

# Critique of the Transcendental Metaphysics of Knowing: Phenomenology and Neo-scholastic Transcendental Philosophy

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## Introduction

Two questions are still determinative for the discussion of scholastic philosophy's self-understanding at present. Is a transcendental-philosophical justification of knowledge possible, or does it not rather stand in contradiction to the accepted thesis that we possess in our intellect the ability to make the being and essence of things visible and thus to grasp them?

The second question concerns the "ontological difference" between being (*Sein*) and the existent (*Seiendem*). Is it necessary to posit a real distinction, of whatever description, between *esse commune* and the individual existents in which it unfolds, or does the case of '*Sein and Seiendem*' concern a merely conceptual distinction?

The neo-scholastic transcendental philosophy which has developed since Maréchal, and which has been championed by (among others) Karl Rahner, Walter Brugger, Emerich Coreth, Johannes B. Lotz, and Otto Muck, shows that the answers to these two questions are tightly connected together. For the theory of pre-apprehension (*Vorgriff*) upon being in its entirety and of *a priori* foreknowing of being, which is supposed to make the knowledge of things and their necessary states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*) possible, presupposes the thesis of a difference between being and existent such that being juts out beyond the individual existents already *a parte rei* and thereupon also extends beyond them for purposes

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of knowledge. On this ground alone, the Scotist-Suarezian tradition has generally been reserved towards transcendental philosophy. For this tradition sees in the thesis that *esse commune* has a reality of its own distinct from individual existents an inadmissible reification which turns an abstraction *cum fundamento in re* into a principle of being in its own right. Indeed, even in Thomas Aquinas, alongside the passages which speak for the reality of being as the first effect of creation, one finds numerous other passages which have to be understood in the Suarezian sense — so much so that the intensely cultivated neo-scholastic ontology of the last few decades seems to have been inspired far more by Heidegger than by Thomas.

It is no accident that, despite the widespread abandonment of the study of scholastic philosophy and its sources (an abandonment which makes it virtually impossible to speak of a "neo-scholastic movement" at all any more), the discussion of these two questions has been pursued with undiminished intensity, especially for purposes of post-conciliar theology. For the way in which one answers them is of the highest importance for the way one evaluates the spiritual and philosophical history of modern times. If Maréchal is right, and the transcendental deduction of knowing can be combined with epistemological realism (indeed, gives the latter for the first time its ultimate grounding), then Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was not the catastrophe which led inevitably to the surrender of metaphysics, as scholastic philosophers and Catholic theology up until Maréchal had always supposed. Furthermore, it will follow that Fichte's doctrine of knowledge as a positing need not have assumed unqualifiedly that subjectivist-idealist cast which Fichte himself gave it. Then, too, it will follow that the positivism and pragmatism which disfigure present-day philosophy are not the last, ineluctable consequence of Kant's agnosticism. Rather, this agnosticism emerges as a factory mishap due to the fact that Kant failed to carry his transcendental deduction through to its last metaphysical rivet. Thereupon, the spiritual history of modernity is not precipitous decline from the unrivalled heights of Western speculation but progress, in fact, the crucial expansion of the doctrine on the connection of knowing and being which had first been suspected by the major scholastics and given preliminary, incomplete formulation by them. On the other hand, it will follow that the development from John Duns Scotus to Francis Suarez was no progress at all but the corruption of an original reflection on the reality of being — the corruption brought about precisely by the drive to conceptualize being, as Gilson and especially Siewerth have maintained.<sup>1</sup>

### I. Reflection on the Act of Knowing

In our book, *Kritik der transzendentalphilosophischen Erkenntnistheorie*,<sup>2</sup>

we have taken a position on the controversy over whether transcendental philosophy and critical realism can be combined. What we seek to do here, inspired not only by contemporary phenomenology but also by the phenomenological method of philosophizing, as it appears already with rare clarity and consistency in the work of Duns Scotus, is to let knowledge speak for itself, *prior* to all theory and speculation over its possibility: to go along with it and delve into its actual happening, so as to apprehend knowledge exactly as it discloses itself from itself.

At this point a few brief historical references will be allowable and even helpful to the matter at hand. Alongside its rejection of the ontological difference, Scotist-Suarezian philosophy's possession of this phenomenological character is the chief reason why it is more inhospitable than Thomism to the transcendental tendency. Six hundred years before Alexander Pfänder and Edmund Husserl, Duns Scotus was already availing himself of the phenomenological method in a thorough-going and consistent way. We have marshalled elsewhere the evidence that exactly his decisive, personal doctrines were grounded in that typically phenomenological way of thinking which applies itself first of all to the things, prior to all theory about their inner possibility, in order to let the '*Sache Selbst*' (thing itself) which is in question speak for itself — to receive it intuitively and thus "experience" it.<sup>3</sup> In all fields, Duns Scotus' methodic work always aims at getting down to those ultimate essences which, in their utter simplicity, can only be taken in, and whose 'such-being' can be no more defined and explicitated than the difference between "red" and "green." Analogously, what is meant by the word "being" can only be "experienced" in an act of simple reception, which sinks into the content, "being." This content, "being," which in its simplicity can only be taken in, is then actualized utterly and completely in all the existents. In this way, Scotus arrives at his doctrine of the *univocatio entis*, which lies behind the *analogia entis* and in no way excludes it.

In a quite similar way, Scotus arrives also at his deeply thought-out doctrine of the simple, pure perfections. Because the simple intuition of these perfections is the prerequisite for their analogical application to creatures and to God, this intuition is a decisive instrument for metaphysics and becomes, indeed, the supporting skeleton of his ontology. Even his doctrine of free will is an expression of his deep and exact phenomenological description of how a free volition is carried out. In freedom, the will discovers its *dominium* over its own act — a discovery we all make if we ponder over what we ought to do. Just so, in the act of love, we discover that freedom and necessity of volition in no way exclude each other.

Needless to say, we must be careful of the ambiguity of the notion of "intuition," if we are going to call Duns Scotus a phenomenologist! For human beings *in statu viae*, intuitive knowledge is restricted to existing things as such, hence to the concrete world encountered through the senses. So Scotus explicitly teaches.<sup>5</sup> But quite apart from this restriction, he has recognized clearly the meaning of that receptive, entirely simple act of insight which discovers the simple such-being of the given "thing itself." And accordingly, he uses this simple taking-in as the royal road of his whole philosophy. The intuition with which I see an existing house, and the act with which I sink into the simple content of being, which, as a *conceptus simpliciter simplex* cannot be further resolved — these two acts correspond exactly in formal structure, as simple "taking in" of something. With this allowance, one can speak very well of an intuition of being as such in Duns Scotus, even though he himself would not have used this language for the reasons mentioned above. And with the same allowance, one can say that for Duns Scotus knowledge, by its essence, either is intuition (*Anschauung*) or goes back to intuition, and that on the basis of this understanding of knowledge, he quite correctly avails himself of the phenomenological intuition. He keeps going back to this: "quia hoc est hoc et illud est illud,"<sup>6</sup> and in the same way he arrives at the *distinctio formalis* as well. On the authority of the *thing* and not the terminology, he holds fast to the truth that all knowledge is intuition or grounded in intuition — holds to it more strictly than any other scholastic thinker of the high Middle Ages. To undertake a critique of knowledge in Duns Scotus' sense, therefore, will be to do something completely different from asking about the transcendental justification of knowledge. Quite the contrary, it will be to ask about the self-evidentness which underlies and guides all knowledge.

A person has to experience first, without prejudice, a given "thing itself" and delve into its such-being in an act of pure reception, before there can be any question of explaining it and looking for the conditions of its possibility. This is elementary good sense — which is nowhere so often insulted, however, as in philosophical epistemology. Nowhere else does theory so completely distort and cover up the original phenomenon. The best example of this, it seems to us, is Kant's peculiar attempt to interpret knowing after the fashion of some sort of production-process, in which an originally non-descript material is turned into an organized, surveyable edifice. The reason for such over-hasty substitution of theory for phenomenology, and of derivative explanantion for adherence to the phenomenon itself, is the difficulty of grasping the knowledge-event. In the entire visible world with which we are familiar, we have not a single model which we could draw upon to explain how knowledge is possible.

Our faculty-of-knowing is not a box that things somehow get into, and Husserl already demonstrated that the curious copy-theory, which evokes associations related to photography, only postpones the problem. After all, we do not use pictures when we look at an object; rather, the object is given to us as "it itself" in immediate seeing. As indicated, Kant's transcendental apparatus of categories, which overhauls the "raw material" of sensations, is just one more in the series of feeble attempts to make the phenomenon of knowledge, which cannot be understood pictorially, nevertheless understandable through the aid of a picture. How could we possibly adduce an analogy by which to make comprehensible the tremendous thing which happens in every act of simply perceiving something: I am here and the thing is there, and yet this thing itself is given to me — no mere picture of it — immediately and without any duplication.

The reason, then, for this impossibility of describing the knowledge-event lies in its immateriality, which rules out any immediate observation of the "how" of its occurring as well as any explanation based on well-known models drawn from the visible world. But prescinding entirely from that fact, there is still another reason why I cannot treat the act of knowing the way a geologist, let us say, would treat a fossil, namely, for the reason that it is an *intentional* act, which is turned away from itself and towards the object. Perception and insight (*Anschauung und Einsicht*), as the cognitive acts which all concepts and all discourse rest upon and lead back to, are exhausted without residue in presenting the object in question. They vanish in the "real presence" of that which they display, so that phenomenologically speaking (that is, as regards their self-givenness) they "are" nothing other than the intuitively evident presence of the thing itself. It does not follow from this that a phenomenological contemplation of the act of knowing is impossible, only that such a contemplation, like any knowing, must assimilate to its object in order to experience it properly. Reflection upon the act of knowing is possible only as a co-performance (*Mitvollzug*) of it — a co-performance, that is, in which I consciously pay attention to what I am doing. Such reflection is not possible in the stance of the indifferent observer who puts himself above the knowing, withdraws himself from it, from its motivation and from its themes, so as to regard it from a bird's-eye view, so to speak, in the pose of a neutral, indifferent spectator. For this reason we have repeatedly introduced very severe strictures against Husserl's concept of reflection, which proposes to grasp the sense and validity of the judgments and attitudes of the underlying consciousness precisely by no longer co-performing them but just by watching how the consciousness arrives at them.<sup>7</sup> Not through abstention but only through the complicity of engagement can I adequately grasp what knowing itself means.

Thus, only if I look *with* my knowing in the direction of the contemplated object can I properly experience the essence of knowing, which is precisely to be the real presence of the thing seen or of the state of affairs grasped through insight. Only if I let myself, *with* my knowing, be surprised by this object can I experience the knowing itself as discovery and as a breaking-through from the immanence of the subject into reality. Only in this self-experience of knowing (which is the one and only solid foundation for any epistemology) does it become obvious that knowledge is not a constructional positing of the object but its reception — a truth which was accepted as self-evident prior to the rise of rationalism, empiricism, and transcendental philosophy. (This latter, of course, came about as a necessary consequence of empiricism's assumption that nothing but sense-data are given to the knowing subject *ex parte rei*.) What we have just been saying should not diminish the importance of the discursive and combinatory activity of thought which speeds back and forth between the bases of relations; it is just that this thought, by always seeking new relations, is always in service to the insight which suddenly and finally flashes up and which is exactly knowledge itself.

Therefore, Husserl seems entirely correct to us when he says that any knowledge worthy of the name is seeing or insight, or else goes back to this. In insight alone do we find that presence of the thing in which all striving for knowledge and its meaning rests complete. The sharp distinction which Husserl draws between intuitively fulfilled knowledge on the one hand, and meaning (*Meinung*) on the other, is thoroughly justified on this view of knowledge, which in any case is not derived from some definite theory on which people might hold different opinions but simply sketches out what we factually experience in each particular perception and insight. On the side of mere meaning belong all intending and "thinking about" (*Nach-denken*) the thing, which is not *yet* present to thought in its very self. Of course, phenomenology is also aware that the "thing itself" is not so simply and immediately *there* as it presents itself to our vision (*Anschauung*), but that this presence is a result of the mode and manner of seeing and grasping the thing — a product of spontaneous thought, which stakes out the horizon within which the thing appears as thus and not otherwise. Hegel would speak here of mediated immediacy. But precisely if conception and anticipatory thought about the thing do have the above-mentioned object-constituting power, which then conditions even the reception of that object, these acts must themselves go back to original experiences of the "thing itself" and hence to pure receptions and insights. Otherwise these acts themselves would not be knowledge. What could possibly set the *a priori* conception of the object in motion except, again, insight! Hence the critical task does not consist simply in examining that which insight takes in as a supposedly immediate datum

and exposing it as being, in fact, the product of a mediating activity of thought. No, one must dig down a layer deeper and get at the question of what original insights form the basis for this formative thought which mediates the objects of insight. For this reason, Theodor W. Adorno's critique, which he launches in his *Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie* against the supposedly uncritical intuitionism which passes the mediated off as immediate, does not really affect Husserl or phenomenology.<sup>8</sup>

## II. Transcendental Justification of the Self-evident

The neo-scholastic transcendental philosophy does not in fact contest the point that knowledge is insight, reception and discovery of the object, but maintains that this knowledge still needs a transcendental constitution, which makes it possible. Following Kant, this need is highlighted above all in the case of knowledge of necessary states of affairs, which allegedly cannot be explained without an *a priori* pre-apprehension of being.

The fact is that this problem solves itself through the phenomenological experience of the act of insight in which necessary states of affairs become evident in their necessity. This experience shows at once, and quite simply, that the knowledge of necessary states of affairs, too, is a *seeing of the thing* and nothing else. Consequently we must admit that necessity stands on the side of the thing seen. I encounter it as something standing over against me, the knowing subject, and I discover it just as I find a tree before me over here and a bench over there. Physical seeing and insight-into-an-essence agree completely in this: both are a seeing and hence a discovery of their given object. Despite the specific difference between the two acts, which is based on a difference of cognitive faculties, insight-into-an-essence discovers the necessity of the state of affairs before it, exactly as physical seeing discovers that the bench is green and not blue. This comparison is not intended in any way to dispute the obvious fact that consciousness of a blunt fact is very different from consciousness of an evident state of affairs. But this difference is wholly and completely caused by the difference of the respective objects and not by the subject. The inner coordination between the act of perception and *its* object, on the one hand and the act of insight and *its* object, on the other, simply means that no one act can disclose and make evident all possible objects; and that point does not alter the fact that contingency and necessity are discovered as moments of the object — moments which the subject encounters. Therefore this inner coordination is something quite different from the spontaneousthetic actuation on the part of the subject which would ground the knowledge of necessity, and which the transcendental philosophers have in mind.

It follows from this that I assent to an evident state of affairs solely because it stands visibly before me and bears witness to its own necessity — because I see that the P(redicate), by its nature, is contained necessarily in the S(subject) or at least is bound up with it. It is not the case that the knower posits the necessity of the state of affairs in and with his assent; rather, the state of affairs itself, in its necessity, bears witness for itself. I see that it cannot be otherwise, and hence this seeing is already identical with the assent — and this remains the case whether I repeat the thing seen in some sort of inner judgment or not. This is exactly what we mean when we speak of intuitivity or self-evidence! Knowledge is certain and justified in the very measure in which it is free from subjective ornamentation and rests exclusively upon this “objective” evidentness of the state of affairs itself, which, in its intuitive necessity, can only be “taken in.” Hence follows the basic point of our critique of neoscholastic transcendentalism. If the act of insight *encounters* the necessity of the state of affairs and *discovers* it, then it is not only superfluous but absurd to look within the subject for a transcendental justification-*cum*-grounding for the act of assent. There are two interpretations here. One interpretation of the assent makes it arise already *in* the perception of the necessary state of affairs, indeed coincide with that perception; the other interpretation makes it a positing of the necessity. Now: *if* one really takes seriously the meaning of evidentness as revealed through its phenomenological co-performance (*Mitvollzug*), then one sees that between these two interpretations there is an insurmountable contradiction, with no middle ground possible.

For this reason our critique is not directed so much against Kant and the (even more radical) neo-Kantian distortion of knowing into positing, which is at least consistent given that these philosophers no longer have the phenomenon of intuitivity anywhere in sight, nor its importance for the grounding and progress of our knowing. Rather, the inconsistency of the neoscholastic transcendental philosophers seems much more obvious. For they acknowledge evidentness throughout as the “just title” for our knowing and nevertheless want to derive its very justification from transcendental positing. Muck, who has given us the most comprehensive presentation of neo-scholastic transcendentalism, emphasizes very clearly that exactly this *via media* was the program of Maréchal:

The positing character of cognition in no way excludes, in Maréchal, its receptive and perceptive character but rather presupposes and explains it. Maréchal's interpretation differs from other epistemologies in that he does not justify this cognition's claim to grasp real being through a mere appeal to the evident but derives the force of evidentness itself from the conditions for the possibility of the cognitional

performance.<sup>9</sup>

In the same vein, Coreth stresses that the “mediating thought-performance” of transcendental deduction does not repeal the immediately evident but unveils it as necessary *a priori* from its ground up and fathoms out its constitution.<sup>10</sup>

As was said above, these attempts at a transcendental justification seem to us to bypass completely the phenomenon of evidentness as the self-giveness of the necessary state of affairs.

### III. The Explanatory Value of Phenomenological Description

Recently Peter Eicker and Klaus P. Fischer have taken issue with this critique of neo-scholastic transcendentalism.<sup>11</sup> Their wide-ranging discussions, devoted to the philosophical and theological anthropology of Karl Rahner, take up many more problems, of course, than are posed here. But both authors articulate especially sharply an argument which had also been fielded previously against our critique. It runs as follows. Let the whole phenomenological analysis of knowing as a seeing of the “thing itself” be declared sound: the mistake still lies in our failure to move beyond this phenomenological description, with the result that we overlook the fact that transcendental philosophy is not asking about the phenomenon of receptivity but “above and beyond that is asking about the conditions for the possibility of a conscious (and not merely physical) receptivity.”<sup>12</sup> Hence our critique would fall short of its mark because the description of knowledge as reception moves on a different plane from the deeper-going question of its ontological-transcendental presuppositions. “The ‘self-actuation’ of which Rahner speaks remains untouched by this phenomenological attack, to the effect that knowing shows itself to be immediate reception and not positing, because Rahner's position portrays the ontological footing of consciousness, not its phenomenal execution.”<sup>13</sup> Hence the argument takes its point of departure from the fact that our critique “juxtaposes the theory of positing with the phenomenon of reception in knowledge, with nothing in between.”<sup>14</sup> But this reply overlooks the fact that we hold an expansion of phenomenological description by any sort of transcendental deduction and justification to be absurd. If the objective state of affairs standing visibly before me declares of itself that the reason for whatever kind of necessity it has lies entirely in its own nature and is constituted thereby — that is, by the disposition of S and P, which stand to each other in the relation of necessary connection — then it is senseless and utterly mistaken to look for a constitutive reason for the knowledge of this necessity all over again in the knowing subject. Otherwise, the consciousness of intuitive necessity will be explained twice over and in completely different ways: once “from the front,” so to speak, from

the object and its perspicuity, and once "from the back," from the subject and his transcendental mechanism. And we fail to see how such a double explanation can escape the following alternative. Either the whole thing simply and obviously runs afoul of the principle, "*Entitates non multiplicandae praeter necessitatem*," because the phenomenon here precludes any further derivation. Or else one thinks the perspicuity of the state of affairs does not suffice to make one affirm it, whereupon one is moving towards a dangerous relativization of that very quidditative necessity which makes itself felt absolutely by itself. And in fact this relativization seems to us to be the ultimate consequence of a transcendental-philosophical derivation of necessary affirmation.

#### IV. Transcendental Theory of Judgment

That this fear is not groundless is shown by Klaus P. Fischer's rejoinder to our charge that a "mystification of the copula" is going on in neo-scholastic transcendentalism.<sup>15</sup>

Since Maréchal and his school take the judgment to be a positing, they cannot be satisfied that the "is" which connects S and P simply expresses the being of the state of affairs. Rather, according to Maréchal, the copula refers to the total wholeness of being, which is co-affirmed in the judgment, since otherwise the unconditional character which attaches to every judgment<sup>16</sup> would be inexplicable.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in K. Rahner the pre-apprehension (Vorgriff) of being serves as condition for the possibility of judgment.<sup>18</sup> Brugger also bases the unconditional force of the judgment upon the "transcendence of being," that is, upon the relation which the judgment's content has to being-in-general. The knowing subject supposedly has to view his objects under the light of this transcendence in order to reach an intuition of the judgment's unconditional validity.<sup>19</sup>

Anton Pechhacker has already analyzed critically this unwarranted problematization of the copula, indeed of judgment as a whole.<sup>20</sup> For our part, we have rejected it with the argument that the reason why I say "is" in judging lies wholly in the state of affairs itself, that is, in the nature and peculiarity of the data upon which I pass judgment. That man is necessarily mortal rests entirely on his composite, dissoluble nature. In no way is a recourse to something like "being in general" (*das Sein überhaupt*) required in order to acknowledge this necessity, as though being alone had necessity, and this particular state of affairs merely got some necessity through some sort of borrowing and participation in being. Furthermore, it seems woefully unclear just which "being in general" is supposed to be the term of this preapprehension. Is it the *ens a se* or the *esse commune*? Or is it not really the case that the descriptions actually given of the "being" which pre-apprehension attains vascillate between *esse absolutum* and the *Sein des*

*Seienden*, which latter, taken in the sense given it by a certain metaphysic of participation which appeals to Thomas, is supposed to mediate between God and creatures?

Klaus P. Fischer is surprised that in our critique we "indeed see the distinction made by Maréchal, Siewerth, Lotz and Rahner, between *esse commune* and *esse absolutum*" but still do not allow ourselves to be persuaded thereby to abandon our rejection of the transcendental metaphysic of knowledge.<sup>21</sup> But there is no reason for this surprise, since the question of how a pre-apprehension of being can ground our knowing the necessity of a particular state of affairs becomes all the more difficult if the being thus preapprehended is *esse commune*, which, precisely as a created effect, is not necessary. At this point Fischer refers to Siewerth and suggests that perhaps this being could be taken as a likeness to God.<sup>22</sup> In that case, the pre-apprehension of "*das Sein*" which constitutes the judgment would first have to go to being-in-general and then grasp this latter as a likeness to God — and do it all *implicite* or in the form of co-consciousness, totally unbeknownst to me as I factually execute my judgment. It is incomprehensible how my knowledge of the essentially necessary state of affairs which stands before me in apodictic clarity can be based on such an unexpressed, implicit co-consciousness, of which, as we say in plain English, we have no inkling. But quite apart from this problem, the proposal to derive necessary knowledge of the state of affairs from a necessity of being-in-general makes sense only if one assumes that the state of affairs is not necessary of itself, or not completely so. But the fact is, that the necessity encountered in essential states of affairs is so grounded in the essence itself, that it even exists quite independently of whether or not that essence is given in the real. That man is mortal would hold true even if there were no men. But if the state of affairs is necessary in and of itself, there is no reason why the judgment which acknowledges that necessity should have to rest on anything other than the state of affairs itself — whether this other thing be being-in-general or even the plenitude of *ipsum esse subsistens*.

But worst of all, the transcendental derivation overlooks the fact that the necessity of particular states of affairs, because it rests exclusively upon the particular *relata*, is different in each case. The reason why man is mortal is different from the reason why the whole is more than the sum of its parts, or why the sum of the angles in a Euclidian triangle is equal to two right angles. The thing itself grounds its particular relation to its predicate and grounds the particular necessity of this relation — which is what is at stake in the judgment. Therefore, it is impossible to derive these distinct necessities, each in its own specific meaning, from one and the same ontologico-metaphysical necessity of being, which means some-

thing completely different. The insight which I articulate in a judgment *means* just that state of affairs which that insight grasps as necessary, and nothing else. It means just that and nothing else precisely because it holds good absolutely and by itself. Thus a second reason why transcendental deduction is excluded is the specific character of the evident necessity itself, which is different in each case. Hence Fischer is perfectly correct when he remarks: "as an epistemologist who proceeds in a purely phenomenological way, Hoeres of course can only see each instance of necessity and absoluteness as grounded exclusively in the state of affairs, that is, in the known-content (rather than the knowing-performance)." <sup>23</sup> And we, for our part, cannot see any rebuke in that remark, since the phenomenological analysis of the judgment's intention already precisely excludes the possibility that something else might be co-intended therein. Even Fischer will have to agree with us in this: before one goes on to explain something, one must first look at this "something" exactly as it itself displays itself, regardless of whether one calls this self-evidentness "phenomenological method" or not. And our thesis is simply that this very looking at the thing in question (namely, insight) already indicates that insight is self-grounding, so that a transcendental justification merely masks its self-groundingness. If for Fischer it "remains baffling how Hoeres can misunderstand the *a priori* moment of the affirmation of absolute being in every act of knowing, simply by going off on the idea that, according to Maréchal-Rahner, the 'pre-apprehension' of the absolute Being of God projects God's own necessity into the things-to-be-known themselves," <sup>24</sup> then I need only answer: either the necessity of the state of affairs which is known as necessary suffices by itself to make one affirm it as necessary, or else it does not. There is no middle ground!

## V. Ontology of Knowledge and Transcendental Philosophy

Still, it must be admitted that there is something deeper to Eicher's and Fischer's doubts about a purely phenomenological epistemology, and that these doubts, in their ultimate intention, are not fully cleared up by the appeal to the phenomenon of insight. Phenomenology merely shows us that there is such a thing as insight; it tells us nothing about how it is at all possible for me to see a necessary state of affairs before me. The possibility we are asking about has nothing to do with transcendental possibility-conditions but quite simply with the ability to know and the mode and manner in which this occurs. How is it possible for a particular living thing — the human spirit — to step so completely outside of the charmed circle of his own immanence that the other itself can be present to him in that in-itself-ness (*Ansichsein*) which is quite independent of him as knowing subject? How is that breakthrough which stamps knowing's

essence as discovery, the breakthrough to the things themselves, possible? How explain that openness for the other which Aristotle had already indicated with his profound image of the "*tabula rasa*"?

We conceded at the beginning that we cannot answer this question, because we possess "*saltem in hac vita*" no immediate vision of our spirit and its living processes. This difficulty is rooted in the nature of the case, hence is insurmountable, and certainly is not solved by postulating the *a priori* proto-knowledge of being as a whole, according to which this being is always illuminated within the human spirit *prior* to all actual cognitions of individual things. This contrivance rather evades the crux of the problem (*i.e.* the problem of how knowing can be possible as discovery, as a seeing-before-oneself what stands over against oneself), because at the most decisive point it writes off discovery as superfluous. It explains that the object is always already present to the knowing subject and in fact is identical with him. The riddle of knowledge is ostensibly dispelled by saying that knowledge of being is always in hand already, because that knowledge belongs from the outset to the endowments of the spirit. But the fact is, that by this move one problem is merely replaced by another: in what conceivable way "being" can be already present at all times in the spirit, and how the *a priori* being which is thus given unconsciously or merely implicitly, at any rate not clearly in itself nor distinctly, can make possible the givenness of things and their necessary states of affairs, which givenness is clear and distinct!

The thesis of being's *a priori* presence in the knowing spirit relies, of course, on the assumption that being, according to its own inner sense and essence, always and already connotes being-with-itself (*Beisichsein*). On this assumption, the power of knowing in general and of spiritual knowing in particular is not something that dropped out of heaven, nor is it something that merely happened, so to speak, to beast and man. Rather, the existent as such is always already ordained to be with itself and for itself. Thus whenever, inside the overall framework of the *analogia entis*, a higher level of being is reached, a more perfect realization of this being-with-itself is necessarily reached also, until, in man, the existent opens its eyes, so to speak, and comes to explicit consciousness of itself and of what being itself is. But this interpretation of the ontological place the value of our knowing holds, which neo-scholastic transcendentalism advances again and again as an argument for the *a priori* proto-knowledge of being, dare not overlook its own point of departure: the doctrine of the *analogia entis*. Thomas Aquinas, already, never tired of pointing to these different levels of being on which knowledge is realized — in men, in the pure spirits, in God. According to this scheme, the human intellect is appointed to *receive* the things with which it deals. The light of the *intellec-*

*tus agens* is not an already *a priori* possession of the being and essence of things but makes them visible. Thus, between the *Beisichsein* of God, and that of the angel (which knows by means of species infused at its creation), and that of the human spirit, there stands each time a distinction of essence. And by its essence, the human intellect faces the intelligible contents with which it operates as an initially empty, blank page, so that its act of knowing is always an act of new discovery. Not for nothing did the great scholastics compare *intellectus possibilis*, in this regard, to *materia prima*.

The being-with-itself of being also realizes itself, for the rest, in every act of discovering being over against itself, in which what being-in-general means becomes visible each time in the concrete object. And it realizes itself in every act of *reditio*, in which I turn back from the handling of things to reflection upon myself, the knowing subject. This knowing subject (which I myself am) meets me in reflection, but not in the form of a hazy *a priori* acquaintance or proto-knowledge; rather, in this case, I make this knowing subject's mode of being and rank of being explicitly objects of knowledge and seek — once again! — to discover them.<sup>25</sup>

## Footnotes

1. Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952). Gustav Siewerth, *Das Schicksal der Metaphysik von Thomas zu Heidegger* (Einsiedeln, 1959). See also Marius Schneider, "Der angebliche philosophische Essentialismus des Suarez," *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, 24 (1961), 40-68. Also: Walter Hoeres, "Wesen und Dasein bei Heinrich von Gent und Duns Scotus," *Franziskanische Studien*, 47 (1965), 121-186.

2. Stuttgart, 1969.

3. W. Hoeres, *Der Wille als reine Vollkommenheit nach Duns Scotus* (Munich, 1962). W. Hoeres, "Platonismus und Gegebenheit bei Duns Scotus," in *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti*, Acta Congressus Internationalis, Oxonii et Edimburgi 11-17 Sept. 1966 celebrati, vol. I (Rome, 1968), 139-168. (= *Studia Scholastico-Scotistica*, I).

4. See also the numerous studies of Timoteus Barth on the *univocatio entis*, especially: "Zur univocatio entis bei Johannes Duns Scotus," *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, 21 (1958), 95-108; "Das weltliche Sein und seine inneren Gründe bei Thomas von Aquin und Johannes Duns Scotus," *ibid.*, 170-187. See also my own works: "Francis Suarez and the Teaching of John Duns Scotus on univocatio entis," in *John Duns Scotus 1265-1965. Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, III (Washington, 1965), pp. 263-290; "Die analogia attributionis intrinsecae und ihre Erkenntnis," in *Gegenwart und Tradition, Festschrift für Bernhard Lakebrink* (Freiburg, 1969), pp. 75-95.

5. Cf. Sebastian Day, *Intuitive Cognition. A Key to the Significance of the Later Scholastics*. Franciscan Institute Publications, Philosophy Series, 4 (St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 1947).

6. *Quodl.* q. 16, n. 16.

7. *Sein und Reflexion*. Forschungen zur neueren Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte, XI (Würzburg, 1956), 37ff. Also: "Zur Dialektik der Reflexion bei Husserl," *Salzburger Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Psychologie*, 2 (1958), 211-230.

8. Theodor W. Adorno, *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie, Studien über Husserl und die phänomenologischen Antinomien* (Stuttgart, 1956). Albert Keller appealed explicitly to Adorno in his review of our *Kritik der transzendentalphilosophischen Erkenntnistheorie*, in which he attacked the fact that we had made all knowledge "worthy of the name" thoroughly equivalent to perception and insight: Albert Keller, "Neuere Veröffentlichungen aus dem Umkreis der neuscholastischen Philosophie," *Philosophische Rundschau*, 21 (1975), 100-102. Keller, too, overlooks the fact that all spontaneously mediating thought-activity which enters into the experience of the thing, just like all theory, has meaning and justification only insofar as it goes back to, unfolds, and continues insights in which the particular "thing itself" is given to me.

9. Otto Muck, *Die transzendente Methode in der scholastischen Philosophie der Gegenwart* (Innsbruck, 1964), 135.

10. Emerich Coreth, *Metaphysik*, 2nd ed. (Vienna and Munich, 1964), p. 92.

11. Peter Eicher, *Die anthropologische Wende, Karl Rahners philosophischer Weg vom Wesen des Menschen zur personalen Existenz*. DOKIMION, Neue Schriftenreihe zur Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie, I (Freiburg, Switzerland, 1970). Klaus P. Fischer, *Der Mensch als Geheimnis, Die Anthropologie Karl Rahners*. Oekumenische Forschungen, II. Soteriologische Abteilung, vol. V (Freiburg, 1973).
12. P. Eicher, p. 105.
13. *Ibidem*.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
15. W. Hoeres, *Kritik der transzendentalphilosophischen Erkenntnistheorie*, 108-112.
16. Of course, every judgment which bears upon facts which could also be otherwise, is at the same time an absolute pronouncement, since, thanks to the principle of contradiction, it excludes the possibility that its contradictory opposite can also be the case.
17. J. Maréchal, "Judgement scolastique concernant la racine de l'agnosticisme kantien," in *Melanges Maréchal I* (=Museum Lessianum, 31) (Brussels and Paris, 1950), 227.
18. Karl Rahner, *Geist in Welt* (Munich, 1957), p. 208.
19. Walter Brugger, "Kant und das Sein," *Scholastik*, 15 (1940), 378f. Cf. also J. B. Lotz, *Das Urteil und das Sein*, Pullacher Philosophische Forschungen, 2 (Pullach, 1957), p. 78.
20. Anton Pechhacker, "Das transzendente Verfahren als Methode der Metaphysik," *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, 26 (1963), 180-197; 27 (1964), 30-47. See also Pechhacker, *Der Logos des Seins* (Innsbruck, 1961), p. 117. Recently Pechhacker has taken a position on the question of a neo-scholastic transcendentalism in his study, "Scholastik — wohin? Bemerkungen zu einem augenblicklichen Denkfortgang," *Salzburger Jahrbuch für Philosophie*, 15/16 (1971/72), 303-355.
21. K. P. Fischer, *op. cit.*, 132.
22. *loc. cit.*
23. *Ibid.*, 121.
24. *Ibid.*, 124.
25. Editors' Note: In order to clarify further how Hoeres considers the discovering, receptive character an absolutely necessary trait of *any* knowledge, of the *metaphysical* essence of knowledge rather than of human knowledge only, or as a mere aspect of knowledge, open to phenomenological analysis, we wish to append a translation of the following passage from his book, *Kritik der transzendentalphilosophischen Erkenntnistheorie*, pp. 62-63. There it becomes clear that any form of 'Beisichsein' of the spirit or of self-knowledge implies the receptive, *not* positing nature of knowledge:

If we designate knowledge as receptive vision (*empfangende Schau*), we speak immediately of two different things, which nevertheless belong together inseparably. If 'vision' is the self-presence of the object, the way to it can only be a 'reception'

of this presence and hence of the "thing itself," i.e., a being-determined by the object. Not only the receiving (knowledge *in fieri*), however, but also the already established sight (knowledge *in esse*), have this same essential trait, namely, of being determined and signed by the object. This determination is given *eo ipso* in and with the object's being-perspicuous-in-itself or self-presentation. Hence, if I say that it *becomes* perspicuous by and from itself, I do not mean only that this is the case in the transition from not-knowing to knowing; rather, the object *becomes* continuously perspicuous to me by and from itself in the lasting actuation of the vision. In this enduring vision I experience continuously, from the thing itself, what it is — just as I did at the first instance.

This holds good for every seeing — even for that seeing which has no need to first come into being, then receive its object as something new, and thus discover it, but has already eternally possessed it. In other words, it holds good even for the vision in which God grasps His own essence, and in which, according to the classical philosophy of God, subject and object coincide totally. Even to such a seeing, the object (in this case, the divine Being) displays itself by and from itself and thus becomes evident to that seeing by and from itself. It is certainly not the purpose of these phenomenological investigations to enter into the theologian's and philosopher's speculative problem of how vision's essential receptive stance *vis-a-vis* the object can be possible in God without imperfection and potentiality. But the points we have made so far present no difficulties here, because the terms "receptivity" and "receiving" (*Empfangen*) do not connote movement from potency to act, which would be unthinkable in God, but only the logical relation of ground and consequence, which is also employed elsewhere in the philosophy and theology of God, for example, in Trinitarian doctrine. Because the object is perspicuous in itself — in this case eternally — it is seen in an equally eternal perfection of knowing, with the result that the seeing is still not the ground which makes possible the "transaction" but even here the perspicuity of the object remains the ground of the seeing. Thus even in a perfect vision, which is not initially brought into being, this relation must find instantiation in all clarity.