

THE DISCOVERY OF BEING IN THOMAS AQUINAS
ACCORDING TO JOHN F. WIPPEL

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1. Introduction

The principle of principles that is first sought in philosophy is what is actually first in reality, which need not be what is the most easily accessible to human understanding; it is that whose very presence or absence entails the presence or absence of all the rest in reality.¹ For Thomas Aquinas, being is that which is most fundamental to reality. This is because being not only applies to all that exists or could exist but being envelopes all to which it applies. Being has an unspeakable richness to it.²

John F. Wippel, a devout servant of the truth, a lucid teacher of Thomas Aquinas and a pillar of Catholic metaphysical thought³, was a scholar who followed the Gilsonian version of Existential Thomism,⁴ known for his field-defining scholarship on Thomas Aquinas's Metaphysics and on the later thirteenth-century thinker Godfrey of Fontaines. His works viz., *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines: A Study in Late Thirteenth-Century Philosophy* (1981), *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Eternal Being* (2000) and the numerous articles that he published, are witnesses to his revolutionary role and unquestionable mastery in the field of medieval metaphysics in modern times.

John Wippel's *modus operandi* was simply to concentrate on the historical Aquinas. He believed that to fully appreciate the contributions of Thomas Aquinas, one must try to understand more precisely and

¹ Étienne Gilson, *Preface*, in *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952) ix.

² John F. X. Knasas, *Being and Some Twentieth-Century Thomists* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003) xvii.

³ *In Memoriam: Msgr. John F. Wippel*, in <<https://philosophy.catholic.edu/news/2023/09/in-memoriam-john-f-wippel.html>> (05.01.2025).

⁴ Benedict Ashley, *The Way toward Wisdom: An Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Introduction to Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009) 204.

accurately what Thomas Aquinas himself accurately said and thought.⁵ Wippel had agreed with Étienne Gilson that Thomas Aquinas had never written a *Summa Philosophiae* or a *Summa Metaphysicae* but for him a well-worked out metaphysics always existed in the mind of Thomas Aquinas which could be recovered from his varied writings.⁶ He stated that one could easily remove the discussions from the general theological contexts and use them as important sources in reconstructing Thomas Aquinas's metaphysical thought⁷ which has always been a unique enterprise which explained the discovery of being as real or as existing, which in turn, facilitated in attaining the knowledge of *being as being*.⁸

2. Our Knowledge of Being as Real

Considerable attention has been paid in recent years to the intellectual processes involved in the discovery of being, especially being as real or existing. Commentators on Thomas Aquinas, such as John Wippel, have stressed the role of the mind's second operation, viz., judgement, when it comes to the discovery of being as existing. Judgement is required if one is not to have an incomplete notion of being that is reduced to the level of an essence or *quiddity*. It is only judgement that can assure one of one's notion of being as existing, an *est* as well as an *id quod*, and *isness* as well as a *that* which.⁹ Some attention has been devoted to a special, particular kind of judgement or a particular form of the intellect's second operation known as *separatio* by Thomas Aquinas.⁹ Before we examine the process of the discovery of being as real, it is necessary to scrutinise Thomas Aquinas's examination of the issue on the operation of the intellect in q. 5, a. 3 of his commentary on

⁵ Therese Cory, <John F. Wippel 3 In Memoriam,= in <<https://thomistica.net/news/msgr-wippel-in-memoriam>> (05.01.2025).

⁶ John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000) xvii.

⁷ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, xviii-xxii.

⁸ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 3.

⁹ John Wippel, <Metaphysics and Separatio in Thomas Aquinas,= in *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1984) 69.

Boethius's *De trinitate*.¹⁰ Aquinas states that the operation of the intellect is twofold. One operation is called understanding indivisibles, i.e., it is by this that one knows *what* is something, and the other is that by which one composes and divides, i.e., it is by that by which an affirmative or negative proposition is to be formed. Both these operations correspond to a principle of things: the first operation corresponds to the nature of the thing itself, while the second one corresponds to the *esse* of a thing.¹¹

2.1 Sensation and Simple Apprehension

Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle, distinguishes between two kinds of intellectual operations: the first act of the intellect i.e., simple apprehension in which we come to know what a thing is; and the second act, the act of judging, the act of composing and dividing, which looks to the existence of the thing in question. Thus, by the first act we understand what a thing is, but through the second act, the judgement, we deal with whether the thing really is and how it is. Wippel writes, <... the point is this: if it is through the intellect's first operation that we discover *quiddities* or understand what things are; it is only through its second operation that we discover their existence (*esse*).=¹²

Now, the process through which one comes to know being as real starts at the level of sensation. Here, the external sense organs are acted upon by an external object. Wippel questions whether or not there is an awareness of the existence of an external object at the level of sensation, <for in being aware that one is sensing, one is also aware that one's power

¹⁰ Scott R. Lefor, *John F. Wippel vs Benedict Ashley on Aquinas's Discovery of the Subject of Metaphysics*, Licentiate Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2015, 11.

¹¹ ...*duplex est operatio intellectus: una, que dicitur intelligentia indivisibilium, qua cognoscit de unoquoque quid est, alia uero, qua componit et diuidit, scilicet enuntiationem affirmatiuam vel negatiuam formando. Et hee quidem duae operationes duobus que sunt in rebus respondent. Prima quidem operatio respicit ipsam naturam rei . . . Secunda uero operatio respicit ipsum esse rei . . .* = (Super Boeth., de Hebdom., q. 5, a. 3). Cf. Lefor, *John F. Wippel vs Benedict Ashley on Aquinas's Discovery of the Subject of Metaphysics*, 11-12.

¹² Robert Sokolowski, <The Science of Being as Being in Aristotle, Aquinas, and Wippel,= in *The Science of Being as Being: Metaphysical Investigations*, ed. Gregory T. Doolan (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012) 17.

of sense perception is being acted upon by some object.¹³ This raises the question of whether or not judgement, the second operation of the intellect, is necessary for one to determine that something exists. Wippel concludes that although there is necessarily some awareness⁹ of the actual existence of the thing which is perceived, it is only implicit at this level. Thus, the intellect is needed for judgement of existence, and thus for the discovery of being as real.¹⁴

2.2 Judgement

Judgement gives us a direct, naïve awareness of the reality of particular kinds of things. It does involve reason; it is more than the elementary awareness of reality that we have in sensory experience, where we could be said to encounter the resistance of things but not yet their existence. When we judge, we move into reason⁴we move into syntax⁴the logicians call it proposition⁴which is made up of two terms⁴the subject of the affirmation or the negation, and the ⁸predicate⁹ which is affirmed or denied of the subject. Here, we register the actuality of things, i.e., their existence. We have an initial contact with being. We have turned toward being as being.¹⁵

Wippel says, <Here...owing to its cooperation with common sense, the intellect will be in a position to judge that the object one is perceiving actually exists...one will now make an initial judgement of existence regarding the particular thing one is perceiving.¹⁶ The actuality in question, is that of a particular kind of thing. We are dealing not with sheer existence but with the existence of something definite. Here, we have an awareness of the reality or existence of things, registered and presented to us by the act of judging.¹⁷

Here, we need to address some points concerning judgement: 1) what does Aquinas mean by *esse* when he claims judgement treats it? 2) What is

¹³ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 36.

¹⁴ Lefor, John F. *Wippel vs Benedict Ashley on Aquinas's Discovery of the Subject of Metaphysics*, 13-14.

¹⁵ Sokolowski, <The Science of Being as Being in Aristotle, Aquinas, and Wippel,¹⁷

¹⁶ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 38.

¹⁷ Sokolowski, <The Science of Being as Being in Aristotle, Aquinas, and Wippel,¹⁸

the distinction between judgements of existence and judgements of attribution? Wippel notes that in Aquinas's Commentary on *I Sentences* d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, ad. 1, Aquinas claims the term *esse* may be taken to signify: 1) the very *quiddity* or nature of a thing. 2) the very act of an essence... i.e., its actual existence 3) the truth of a composition, i.e., of judgement, as this is expressed in propositions.¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas often limits himself to the second and third meanings. In his Commentary on the *De trinitate*, he has distinguished between the nature of a thing to which the intellect looks in its first operation and the very *esse* of a thing (*ipsum esse rei*) to which the intellect looks in its second operation. In this text, it is clear that *esse* cannot mean nature or *quiddity*. Therefore, it would seem to follow that it must mean either a thing's actual existence or else that *esse* which is formed by and exists only in the intellect when it judges. But since Thomas Aquinas has referred, here, to the very *esse* of the thing⁴this suggests that he does not have in mind *esse* simply as it exists in the intellect as expressed in judgement. Hence, by the process of elimination, we seem to be left with the remaining alternatives 3 *esse* used here to signify the actual existence of a thing.¹⁹

It would be useful to highlight another distinction that Thomas Aquinas makes, one which Étienne Gilson has highlighted to good effect in various publications.²⁰ As Thomas Aquinas develops in his Commentary on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*, the verb *est* as it appears in propositions is sometimes predicated in its own right, as when we say *Sortes est*. By this, we indicate that *Sortes* is in reality, i.e., he actually exists. Gilson states that the very *est* often appears in what we may describe as existential judgements or judgements of existence. But Thomas Aquinas will state that on other occasions the verb *est* is not predicated in

¹⁸ *Sed sciendum, quod esse dicitur tripliciter. Uno modo dicitur esse ipsa quidditas vel natura rei, sicut dicitur quod definitio est oratio significans quid est esse; definitio enim quidditatem rei significat. Alio modo dicitur esse ipse actus essentiae; sicut vivere, quod est esse viventibus, est animae actus; non actus secundus, qui est operatio, sed actus primus. Tertio modo dicitur esse quod significat veritatem compositionis in propositionibus, secundum quod <est= dicitur copula: et secundum hoc est in intellectu componente et dividente quantum ad sui complementum; sed fundatur in esse rei, quod est actus essentiae, sicut supra de veritate dictum est. (I Sent., d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, ad. 1).*

¹⁹ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 24-25.

²⁰ Étienne Gilson, *Knowledge and Existence*, in *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952) 190-204.

its own right but as a copula⁴ joined to the principal predicate in order to connect it with the subject of the proposition. So, when we say 8Sortes is white⁹, the speaker does not intend to assert that Sortes actually exists, but rather to attribute whiteness to him. These judgements may be described as judgements of attribution.²¹

We recall another point that Thomas Aquinas makes in his Commentary on the *De trinitate*, viz., truth arises in the intellect from the fact that the intellect is conformed to reality, it follows that in its second operation (judgement) the intellect cannot truthfully abstract what is united in reality. For the intellect to abstract (distinguish or divide) in this operation, it needs to assert that there is a separation which regards to the thing⁹s very *esse*. For e.g., if I speak of someone who is actually white and a separate human being from whiteness and then say, 8this human being is not white,⁹ my judgement is false.²² Thomas Aquinas reminds us that truth in the strict sense arises as the level of judgement. Any composition or division effected by the intellect through judgement must correspond to reality if the judgement is to be true. Thomas Aquinas holds that the intellect⁹s second operation (judgement) is ordered to the *esse* of things and if this means their actual existence, then one might conclude that such is the case only in judgements of existence. Thomas Aquinas indicates that this holds true also for judgements of attribution such as 8Sortes is white.⁹ Even in such judgements, there must be some reference to reality or as Thomas puts it, to the very *esse* of the thing in question. Gilson phrases this well: in judgements of attribution 8is⁹ has correctly been chosen to serve as a copula 8because all judgements of attribution are meant to say how a certain thing actually is.⁹ In another text, d. 19, q. 5, a. 3, taken from his Commentary on *De trinitate*, which is more or less parallel to his Commentary on *I Sentences*, Thomas Aquinas draws the same distinction between the intellect⁹s two-fold operation, one of these is named 8imagination⁹

²¹ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 25-26.

²² *Et quia veritas intellectus est ex hoc quod conformatur (rei), patet quod secundum hanc secundam operationem intellectus non potest vere abstrahere quod secundum rem coniunctum est; quia in abstrahendo significaretur esse separatio secundum ipsum esse rei, sicut si abstraho hominem ab albedine dicendo homo non est albus, significo esse separationem in re, unde si secundum rem homo et albedo non sint separata, erit intellectus falsus. (Super de trinitate q.3, a. 4)*

concept formation or formation on the part of the intellect²³this is referred to by Aristotle as an *understanding of indivisibles*. The other, which some refer to as belief consists in the composition or division expressed in a proposition. This is what is meant by judgement. While the first operation grasps the *quiddity* (nature) of a thing, the second has to do with *esse*.²³ Because truth as such is grounded in *esse* rather than in *quiddity*, truth and falsity are found properly in the second operation of the intellect, hence in a proposition. Thomas Aquinas writes that it is through judgement that one grasps *esse* just as it is through judgement that, truth, properly speaking is realized. It is through this discussion that Thomas Aquinas has contrasted *esse* with nature or *quiddity* and that *esse* is said to be grasped by the intellectual operation we know as judgement²⁴this shows that it must signify actual existence.²⁴

In Thomistic metaphysics, if a given substance actually exists, this is owing to the presence within that thing of an intrinsic principle, i.e., *actus essendi*, which actualises its essence, is distinct from it and enters into composition with it. This distinction between this intrinsic act of being and its corresponding essence principle is not immediately evident to us but needs to be justified by philosophical argumentation. As we have seen in chapter V of his *De ente et essentia*, he begins to argue for distinction and composition of essence and existence within non-divine beings by starting from the fact that it is different for us to know what something is (i.e., to recognize its *quiddity*) and to know that it already exists (presumably through judgement of existence). Further, Thomas Aquinas closely associates *esse* with actuality. In *Sum. Theol.* I, q. 3, a. 4 he refers to *esse* as the actuality of every form or nature.²⁵ In *De potentia*, he describes it as the <actuality of all acts and because of this the perfection of all perfections=²⁶ (*De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2). While this

²³ *Dicendum, quod ad evidentiam huius quaestionis oportet (videre) qua(liter) intellectus secundum suam operationem abstrahere possit. Sciendum est igitur quod secundum Philosophum in III De anima duplex est operatio intellectus: una quae dicitur intelligentia indivisibilium, qua cognoscit de unoquoque quid est, alia vero qua componit et dividit, scilicet enuntiationem affirmativam vel negativam formando ... Prima quidem operatio respicit ipsam naturam rei, secunda vero operatio respicit ipsum esse rei ...* (*Super de trinitate* q.5, a. 3)

²⁴ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 26-28.

²⁵ ...quia esse est actualitas omnis formae vel naturae... (*Sum. Theol.* I, q. 3, a. 4)

²⁶ ...actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum... (*De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2)

understanding of *esse* as actuality takes on its fullest meaning only when it is considered in the light of Thomas Aquinas's theory of composition and distinction of essence and *esse* within finite substances, it seems to be available to him prior to his demonstration of that conclusion. Thus, he often explains that a thing is, or exists by reason of the fact that it has *esse*. The very name being (*ens*) signifies that which is or that which has *esse*.⁹ As we shall see in ch. IV, in his Commentary on the *De Hebdomadibus*, Thomas Aquinas holds that a being (*ens*) has existence or is insofar as it participates in *actus essendi*.²⁷ In *Sum. Theol.* I, q. 5, a. 1, ad 1, further, he explains the term being (*ens*) indicates that something is in act. But act is ordered to potency. Something is said to be a being (*ens*) in the unqualified sense insofar as it is distinguished from that which is only in potency. And it is so distinguished by reason of its substantial *esse*.²⁸ In his later Commentary on the *De interpretatione* 1, 5, Thomas Aquinas remarks that the verb is when taken alone signifies composition (judgement) but only by way of consequence and not in its primary meaning. In its primary meaning, it rather signifies that which the intellect grasps in the manner of unqualified actuality, since it means to be in act.²⁹ But as he explained in his much earlier *Quodlibet* 9, q. 2, a. 2, the term *esse* may be taken in one sense as signifying the act of being (*actus entis*) insofar as it is being.³⁰ By this Thomas Aquinas has in mind that something is designated as being in act in the nature of things, i.e., as something which actually exists. In this sense, *esse* is properly and truly applied to a thing which subsists in itself, to a subsisting substance.³¹

²⁷ ...quod ens sive id quod est sit in quantum participat actum essendi. (*Super Boeth., de Hebdom., V*)

²⁸ Nam cum ens dicat aliquid proprie esse in actu; actus autem proprie ordinem habeat ad potentiam; secundum hoc simpliciter aliquid dicitur ens, secundum quod primo discernitur ab eo quod est in potentia tantum. Hoc autem est esse substantiale rei uniuscuiusque; (*Sum. Theol. I, q. 5, a. 1, ad 1*)

²⁹ ...quod hoc verbum est significat compositionem, quia non principaliter eam significat, sed ex consequenti: significat enim id quod primo cadit in intellectu per modum actualitatis absolute; nam est simpliciter dictum significat esse actu, et ideo significat per modum verbi. (*Super Perì herm., 1, 5*)

³⁰ Alio modo esse dicitur actus entis in quantum est ens, id est quo denominatur aliquid ens actu in rerum natura; (*Quodl., 9, q. 2, a. 2*)

³¹ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 29-34.

We have come to understand a sense of the world as real. Yet, this global sense of being is still not the metaphysical understanding of *being as being*. This generalized notion is what Wippel calls the primitive or premetaphysical notion of being. This is a generalized sense of 8what is.9 We have a sense of 8being9 but not of being as such or *being as being*.³²

3. Discovery of Being as Being

What establishes the science of *being as being*, is another judgement⁴one that is different from the judgements of existence and attribution that gives us the reality of things. This new judgement is specifically a negative judgement, what Thomas Aquinas calls a judgement of separation (*separatio*). In what we have described till now, we encounter being as material and mobile, i.e., reality as we experience and conceive it so far, involves matter and motion. If we stop to analyse it further, we would be involved in physics as the highest and most comprehensive science, and its principles and causes would be the highest we could seek. But if we reflect and study further, we come to see that being need not be constricted to matter and motion. In our experience and out of the physics that we have developed and used such notions as substance, actuality and potentiality, identity and difference, and even being and truth. We could not have had a physics or any thoughtful experience without the involvement of these forms. We realise that although these dimensions of things occur in the material and mobile being we experience, they could also occur outside of matter and motion. They could occur in what Wippel calls negative or neutral immateriality. Thus, they could be found in things that are separate from matter and motion. We express this in the judgement of separation⁴ in which we assert that being and all that belongs to it as such need not be material and mobile. Thus, being could also encompass immaterial things, and it cannot be limited to any particular kind of being. In this way we attain *being as being*, which Thomas Aquinas calls *ens commune* or being in general. This is the subject of metaphysics, and we are set to determine its principles and causes.³³

³² Sokolowski, <The Science of Being as Being in Aristotle, Aquinas, and Wippel,= 17.

³³ Sokolowski, <The Science of Being as Being in Aristotle, Aquinas, and Wippel,= 19-20.

3.1 Abstraction and Separation

If one concedes that metaphysics is indeed the science of *being as being* and that its subject is being in general rather than this or that particular kind of being, then one can understand why Thomas Aquinas links *separatio* with Metaphysics and contrasts it with abstractions characteristic of other theoretical sciences. This is why his distinction between abstraction in the strict sense and *separatio* in q. 5, a.3 of the Commentary on *De trinitate* is so important when it comes to grounding Metaphysics or to one's discovery of a metaphysical understanding of being. It is by appealing to this negative judgement that one frees one's understanding of being from the restrictions involved in a merely primitive notion of being. In the final version, he clearly distinguishes between *separatio* and abstraction and reserves the name *separatio* for the intellect's second operation. It is this that he regards as proper to Metaphysics.³⁴

The importance of *separatio* for Thomas Aquinas becomes evident if one were to reject this distinction; the result would be the reduction of the notion of being to a more refined kind of abstraction. Thus, one might first abstract from the individuating differences between material and changing things, thereby ending with a general or universal concept that still includes reference to sensible matter, e.g., man, horse or animal. The difficulty with such a procedure is that being then becomes another abstracted notion. As such it can hardly serve as the subject which is so universal and transcendental that it not only applies to that which is insofar as it is, but even to the individual differences between things. Wippel questions, if one abstracts from individual differences, from sensible matter and from quantity in arriving at one's notion of being, how can one apply such an abstracted notion? Perhaps by adding something to the notion of being that does not fall under the same. But that could only be nonbeing. Such an abstract notion of being might be univocal, but not truly analogical and not sufficiently transcendental to serve as the subject of a science of *being as being*. Hence, we have Thomas Aquinas's earlier suggestion that the mind's second operation is ordered to a thing's *esse*. We cannot rely solely on the mind's first operation to grasp the real, or as existing. Were one to attain the notion of being through judgement, one would presumably abstract from existence as well as from individual differences, from common sensible matter, and from quantity. Hence,

³⁴ Wippel, <Metaphysics and Separatio in Thomas Aquinas, = 79-80.

Thomas Aquinas's second appeal to the negative judgement, *separatio* makes sense. As he himself has shown, in certain cases of abstraction, one can mentally distinguish things that are not distinguished in reality. By appealing to negative judgement, to *separatio*, one asserts that that by reason of which something is recognized as being is not to be identified with that by reason of which it is material or quantified or of a restricted kind.⁹ In short, one asserts that being, in order to be such, need not be material, nor changing, nor quantified, etc. Therefore, one asserts the legitimacy of investigating *being as being* rather than as changing or as quantified.³⁵

The terminological difference between *abstractio* and *separatio* is not so important. But the difference between that which is signified by the term *abstraction* the intellect's first operation, and that which is signified by *separation* the intellect's second or judging operation, is indeed crucial. Later on, in his career Thomas Aquinas does not always rigorously preserve this distinction in terminology between abstraction and *separatio* but uses abstraction more generally so as to apply to both ways of distinguishing, this does not imply any change in doctrine. In these later texts, he still distinguishes clearly between one operation (simple apprehension) and the other (judgement), and still connects the latter with Metaphysics.³⁶

4. Conclusion

Thomas Aquinas is of the opinion that *being* is that which is fundamental in reality because it envelopes everything. John Wippel, believes that the metaphysical endeavour of the thought of Thomas Aquinas is a unique exercise in the discovery of being as real or as existing. Here, in this metaphysical enterprise of the discovery of being as being, Wippel believes that Thomas Aquinas states that if it is through the intellect's first operation, i.e., simple apprehension, that we discover quiddities i.e., the essential nature of something or an understanding of what things are, it is only through the second operation that we discover being as existing or having *esse*. Thomas Aquinas calls this second operation Judgement where the intellect composes or divides.⁹ He, further, singles out a special type or kind of judgement, i.e., a negative judgement which he refers to as

³⁵ Wippel, <Metaphysics and Separatio in Thomas Aquinas,= 80-81.

³⁶ Wippel, <Metaphysics and Separatio in Thomas Aquinas,= 81-82.

separatio, which he closely connects with Metaphysics and the discovery of *being as being*. Reality as we experience and conceive consists of matter and motion. Yet, being need not be constricted to matter and motion. Although the dimensions of things occur in the material and mobile being we experience, they can also occur outside of matter and motion. They can occur in, what Wippel states, the negative or in neutral immateriality. Thus, they can be found in things that are separate from matter and motion. Thus, we can think about things simply as being and not as something limited to a particular kind of being. Therefore, they can encompass immaterial things as well. In this way, we can discover or attain *being as being*, which Thomas Aquinas calls *ens commune* or being in general.

ABSTRACT

John Wippel, a Thomistic interpreter of the Gilsonian version of Existential Thomism states that the metaphysical thought of Thomas Aquinas has been a singular effort of the discovery of being as real or as existing which in turn makes it easier for us to understand being as being or *ens commune*. This task is processed through the intellect's two operations, viz., its first operation, i.e., simple apprehension wherein we come to the knowledge of the essential nature of something or of what things are and its second operation called judgement. Further, it is only through a special kind of judgement known as *separatio* that we come to discover being as being or *ens commune* or being in general as Thomas Aquinas calls it.