefore, be inclined to include it among the passive potencies, for, as with a passive potency, another actuality or “form” might be realized by the person concerned, such as injustice or a life of unjust passions and vices. But the potency in question is not a passive potency, nor only an active potency of minor importance, but it is one of those active potencies in the true sense, which are entirely founded in the essence of a certain being. The Person is from her innermost being and essence to become just and morally good. This vocation belongs even more properly to the nature of a person than it belongs to the seed to become a full-grown plant. Many potencies that are realized only through freedom, as well as many other potencies realized in cognition, hope, trust, conviction, etc., differ from other active or passive potencies in another crucial respect: they are “intentional potencies” in the sense that they involve a meaningful and conscious relation to the objects of personal acts. In these cases, the reality of an act is either generated in a person by the object of which she is conscious, or it depends in some other way on the conscious intentional dialogue between the person and other beings.

⁴⁴ Cf. J. Crosby, “Evolutionism and the Ontology of the Human Person,” pp. 208-243.

meant to produce a new being: actual knowledge, thought, growth, the full-grown tree, and so on.

A second meaning of potency is called “potencies,” the unawakened, undeveloped layers in a given being, which are destined to awaken through the exercise of actual abilities, capacities, etc. We speak here of a somehow “dormant” side *in a* being, which must already be present in the real being but is not yet awakened until the potency is actualized and thus realized. For this second meaning of potency the Aristotelian thesis is more valid than for the first: namely the thesis that *to dynamei on* (potential being) somehow “lies between being and non-being.”

The third meaning of potency refers to something that does not yet really exist in a given being but that *can* become real in him. In this sense, one can speak of a child as a “potential pianist” or a “potential great philosopher” if one means by this that from this child a great pianist or philosopher *can* become. In this sense, the adult oak already exists in the seed “*in potential*.” This “potential being” lies between actual being and non-being - it is somewhat closer to non-being than to being. But it is more than a mere abstract possibility; for potential being in the third sense is based on actually existing capacities or capacities of a being. This third kind of “being *in potential*” is found above all in the active potencies and here again in a new sense in such active potencies which do not require the use of freedom for their realization. These references do not exhaust all meanings of “potency,” but they are sufficient for the present purposes.

Wherever we find potency, we find these *three different data that* can be meant by the term “potency.” For this reason, they are best referred to as three phases of potency, or three different states that can be called potency, rather than three *types*. In the background of this short analysis of potency, it becomes clear that potency presupposes a real existence in at least four respects. First, the being with capacities, abilities, potencies, etc., really exists. Second, the potencies in the first sense (capacities, abilities, etc.) really exist, although they are also intended to cause another reality. Third, the “unawakened layers” in a being already really exist as potentials. Fourthly, the being “to be brought into existence” already has an existence, even if it is very “weak”; it lies “between” being and non-being.

It is true that with respect to the last and, to a certain extent, with respect to the first meaning of the potency, the transition from potency to act also means a certain becoming (a beginning of being). In this realization, something becomes a full being that did not (fully) exist before. But if we further consider that real existence must be ascribed to the real being that has a potency, as well as to its potency itself, and that this real existence already precedes any actualization in the way described, we see that the understanding of this kind of actuality does not at all give us a sufficient concept of what existence means. Instead, it already presupposes the understanding and givenness of real existence's fundamental and irreducible datum.

The second misunderstanding of existence as actuality could arise from a confusion of existence with *what* we mean by the actuality of something that existed

before only as potency. *What actuality* and actualization mean is that this actualization does not yet exist. Rather we also find the real difference between what *actuality* is (the essence of actuality) and its existence. Thus, the understanding of actuality as such does not give us any information about what we mean by existence. First, not only actualized but also potential beings can really exist; potential beings presuppose real existence in four ways. Second, what we mean by existence is precisely not *what* we mean by actuality; it is not the essence of actuality.

Existence, we can say, means something different from actuality in the sense described; nevertheless, it means something analogous and closely related to it. This fact was undoubtedly in Thomas Aquinas's mind when he called existence the "act of (all) acts."⁴⁵ Real existence (being) is this unique actuality that makes both potentialities and realities (in the sense described) *real*. It marks the unique actuality of what the thing or its potentialities, a person, her cognitions, love, virtues, and actions are. The being of a being, its existence, denotes this irreducible and unique actuality, because of which we call one thing or actuality real. In contrast, we call another thing, potentiality, or actuality, only possible because it lacks real existence. Existence means this unique actuality to which we refer when we say that something is real or actually exists.

It is unique because all other acts, acts, and actualities already presuppose the existence of the subject of such acts. Real existence is an entirely different metaphysical actuality that establishes the difference between possibility and actuality wherever that difference exists. Existence is this actuality of a being, which is at the same time responsible for that tremendous change of being between the "possible being" and the "actual being" of something and the whole world. This *primordial phenomenon of reality requires* a deep philosophical wonder and a careful method that allows us to penetrate more deeply into it without explaining it away by denying any difference between the real and the possible or reducing it to something else that it is not.

Probably the philosophically most important result of our investigation of the primordial phenomenon of reality and our partial critique of its determination by Husserl, Scheler, and Heidegger was that reality does not at all coincide with being-in-time and that the equation of real being with temporal being, proved to be doubly false. Being in time, due to some essential features of temporal being, does not only not coincide with being real but possesses the essential moments of being real only in a tremendously weakened sense, which moved St. Augustine to say that temporal being is only by rushing towards nothingness (the no-more-being of the past). Thus, the primordial phenomenon of reality was shown to be primarily proper only to eternal beings. This insight overcomes the inherently atheist equation of real being

⁴⁵ Fernando Inciarte, *Forma formarum. Strukturmomente der thomistischen Seinslehre im Rückgriff auf Aristoteles* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 1970).

with temporal being and the inversion of the first archetype of all reality from the eternal, divine to the temporal being.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ I have developed this result much more deeply and extensively elsewhere. Cf. Josef Seifert, *God as Proof of God. Eine phänomenologische Neubegründung des ontologischen Arguments*, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996), 2nd ed. 200; *Erkenntnis des Vollkommenen. Wege der Vernunft zu Gott*, (Bonn: Lepanto Verlag, 2010, 2nd Expanded ed. 2020) ; *Bye-bye Dawkins and Darwin. Divine creation of the world and man from nothing: Philosophical evidence*. 2nd, substantially enlarged and improved edition of *Divine Creation of the World and Man from Nothingness*, (Aachen-Mainz, Patrimonium Verlag 2021).