

MARCO FORLIVESI

*The Nature of Transcendental Being
and Its Contraction to Its Inferiors
in the Thought of Mastri and Belluto**

If all historians of philosophy were as perspicacious and clear as Lukáš Novák, our work would be more pleasant. It is for this very reason that I wish to discuss the interpretation that Novák gives of the thought of Mastri and Belluto concerning the nature of transcendental being and suggest both to him and to other readers a different hypothesis for interpretation, certain as I am that the replies I shall receive will contribute to increasing my knowledge.

1. *Mastri's doctrine concerning the nature of real being*

It seems to me that Mastri's doctrine concerning the nature of real being may be summarised in the following terms. Real transcendental being,¹ that is to say common to both God and

* A grateful thought for Carmel Ace and John P. Doyle.

1. In the terminology used by Mastri and Belluto, and by the Baroque schoolmen in general, the adjective that normally qualifies transcendentals with respect to predicamentals is "*transcendens*". However, the adverb "*transcendentaliter*" and the adjective "*transcendentalis*" also crop up in the sense of "relative to *gradus transcendentis*". See, for example: MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 10 *De enunciatione*, q. 2 *De veritate et falsitate*, [prologus], n. 5, Venetiis 1646, p. 764b; MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. <1> *proemialis in metaphysicam*, q. 2 *De adæquato metaphysicæ obiecto*, n. 41, 2 vol., Venetiis 1646-1647, vol. I, p. 30b; *Id.*, disp. 2 *De natura entis*, q. 2 *An conceptus entis sit unus, nedum respectu substantiæ, et accidentis, sed etiam Dei, et creaturæ*, n. 45, vol. I, p. 102a; *Id.*, q. 4 *An conceptus entis sit ex natura rei ante intellectum præcisus, et distinctus ab inferioribus*, a. 1 *Respectu substantiæ, et accidentis conceptus entis est ex natura rei actualiter præcisus, non tamen respectu Dei, et creaturæ*, n. 76, vol. I,

creatures and to substance and accidents,² is a unitary concept intended both as a formal and as an objective concept.³ As an objective concept, in the sense of a known object, on the one hand it is perfectly distinct from its inferiors, on the other it is in itself such that it may be contracted to them; on the contrary, its inferiors are not perfectly distinct from it. Furthermore, it is not included in the formal and quidditative concept either of its

p. 125a; *Id.*, disp. 6 *De passionibus entis complexis actu, et potentia, necessario, et contingenti, eodem, et diverso*, q. 7 *De eodem et diverso. Quid, et quotuplex sit identitas et distinctio*, a. 2 *De numero identitatum, et distinctionum*, n. 163, vol. I, p. 776a; *Id.*, disp. 8 *De entis finiti essentia, ac existentia*, q. 6 *Qualis, ac quanta distinctio versetur inter gradus metaphysicos eiusdem essentiae*, a. 2 *Gradus metaphysici prædicamentales non sola ratione distinguuntur, sed media inter realem, et rationis*, n. 196, vol. II, p. 164a.

2. That this is real transcendental being is stated in MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, [prologus], p. 65, and in some other places; however, such a definition is to be understood as a generic presentation of the object of the *disputatio de natura entis*. Mastri and Belluto first divide being into infinite and finite: only the latter is in substance and in accident; moreover, they define “*transcendens*” that which goes beyond categories and is indifferent to both the finite and the infinite (taking such a definition in a composite sense). The result is that it is possible to speak properly of a transcendental being, and of transcendentals in general, only when speaking of being and its characteristics (*passiones*) common to God and creatures. Cf. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 2 *De vocibus, et communibus earum affectionibus*, q. 5 *De analogis, ac nominum analogia*, a. 1 *Quid sit analogum, et analogia, et quotuplex*, n. 64, p. 269b; MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 1 *An ens habeat conceptum unum tam formalem, quam obiectivum*, n. 23, vol. I, p. 86b; *Id.*, n. 26, vol. I, p. 87b; *Id.*, q. 5 *An conceptus entis sit æquivocus, vel univocus, aut analogus Deo, et creaturæ, substantiæ, et accidenti*, a. 1 *Ens reale esse analogum univocum ad Deum et creaturam, substantiam, et accedens*, n. 109, vol. I, p. 149a; *Id.*, n. 122, vol. I, p. 160b; *Id.*, a. 2 *Argumenta contra analogam entis univocationem dissoluuntur*, n. 130, vol. I, p. 167b.

3. As far as the meaning of “formal concept”, “objective concept” and the sense of their distinction is concerned, I take the liberty of referring to M. FORLIVESI, *La distinzione tra concetto formale e concetto oggettivo nel pensiero di Bartolomeo Mastri* [<http://web.tiscali.it/marcoforlivesi/mf2002d.pdf>], 2002 (an earlier version is published in French: *Id.*, “La Distinction entre concept formel et concept objectif : Suárez, Pasqualigo, Mastri”, transl. by O. Boulnois, in *Les Études Philosophiques*, 2002, n. 1, pp. 3-30; cf. in particular pp. 17-29). I shall merely add that Mastri and Belluto intend “*ratio*” as a synonym for “objective concept”, with all the ambiguity of meaning (“seen by the intellect” and “what the intellect grasps”) appertaining to this syntagm: cf. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 2, q. 4 *De nominibus æquivocis, et univocis, ac eorum significatis*, [prologus], n. 31, p. 253a e MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 11 *De natura identitatis, et distinctionis formalis eiusque utilitate*, [prologus], n. 207, vol. I, p. 822b.

modes or of its differences or of its characteristics (*passiones*), and it is predicated of them only really and identically; this is because they do not contain being quidditatively and, on the other hand, the latter communicates with them in a less perfect way compared to what it is predicated quidditatively. This implies that being is both univocal and analogous: it is univocal since the inequality of the inferiors comes from without; and it is analogous, more precisely analogous in attribution, because such inequality redounds within it to the same extent as the latter expresses its capacity to be contracted to its inferiors.

That being said, it is necessary to distinguish between the nature of the being common to God and creatures and that of the being common to substance and accident. The latter, which is finite being, is a true genus and (like every predicamental degree) has in reality a true corresponding *formalitas*,⁴ distinct from its inferiors and from its contractors *ante opus intellectus*. On the contrary, the former is not a true genus; it is merely an inadequate concept and corresponds to a simple embryonic likeness in reality, which is only conceived of as something common by way of the work of the intellect. This means that finite being is distinct from its inferiors by a formal distinction *ex natura rei*; on the contrary, the being common to God and creatures is distinct from its inferiors by means of a virtual distinction, that is to say by reason *cum fundamento in re*.⁵ This furthermore means that

4. Mastri uses "*formalitas*" and "*realitas*" as synonyms: cf. *Id.*, q. 7, a. 2, vol. I, p. 752a and *Id.*, q. 11, a. 1 *Resolutio quaestionis*, n. 212, vol. I, p. 828a.

5. As to the foundation and to the emergence (*inchoative*) of the virtual distinction, it is a distinction *ex natura rei formalis*, whereas its accomplishment (*complementum*) and realisation (*actualitas*) is a distinction of reasoned reason: cf. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 1 *De modis, seu instrumentis sciendi*, q. 5 *De divisione*, a. 2 *Quid et quotuplex sit distinctio*, nn. 72-95, pp. 218b-231b, *passim*; MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 12 *De natura identitatis, et distinctionis virtualis, eiusque utilitate*, vol. I, pp. 854b-866a. For Mastri's doctrine concerning distinctions, see: A. GHISALBERTI, "La dottrina delle distinzioni nei 'Principia': tradizione e innovazione", in ISTITUTO ITALIANO PER GLI STUDI FILOSOFICI, *Descartes: "Principia Philosophiae" (1644-1994). Atti del Convegno per il 350° anniversario della pubblicazione dell'opera. Parigi, 5-6 maggio 1994. Lecce, 10-12 novembre 1994*, ed. J.-R. Armogathe – G. Belgioioso, Napoli: Vivarium, 1996, pp. 179-201, in particular pp. 199-200; A. POMPEI, "De formalitatibus, modis et rebus Scotistarum doctrina. Accedit 'Quaestio de formalitate', Nicolai Lakmann, O.F.M. Conv. (†1479)", in *Miscellanea*

finite being is contracted to its inferiors through true differences, i.e. that such a contraction consists in a composition on the plane of reality; on the contrary, the being called common to God and creatures is contracted by intrinsic modes, that is to say, in this particular case, through a composition operated by the intellect *cum fundamento in re*.⁶

francescana, 61 (1961), pp. 198-275, *passim*; A. POPPI, "Il contributo dei formalisti padovani al problema delle distinzioni", in *Problemi e figure della scuola scotista del Santo*, (Pubblicazioni della Provincia patavina dei Frati minori conventuali, 5), Padova: Edizioni Messaggero – Basilica del Santo, 1966, pp. 601-790, in particular pp. 723-773.

6. Cf. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 2, q. 4, a. 2 *Examinatur peculiariter natura univocorum*, nn. 39-44, pp. 256b-260a; *Id.*, q. 5, nn. 45-85, pp. 260a-281b; MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, qq. 1-8, vol. I, pp. 66a-234a. On the composition *cum fundamento in re*, see in particular *Id.*, disp. 8, q. 6, a. 2, n. 197, vol. II, p. 165a: «compositio etiam rationis cum fundamento in re talis est, ut compositio proprie sit tantum in conceptibus obiectivis, in re vero solum per extrinsecam denominationem a conceptibus mentis, ergo a parte rei, et in re remanet simplicitas». On Mastri's doctrine concerning the nature of being, besides the essays by Di Vona and, obviously, by Novák in this work, see: L. CONTI, "L'univocatio' della concezione aristotelica dell'essere in Bartolomeo Mastri", in *Regnum hominis et regnum Dei. Acta quarti congressus scotistici internationalis. Patavii, 24-29 septembris 1976*, ed. C. Bérubé, vol. II *Sectionis specialis. La tradizione scotista veneto-padovana*, (Studia scholastico-scotistica, 7), Romae: Societas internationalis scotistica, 1978, pp. 331-335; P. DI VONA, *I concetti trascendenti in Sebastián Izquierdo e nella Scolastica del Seicento*, (Libertà della mente, 3), Napoli: Loffredo editore, 1994, pp. 105-133; *Id.*, "Univocazione dell'ente in Louis Lavelle e nella controversia secentesca su François de Meyronnes", in *Annuario filosofico*, 7 (1991), pp. 121-153, in particular pp. 136-138; *Id.*, *Studi sull'ontologia di Spinoza*, vol. II "Res" ed "ens" – *La necessità – Le divisioni dell'essere*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1969, pp. 39-40; *Id.*, *Studi sulla scolastica della controriforma. L'esistenza e la sua distinzione metafisica dall'essenza*, (Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Milano, 48; Sezione a cura dell'Istituto di Storia della filosofia, 14), Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1968, pp. 232-262 e *passim*; Th. KOBUSCH, "Das Seiende als transzendentaler oder supertranszendentaler Begriff. Deutungen der Univozität des Begriffs bei Scotus und den Scotisten", in *John Duns Scotus. Metaphysics and Ethics*, ed. L. Honnefelder – R. Wood – M. Dreyer, (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 53), Leiden – New York – Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996, pp. 345-366, in particular pp. 359-360; P. SCAPIN, "La metafisica scotista a Padova dal XV al XVII secolo", in *Storia e cultura al Santo di Padova fra il XIII e il XX secolo*, ed. A. Poppi, (Fonti e studi per la storia del Santo di Padova, vol. III, 1), Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1976, pp. 485-538, in particular pp. 523-537.

2. Novák's criticism of Mastri's doctrine

Novák criticises two aspects of this doctrine.⁷ The first criticism, which had already been put forward by Arriaga, Oviedo and Punch, concerns our author's thesis concerning the different foundation in reality of predicamental degrees and of transcendental degrees. To use Mastri's own words: «si salvatur universalitas in gradibus transcendentibus per solos conceptus inadæquatos, cur non etiam salvabitur æque bene in gradibus prædicamentalibus?»⁸ Our author thus answers this question: because a metaphysical composition is given in the case of predicamentals, while none is given in the case of transcendentals. Hence Novák's objection: Mastri does not explain why in the case of predicamentals it is necessary to admit the metaphysical composition, while it should not be admitted in that of transcendentals; he therefore falls into a *petitio principii*.

The second criticism relates to the theory concerning the contraction of being by means of modes. Novák develops three arguments against it; however, it seems to me that he presupposes the following consideration in all three. As we have seen, Mastri maintains that the contraction of being to God and creatures is a work of the intellect *cum fundamento in re*, that is to say that it is given in reality not as such but only as the basis of what the intellect seizes. Hence Mastri also maintains that the being common to both infinite being and to finite being is contracted to them by means of the modes of infinitude and finitude respectively. From this the reader can only conclude that the composition of the mode and of the modifiable is not a composition that may be traced in reality. Furthermore, Mastri states that the distinction between mode and modifiable belongs to the family of *ex natura rei* distinctions, that is, to those distinctions that are found in reality before the work of the intellect. Therefore, the reader can only conclude that Mastri contradicts himself.

7. See Novák's essay in this volume.

8. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 4, a. 2 *Quæ fuerit Scoti sententia circa præcisionem, et realitatem conceptus entis*, n. 102, vol. I, p. 143a-b.

Having said that, Novák recognises that our author tries to evade this alternative. There are places, he observes, in which Mastri maintains that modes do not constitute the essence either of God or of creatures; therefore, one has to ask oneself what may contract the being common to God and creatures to its inferiors. Well, he says, on another occasion Mastri claims that modes are the accidental signs of an essential distinction the members of which are unknown to us; moreover, in the very place where he should state what contracts the being which is common to God and creatures, Mastri says nothing. Two conclusions may be drawn from this. In the first place, none of these attempts solve the contradiction into which Mastri falls concerning the distinction between mode and modifiable. Secondly, even if this contradiction were eliminated, Mastri gives no explanation as to how the being common to God and creatures is contracted to its inferiors. Indeed, when he states that such a contraction takes place by means of something different from modes, he says nothing positive about the nature of this “something”.

3. *Replies to Novák's criticisms*

3.1 *Concerning the first criticism: transcendentals and predicamentals*

As far as the first criticism, taken as such from the historical point of view,⁹ is concerned, it seems to me that it arises from the fact that Mastri mainly deals with the question of the foundation of transcendental degrees and with that of the foundation of predicamental degrees in different places. In the fourth *quæstio* of the second *disputatio* in the *Disputationes in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, our author does not mean to demonstrate that in the case of predicamental degrees it is necessary to admit that a composition of potency and act corresponds to them in reality. Instead, he means to demonstrate (once he has stressed that one cannot admit that such a composition in reality corresponds to transcendental degrees) that transcendental degrees have in any

9. I specify this because it seems to me that in Novák's writing it also has a theoretical value, which I do not question.

case a foundation in reality and to show how the notion of them is generated.¹⁰ I hence concede that in such a *quæstio* Mastri gives no clear reason for the theory according to which a metaphysical composition in reality corresponds to predicamental degrees; however, I propose the hypothesis that this may depend on the theme discussed there and refute the idea that such a reason is not to be found in Mastri's work.

According to him, the fact that there are common predicates immediately abstracted from reality is enough to prove that transcendental degrees have their foundation in reality, yet it is not sufficient to prove that there are common natures and *formalitates* prior to the work of the mind (*ante opus intellectus*).¹¹ He de-

10. Mastri develops his arguments in two steps. First, negatively, he excludes that transcendental degrees have the same nature as predicamental degrees. Briefly, in the case of predicamental degrees one can observe a common ground among realities that are not radically different and which can be constituted by a composition of potency and act; God cannot be effected by a composition and is radically different from the creature; therefore, the common ground between God and creatures is not that of a predicamental degree (MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 4, a. 1, nn. 69-80, vol. I, pp. 118b-128a). Afterwards, from a positive standpoint, he shows which type of knowledge may grasp transcendental degrees. Briefly, one observes that the confused knowledge of the inferiors within the adequate and distinct knowledge of what they have in common is something quite different, as is the confused knowledge of several things produced on the basis of their embryonic (*inchoata*) similarity; these two types of confused knowledge are found respectively in the knowledge of inferiors in predicamental degrees and in the knowledge of inferiors in transcendental degrees (*Id.*, nn. 81-82, vol. I, pp. 128a-129a). Cf. also the replies to the objections, in *Id.*, nn. 83-95, vol. I, pp. 129a-137a and the interesting article which follows, dedicated to the theme «Quæ fuerit Scoti sententia circa præcisionem, et realitatem conceptus entis» (*Id.*, a. 2, vol. I, pp. 137a-145b). It should, however, be noted that the subject of the difference between predicamental and transcendental degrees does not end here. For Mastri, maintaining such a difference is the same as maintaining that there are both formal distinctions and compositions *ex natura rei*, and rational distinctions and compositions *cum fundamento in re*. He will thus have to defend against the Thomists the occurrence of the former, against the Scotists the occurrence of the latter and against the Jesuit Nominalists the occurrence of both. Cf. in this regard *Id.*, disp. 6, qq. 7 e 11-17, vol. I, pp. 734b-786b e 820b-952b, what I write in note 50 and, in this volume, the essay by Renemann dedicated to Mastri's theory of the *præcisiones obiectivæ*.

11. Concerning Mastri's doctrine of predicamental degrees, see: E. CARUSO, *Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza e la rinascita del nominalismo nella Scolastica del Seicento*, (Pubblicazioni del "Centro di studi del pensiero filosofico del Cinquecento e del Seicento in relazione ai problemi della scienza" del Consiglio na-

velops his arguments in this regard on the basis of at least two further considerations. In the first *disputatio* in his *Disputationes in Organum* he focuses on the fact that predicamental degrees are understood by means of adequate concepts, while transcendental degrees are understood by means of inadequate concepts:

sic autem universaliter contingit, quotiescumque definitio rem exprimit per conceptum adæquatum, cui scilicet correspondet totum id, quod est in re exprimendum, possunt autem sic exprimi omnes formalitates, quæ actu plurificatæ reperiuntur in una, et eadem re physica, ut intellectus, et voluntas in anima, animalitas, et rationalitas in homine, bonitas, et sapientia in Deo; formalitates vero, quæ solum virtute in aliqua re continentur ob eius eminentiam, non possunt exprimi, nisi inadæquate, quia a parte rei nulla in suo ordine correspondet realitas adæquate explicabilis, unde hoc genere definitionum, quæ solum per conceptus inadæquatos traduntur, verum est non exprimi rem, nisi ut apprehenditur cum fundamento in re, quæ de causa non fallitur.¹²

Further on in the work, and in *In Met.*, this consideration, continually sustained,¹³ appears to be supported by a second, more radical, observation: the fact that in the case of predicamental degrees that which is coupled is not radically different (since neither of the two connected elements is perfectly simple and in itself singular) and may only be conceived of as a compound of genus and difference, that is to say of potency and act. In order to be convinced of this, consider the pages in which Mastri sustains that the «Gradus metaphysici prædicamentales non sola ra-

nale delle Ricerche, Serie I, 15), Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1979, pp. 104-106; POPPI, "Il contributo...", pp. 731-739.

12. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 1, q. 5, a. 2, n. 77, p. 221a.

13. Cf. for example MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 11, a. 2 *Argumenta ad oppositum soluta*, nn. 230-231, vol. I, pp. 846b-847b: «si (...) conceptus singuli sunt adæquati, et diversitas eorum procedit ex natura rei petentis sic concipi, tunc ex tali conceptuum diversitate optime infertur distinctio ex natura rei formalis; si vero conceptus sunt inadæquati, et eorum diversitas non provenit ex natura rei petentis sic concipi, sed potius ex defectu intellectus non potentis unico actu totam perfectionem obiecti percipere, vel ex parte medij ordinati ad cognitionem, vel puta quia species rem repræsentat inadæquate, tum utique ex tali conceptuum diversitate non licet inferre, nisi solam rationis distinctionem» (quoted from *Id.*, n. 231, vol. I, p. 847b).

tionem distinguuntur, sed media inter realem, et rationis»,¹⁴ which begin with these words:

periculum est in probanda hac conclusione, ne rationes asserrantur [sic], quæ distinctionem formalem ex natura rei mediam inter realem, et rationis astruant, nedum inter gradus metaphysicos prædicamentales, ut hic probare intendimus, sed etiam inter transcendentales; licet igitur a Scotistis soleat diversis vijs hæc conclusio demonstrari; non tamen omnibus utar, sed illis tantum quæ id præcise valeant demonstrare de gradibus prædicamentalibus; alias vero quæ promiscue de omnibus probare videntur, tam prædicamentalibus, quam transcendentibus reijciam, ut ineptas, et inutiles, quia transcendentales non tanta distinctione distinguuntur, nec sunt abinvicem præcisi ex natura rei actualiter in ratione actualis, et potentialis ob eorum maximam transcendentiam ex dictis disp. 2. q. 4. et 5.¹⁵

The same perspective is expressed, more succinctly, even where Mastri intends to prove that there is a formal distinction differing from the virtual one,¹⁶ or that genera and differences are composed through a composition that presents itself as such *ex parte rei*,¹⁷ or that common nature is formally distinguished from sin-

14. *Id.*, disp. 8, q. 6, a. 2, vol. II, pp. 164a-175b.

15. *Id.*, n. 196, vol. II, p. 164a-b.

16. «(...) <animalitas vel risibilitas non> plurificantur, vel distinguuntur in homine per solas præcisiones obiectivas id est per conceptus obiectivos inadæquatos, quibus partiri potest mentaliter intellectus rem a parte rei penitus indistinctam, ut solent dicere Thomistæ, quasi gradus illi dicant plures rationes inadæquatas tantum apud intellectum hominem imperfecte, et inadæquate concipientem, qui <gradus> si actu adæquato intelligeretur, unica tantum ratio conceptibilis in ipso apprehenderetur ei adæquate correspondens. Hoc enim falsum est, quia nec homo, nec angelus, nec alia quælibet creatura est simplex aliqua entitas a parte rei, nedum enim physice, ex varijs partibus essentialibus, aut accidentibus, sed etiam metaphysice ex varijs gradibus essendi est composita, et ideo quantumcumque adæquate concipiatur, concipi nequit nisi sub varijs, et distinctis rationibus, quæ licet sine [sic] adæquate in ordine suo, quatenus singulæ proprias præseferunt realitates, in ordine tamen ad integram, et totam essentiam quam constituunt, sunt inadæquate. (...) ratio obiectiva inadæquate conceptibilis proprie nequit dici formalitas, ut ratio entis, boni, et cuiuscumque gradus transcendentis, istæ enim rationes non sunt conceptibiles in re conceptu perfecto, et adæquato, sed tantum inadæquato, neque obversantur, nisi intellectui rem inadæquate, et confuse concipienti» (*Id.*, disp. 6, q. 11, a. 1, nn. 212-213, vol. I, p. 828a-b).

17. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 5 *De universalibus in particulari*, q. 3 *De differentia*, a. 2 *Quomodo differentia simul cum genere speciem constituat, ubi de compositione metaphysica*, nn. 128 e 130, pp. 477b-478b.

gulars and from the contracting differences at least in a distinction *ex natura rei*.¹⁸ Moreover, it is picked up, on closer examination, in the very same fourth *quæstio* of the *disputatio de natura entis*, for example, where our author quotes a passage from the commentary by Francesco Lichetto of the *Ordinatio*:

totam hanc doctrinam de abstractione, et contractione entis clarissime docuit Lichetus I. d. 3. q. 1. in fine his verbis; quando abstraho hominem a Francisco, et Ioanne, abstraho ipsum hominem, ut prius omni singularitate, et ut indifferens ad omnem singularitatem hominis, et ut contrahibilem ad singularitatem per aliquid posterius ipso, puta per hæccitatem, ad quam est in potentia; sed quando abstraho a Deo, non potest abstrahi aliquid prius, quod sit in potentia ad illud, quia natura divina est de se hæc; et quicquid est in Deo est de se hoc; non abstrahitur ergo aliquid in re, quod sit in potentia ad determinari, sicut in creaturis; sed sic abstrahitur, quod possum considerare singulare in communi, et ut hoc tantum; in primo casu est abstractio alicuius prioris a posteriori, ad quod est in potentia, in secundo casu est tantum abstractio posterioris a priori (...).¹⁹

If, finally, we ask Mastri to justify the fact that in the case of created things there can be a composition of potency and act while in the case of God such a composition is not to be found, he gives this reply, taken from Nicolas Bonet's *Theologia naturalis*:²⁰

18. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 9 *De natura communi, seu universalis*, q. 3 *An natura communis saltem ex natura rei formaliter distinguatur a singularibus, seu differentijs contrahentibus*, a. 1 *Asseritur pars affirmativa*, n. 48, vol. II, p. 242a and *Id.*, a. 2 *Argumenta Thomistarum, ac Nominalium soluta*, n. 66, vol. II, p. 256a-b. Cf. also MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 5, q. 3, a. 3 *Quomodo differentia distinguat essentialiter speciem, quam constituit, ab alijs, ubi de mutua præcissione generis, et differentiæ; ac etiam differentialem superioris, et inferioris*, n. 146, p. 486b.

19. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 4, a. 1, n. 75, vol. I, p. 124a. Cf. also *Id.*, a. 2, n. 102, vol. I, pp. 142b-143a: «loquendo de conceptu adæquato (...) non potest aliquod, quod est ex se singulare, concipi sub conceptu universalis, sed loquendo de conceptu inadæquato (...) id quod est singulare de se, bene potest concipi sub ratione universalis»; and this is the case of the conception of being as predicable of God and creatures.

20. I propose the hypothesis that Mastri makes use of an edition of a collection of Bonet's works printed in Venice in 1505 entitled: *Habes Nicholai Bonetti viri perspicacissimi quattuor volumina: metaphysicam videlicet naturalem*

Denique Bonet. lib. 1. Theol. naturalis cap. 1. bene ostendit a priori, cur in Deo nequeat esse compositio, quia (inquit) prima radix componibilitatis est ratio partis, quoniam nihil potest componi cum aliquo, nisi habeat rationem partis, dependet ex hoc, quod sit finitum, quia nullum infinitum potest habere rationem partis, cum omne totum sit maius sua parte, nihil autem est maius infinito; quia ergo quidquid positivum est in Deo, est infinitum, vel saltem non est finitum, ideo nihil est ibi habens rationem partis, nec consequenter ullam compositionem facere potest.²¹

For the very same reasons, Mastri maintains that finite being is contracted to categories by means of differences, not by means of modes:

si enim apices prædicamentales ideo per differentias contrahuntur, et non per modos, quia talem dicunt habitudinem ad sua contrahentia, ut cum eis compositionem efficiant metaphysicam, idem quoque de conceptu, seu realitate entis finiti dici poterit, et debet, quia cum suis contrahentibus constituere debet naturas metaphysice compositas, et abinvicem essentialiter diversas.²²

3.2 Concerning the second criticism: transcendentals and intrinsic modes

There are two parts to be distinguished in Novák's second criticism. In his first accusation, Mastri is incoherent; in the second, what he actually accuses him of is not giving any explanation of how the being common to God and creatures is contracted to its inferiors.

phylosophiam prædicamenta necnon theologiam naturalem in quibus facili calle et perbreui labore omnia fere scibilia comprehenduntur.

21. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 11, a. 2, n. 237, vol. I, p. 854a.

22. *Id.*, disp. 2, q. 6 *Quomodo, et per quid ens ad inferiora contrahatur, ac determinetur, num per differentias, vel modos intrinsecos*, a. 2 *Ens ad Deum, et creaturam per modos intrinsecos determinatur; ad substantiam vero, et accidens per differentias*, n. 166, vol. I, p. 194a. Cf. also *Id.*, q. 2, n. 24, vol. I, p. 86b; *Id.*, q. 4, a. 1, nn. 67-68, vol. I, pp. 117b-118b; *Id.*, q. 5, a. 1, n. 117, vol. I, p. 155b; *Id.*, n. 122, vol. I, p. 160b; MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 6 *De prædicamentis in communi, seu antepædicamentis*, q. 1 *Quot sint prædicamenta*, nn. 3-4, pp. 520a-521a.

3.2.1 Concerning the accusation of incoherence:
intrinsic mode and the composition of reason

As for the first part, I concede that according to Mastri the distinction between something that is such *ex natura rei* and an intrinsic mode of the latter, hence the modal distinction taken to mean such, belongs to the family of distinctions *ex natura rei*. In fact, both in *In Org.*, and in *In Met.*, he clearly writes that such a distinction is not specifically distinguished from the formal one *ex natura rei*, of which it constitutes an imperfect form.²³ Notwithstanding this, I do not accept that this thesis conflicts with what Mastri maintains concerning the contraction of transcendental degrees.

In both works recalled here, he speaks of two types of modal distinction: that which lies between the *res* and the extrinsic mode and that which lies between the *formalitas* and the intrinsic mode. The former is an imperfect real distinction; the latter, as I have already said, is an imperfect formal distinction. Accordingly, when he speaks of the imperfect formal distinction, he is referring only to the distinction between something that exists as such *ex natura rei* and one of its intrinsic modes. On the other hand, he says nothing, at least at first sight, about the nature of the distinction between a mode and a modifiable which is not a *formalitas* or a *natura communis*, but rather just an inadequately conceived *ratio*. In particular, in no part of *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 6, a. 1 does he admit that being is a *formalitas*, while in *In Org.*, disp. 1, q. 5, a. 2 and in *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 10 he does not even mention the distinction be-

23. *Id.*, disp. 1, q. 5, a. 2, n. 80, p. 222b; MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 6, a. 1 *De modis intrinsecis, ac extrinsecis*, nn. 146-150, vol. I, pp. 182b-185a and *Id.*, disp. 6, q. 10 *De natura identitatis, et distinctionis modalis*, nn. 204-205, vol. I, pp. 818b-820b. Cf. especially *Id.*, disp. 2, q. 6, a. 1, n. 150, vol. I, pp. 184b-185a and *Id.*, disp. 6, q. 10, n. 205, vol. I, p. 820a-b, in which Mastri criticises, in the first case more mildly, and in the second more scathingly, the definition of such a distinction as a “negative formal distinction”, preferring that of an “imperfect formal distinction”; as far as I can see, these statements of his have not always been heeded by scholars. As for Mastri’s doctrine on modes, see, besides Leinsle’s essay in this collection: POMPEI, “De formalitatibus...”, *passim*; POPPI, “Il contributo...”, pp. 739-745; SCAPIN, “La metafisica...”, p. 532; ID., “Necessità e contingenza in Mastri-Belluti”, in *Problemi...*, pp. 791-822, in particular pp. 797-798, note 17.

tween *ens* and *infinitas*, or between *ens* and *finitas*. In the latter two places, it is true that he speaks of the *infinitas* as the mode of God and as the mode of the *deitas*;²⁴ however, these cases, in Mastri's perspective, cannot be assimilated to that of the relationship between *ens* and *infinitas*. Indeed, he admits that in God there are formal distinctions *ex natura rei*, in particular between God and his attributes, but he excludes that *ens* and *infinitas* are distinguished through any formal function.²⁵ From this I conclude that there is no contradiction in maintaining at the same time that the distinction between being and *infinitas* is not an *ex natura rei* distinction and that the distinction between a *formalitas* and its intrinsic mode is an imperfect formal distinction (and thus *ex natura rei*). What remains to be clarified is that in God formal distinction between being and *infinitas* is impossible even if formal distinctions are to be found in him; a delicate point in Mastri's thought to which I shall return.

It is thus proven that in no context does Mastri state that the distinction between *ens* and *infinitas*, or between *ens* and *finitas*, is an imperfect formal distinction. Nevertheless, one may wonder whether his doctrine on intrinsic modes is compatible with the thesis according to which the distinction between the transcendental being and its modes is a virtual distinction. When he discusses modal distinction, he does not contemplate the case of a distinction between a *ratio* existing in reality only *fundamentaliter* and one of its intrinsic modes, nor does he seem to develop anywhere else a general theory about distinctions of such a type. Furthermore, he introduces the discussion about the contraction of being by means of modes with a discussion in which he refers to the distinction between *formalitas* and intrinsic mode. This all leads one to hold that his thesis about the intrinsic mode foresees that it may be a mode only of a *ratio* which is such prior to the work of the intellect.

24. Cf. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 1, q. 5, a. 2, n. 80, p. 222b; MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 10, n. 199, vol. I, p. 812b; *Id.*, n. 204, vol. I, p. 818b. What our author writes in *Id.*, disp. 2, q. 6, a. 1, vol. I, p. 182b, can be assimilated to this perspective, where he merely includes *finitas* and *infinitas* among the modes that concern the object in its specific being.

25. Cf. *Id.*, q. 4, a. 2, nn. 103-104, vol. I, pp. 144a-145a and *Id.*, disp. 6, q. 11, a. 2, nn. 231-237, vol. I, pp. 848b-854a.

In order to evaluate this hypothesis it is necessary to examine carefully the doctrines developed in *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 6. In the first article of this *quæstio*, Mastri illustrates the nature of modes. To this purpose, he distinguishes extrinsic and intrinsic modes and deals with both. The discussion of extrinsic modes has two aims: to distinguish them from the intrinsic ones, in order to avoid any confusion, and to clarify the nature of modes in general. Our author concludes with Suárez that the extrinsic mode is a «forma necessario subiectum afficiens dando illi aliquid, quod est extra essentiam totam, ut individuum, et existentem in rerum natura».²⁶ As for the intrinsic modes, Mastri establishes precisely first of all their collocation with respect to what they are modes of. First, they cannot be included among the quidditative predicates of what they are modes of or among the differences constituting the same: thus «posse naturam saltim imperfecte; et inadæquate concipi quidditative, et quoad sua essentialia prædicata sine modo». Second, they concern the quiddity of what they are modes of more closely than the characteristics (*passiones*) of this thing and, obviously, of the divisive differences of the same: thus the quiddity «nequit perfecte, et adæquate concipi in primo modo sine suo modo intrinseco, et gradu perfectionali sibi debito». Third, unlike the *formalitates* they have no autonomy with respect to the quiddity of what they are modes of: thus «formalitas apud formalistas sonat rationem obiectivam ex se adæquate conceptibilem sine alia»; on the contrary, the mode «nullatenus potest quidditative concipi sine re, cuius est modus».²⁷ At this point our author tackles the theme of the nature of the contraction carried out by the mode on the modifiable. In facing the question of whether what the mode does not alter is the formal *ratio* of the modifiable (*modificatus*), of the modified (*contractus*) or what is constituted by the mode and modified (*constitutus*), Mastri concludes that the mode does not alter the formal *ratio* of any of these three: in fact, the mode «novum gradum quidditativum non affert, sed priorem modificat, ac determinat».²⁸

26. *Id.*, disp. 2, q. 6, a. 1, nn. 140-146, vol. I, pp. 178b-182b. Quoted from *Id.*, n. 146, vol. I, p. 182b.

27. *Id.*, nn. 147-150, vol. I, pp. 183a-185a.

28. *Id.*, nn. 151-153, vol. I, pp. 185a-187a.

After having responded to a few objections, one of which I shall come back to later, our author goes on to establish, in the second article of the *quæstio*, that the being common to God and creatures is contracted through the composition with intrinsic modes, while the being common to substance and accident is contracted through the composition with differences. I shall leave aside the second case;²⁹ as for the first, it seems to me that its argument may be summed up as follows. Transcendental being is contracted by means of finitude and infinity; therefore, it is necessary to demonstrate that the finite and the infinite are modes.³⁰ Mastri deals with this in two steps. In the first he shows that being cannot adequately be conceived without them and that, on the other hand, they cannot be conceived without being. Every composition by potency and act is a composition of two realities which can be conceived of autonomously, that is to say of two *formalitates*, of which the perfectible one (*perfectibilis*) is “genus” and the perfecting one (*perfectiva*) is “difference”. Accordingly, every composition of *formalitates* (implied: finite) is a composition of potency and act, so that one of the two is “genus” and the other is “difference”. This is precisely what happens in the case of predicamentals. On the contrary, in the case of transcendentals the contractible and the contractor have no relationship to each other (implied: outside the considerations of the mind) as potency and act. The result is that neither the one nor the other is adequately conceivable autonomously and that their composition is a work of the mind. Consequently, it is also clear, Mastri insists, that if being were a reality common to God and creatures *ante opus intellectus*, it would be contracted by differences, not by modes. Therefore, those who maintain both that being is a reality of such a nature

29. Cf. what I wrote at the end of my reply to Novák’s first criticism. I should here merely like to add that Mastri, in order not to come into a radical conflict with Scotus’ works on this subject, holds that such differences are somehow unknown, which is why we contract finite being too by means of modes, which however in such a case inadequately express not the whole essence of what is thought as composed of modifiable and mode (this is the case of the being common to God and creatures, about which cf. *infra*), but the nature of the sole contracting differences. On this point, see *Id.*, a. 2, n. 174, vol. I, p. 198a).

30. *Id.*, n. 157, vol. I, p. 188a-b.

(i.e. a *formalitas*), and that it is contracted by modes, contradict themselves.³¹

In the second step, our author shows that being may be conceived of somehow without considering infinity and finitude, and is thus not the effect of a simple operation of explication. It lies, he argues, in relationship to its contractors as a determinable to a determinant (*determinativus*). Moreover, it is distinct from the latter, which contract it as something more universal than they are. Being is also more universal than its inferiors, but such a passage from the more universal to the less universal is possible only if to the more universal *ratio* something somehow distinct from it is added. Accordingly, being does not mean and is not (*non dicit*) all that God and creature mean and are (*dicunt*); therefore, the passage from one to the others, just like any passage from a superior to inferiors, requires that something that restricts and determines it is added to the former. The main obstacle to these arguments lies in the theory according to which being includes quidditatively (that is to say not merely potentially) all its inferiors and contractors inasmuch as, accord-

31. *Id.*, nn. 157-159, vol. I, pp. 188b-189b. I take the elements and connections of the summary I have proposed from the text under consideration; nevertheless, I have to warn the reader that this part of the article faces and expounds on the question I pointed out only indirectly. In actual fact, first Mastri argues directly in favour of the thesis according to which infinity and finitude are modes; he then develops a clarification dedicated to establishing the reason why transcendental concepts are contracted by modes while predicamental concepts are contracted by differences. This clarification partly coincides with the reasoned exposition of a passage by Scotus, the main objective of which is to be polemical towards those Scotists who maintained that being is both a *realitas* and at the same time is contracted by modes. The passage from Scotus recalled by Mastri is reported with minor changes both in the edition of the *Ordinatio* edited by Antonio De Fantis (which our author normally used), in that edited by Luke Wadding (which he certainly consulted), and in that edited by the Scotist Commission: cf. JOANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio*, I, dist. 8, pars 1, q. 3, Ad primum argumentum principale, nn. 143-144; in IDEM, *Opera omnia*, ed. Commissio scotistica, Civitas Vaticana: Typis polyglottis vaticanis, 1950-, vol. IV, pp. 224-225. As for the editions of Scotus used by our author, I take the liberty of referring to M. FORLIVESI, "*Scotistarum princeps*". *Bartolomeo Mastri e il suo tempo*, (Fonti e studi francescani, 11), Padova: Centro studi antoniani, 2002, p. 306.

ingly, it is included quidditatively in them.³² For this reason, Mastri promptly writes: «ratio entis saltim secundum rationem distinguatur a suis inferioribus, et præsertim a contrahentibus, quia nec illa quidditative includit, ut superius visum est, nec in illis quidditative includitur, ut sequenti quæstione dicetur».³³ The article ends by accusing Suárez and Meurisse of incoherence. They have, Mastri observes, maintained at the same time that being is perfectly independent (*præcisus*) of its inferiors (the former taking such an independence to be simply founded in reality, the latter even taking it as something which exists *ex natura rei*) and which is contracted by explication; if, however, being is perfectly distinct from the latter, then its contraction takes place by means of composition; in conclusion, then, the position of Suárez and Meurisse is contradictory.³⁴

32. According to Mastri, anyone who states that all beings are included in the concept of being must uphold the contraction of being for greater explication: «iste modus contrahendi ens ad illos pertinet, qui negant præcisionem conceptus entis; cum enim secundum ipsos inveniuntur omnia entia in conceptu entis involuta, vel simul confuse concepta, vel sub distinctione, aiunt consequenter sufficere ad determinationem entis, quod concipiantur distincte, ac determinate illa, quæ prius concipiebantur in confuso» (MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 6, a. 2, n. 163, vol. I, p. 191b). To the same extent, anyone who states that being is included quidditatively in all its inferiors and contractors must support this type of contraction: «ad rationem compositionis necessario exigitur, ut pars sit extra aliam compartem; et ideo qui asserunt rationem entis in suis quoque contrahentibus essentialiter imbibere; consequenter eius contractionem ponunt per modum simplicis explicationis, et maioris expressionis, non autem compositionis, vel additionis» (*Id.*, q. 7 *An ens sit de essentia omnium, ita ut in cuiuscunque formali, et quidditativo conceptu includatur*, a. 1 *Resolutio quæsitæ*, n. 179, vol. I, p. 201a). For Mastri the two theories are connected both historically and, somehow, theoretically. Historically because Peter Auriol, many Thomists (among whom the Complutensians and Poinset), Suárez and Aversa maintain the former precisely on the basis of the latter: cf. *Id.*, q. 1, n. 25, vol. I, p. 87a-b and *Id.*, q. 3 *An conceptus entis sit perfecte unus, et præcisus*, nn. 59-60, vol. I, pp. 112a e 113a-b. Theoretically, for the reason given here, about which see also *Id.*, q. 6, a. 2, nn. 171-172, vol. I, pp. 196b-197a.

33. *Id.*, nn. 160-164, vol. I, pp. 189b-193a, in particular nn. 161-162, vol. I, pp. 190b-191a. The quotation is taken from *Id.*, n. 161, vol. I, p. 190b. By “*superius*” Mastri refers to the third *quæstio*, by “*sequenti quæstione*” to the seventh.

34. *Id.*, nn. 163-165[1st. Also the following paragraph is numbered by mistake “165”], vol. I, pp. 191a-193a.

It does not now seem to me difficult to see the coherence in Mastri's doctrine of intrinsic modes with that about the nature of the distinction and of the composition of transcendental being and its contractors. Nothing he wrote in the first article of the *quæstio* examined here concerning the intrinsic mode and the contraction it exercises on the corresponding modifiable signifies either that the modifiable be a *formalitas*, or that the mode exists really as such *ante opus intellectus*. The modifiable can be conceived of at least imperfectly without considering the mode but it can be conceived of perfectly only together with its mode. This is valid for the *formalitates*, but is also valid for those *rationes* which are merely inadequate objective concepts and which do not exist as such *ante opus intellectus*. The mode, in its turn, unlike the *formalitates*, is merely an inadequate concept:

modus intrinsecus proprie non potest dici formalitas, quia formalitas apud formalistas sonat rationem obiectivam ex se adæquate conceptibilem sine alia, modus autem nullatenus potest quidditative concipi sine re cuius est modus, cum dicat ordinem transcendentalem ad illam, unde suapte natura petit concipi cum re, quam modificat (...).³⁵

As such, it is added to the modifiable and is compounded with it, but it does not alter the modifiable with something different from what already belongs to the latter:

dicitur itaque differentia variare rationem illius cui additur, quia illud removet a statu suo contrahendo ipsum ad inferiorem quidditatem, ut constat de rationali; cum advenit animali; modus autem sic variat illud, quia cum non sit gradus quidditativus, non trahit ip-

35. *Id.*, a. 1, n. 150, vol. I, p. 184b. The same theory is maintained in *Id.*, disp. 6, q. 11, a. 1, n. 213, vol. I, p. 828b: «apud Scotistas formalitas definiri solet esse rationem obiectivam conceptibilem in re aliqua conceptu perfecto, et adæquato distincto a conceptu, quo concipitur alia formalitas eiusdem rei. (...) dicitur autem conceptu perfecto, et adæquato, quia ratio obiectiva inadæquate conceptibilis proprie nequit dici formalitas, ut ratio entis, boni, et cuiuscumque gradus transcendentis, istæ enim rationes non sunt conceptibiles in re conceptu perfecto, et adæquato, sed tantum inadæquato, neque obversantur, nisi intellectui rem inadæquate, et confuse concipienti, qua etiam ratione modus intrinsecus apud Scotistas assequi nequit nomen formalitatis propriæ dictæ, quia non est ratio obiectiva conceptibilis conceptu perfecto et adæquato sine re, vel quidditate, cuius est modus». The italics are his own.

sum ad inferiorem quidditatem, sed tantum quidditatem, cui additur, modificat; rursus dicitur quoque differentia variare rationem formalem sui constituti, quia cum realitate contracta novam quandam naturam constituit, quam formaliter ingreditur, eamque essentialiter a quocunque alio distinguit; sed modus non constituit novam naturam, quia novum gradum quidditativum non affert, sed priorem modificat, ac determinat (...).³⁶

In brief: the mode in itself is merely an imperfect concept, a modification of a modifiable. The result is that it may be the modification of a *realitas*, and in this case it will be an imperfect *realitas*; yet it may also be a modification of an inadequately conceivable *ratio*. Indeed, as Mastri establishes in the second article of the *quæstio* examined: the intrinsic mode is the only contractor admissible in the case of the contraction of an inadequately conceivable *ratio*, that is to say one which cannot be related to its contractor in terms of act and potency; and, in fact, *infinitas* and *finitas* are intrinsic modes.

To return to those arguments, which I set out previously, capable of creating doubt about the possibility of understanding the intrinsic mode (in Mastri's conception of it) also as a modification of a *ratio* which is such only after the work of the intellect, in the first place one can observe that if it is true that in the *quæstio* where he discusses modal distinction he does not contemplate the case of a distinction between a *ratio* existing in reality only *fundamentaliter* and an intrinsic mode of its own, this occurs not without reason. The "*distinctio modalis*" of which the *recentiores*, starting with Suárez, and the Scotistic tradition speak is a type of distinction that precedes every operation of the intellect.³⁷ Mastri discusses the nature of such a distinction and at-

36. *Id.*, disp. 2, q. 6, a. 1, n. 153, vol. I, p. 186a-b.

37. Or, at least, this is what our author is convinced of (in my opinion quite rightly). See *Id.*, disp. 6, q. 10, nn. 199-200, vol. I, pp. 812a-813b: «Recentiores passim hanc distinctionem modalem extrinsecam, seu modi extrinseci a re, cuius est modus, assignant quidem, ut distinctionem præcedentem omne opus intellectus, nolunt tamen coincidere cum distinctione reali...» (quotation from *Id.*, n. 199, vol. I, p. 812b). And *Id.*, n. 204, vol. I, p. 818b: «Circa aliam distinctionem modalem scilicet modi intrinseci a re, cuius est modus, (...) Maironis (...) quatuor species distinctionis præter opus intellectus proponit ab invicem distinctas, inter quas distinctionem præsertim modalem enumerat. Alij vero Scotistæ passim eam reducunt ad distinctionem ex natura rei, quam

tempts to assign to it a collocation within his theory about distinctions, but the object of his treatise still remains a type of distinction that precedes any operation of the intellect:

ostendi hos, <id est Recentiores,> et illos <, id est Scotistas,> pari passu errare, et necessarios esse in rerum natura modos utriusque generis, tam scilicet extrinsecos, quam intrinsecos, illos quidem pro rebus physicis determinandis, istos vero pro realitatibus metaphysicis; unde consequenter dabitur distinctio modalis utriusque generis in rerum natura citra operationem intellectus, atque ideo de utraque in hac quæstione agemus (...).³⁸

Now, according to our author the distinction between a *ratio* existing in reality only *fundamentaliter* and one of its intrinsic modes is not to be found as such prior to every operation of the intellect. It therefore turns out to be clear that he was not required to deal with this type of distinction in that place. On the other hand, he constantly and coherently states that it is nothing but a distinction of reason *cum fundamento in re*. It is, therefore, not true that Mastri does not offer a general treatise on the type of distinction to which that of transcendental degrees and their intrinsic modes belongs: quite simply, that treatise is the one dedicated to virtual distinction. Finally, in reply to the perplexity aroused by the fact that he introduces the discussion concerning the contraction of being by means of modes with a treatise in which he refers to the distinction between *formalitas* and intrinsic mode, one might reply that he does so for the same reason that the discussion of extrinsic modes precedes that of intrinsic modes, that is to say, for reasons of clarity.

So much for Novák's doubt about the compatibility between Mastri's doctrine on intrinsic mode and on the contraction through composition only by means of reason *cum fundamento in re*. Nevertheless, a complete exposition of the latter's thought should also point out his effort to sustain two further theories. The first is that by which being, its intrinsic modes and their composition have a

supponunt speciem ab alijs condistinctam, et minimam inter omnes distinctiones antevertentes opus intellectus (...). Alij tandem eam reducut ad formalem distinctionem».

38. *Id.*, n. 199, vol. I, p. 812b.

foundation in reality, therefore the fact that composition by modes is a composition of pure reason has to be excluded. The second is that there is compatibility between the doctrine on the intrinsic mode and the doctrine on the contraction by composition in general. Therefore, the fact that composition by modes is an explication (that is to say a composition in an improper sense) is also to be excluded.³⁹

3.2.2 *Concerning the accusation of inefficacy:
intrinsic mode and essential diversity*

The second part of Novák's second criticism is also an invitation to carry out a meticulous study of Mastri's texts. In short, according to the Czech scholar our philosopher is aware of the fact that his doctrine on the intrinsic mode cannot be applied to the case of the contraction of being by means of infinity and finitude; this is why, in conclusion, the seventeenth-century Scotist does not try to give any explanation of the contraction to inferiors of the being common to God and creatures. It seems to me, as I have said, that Novák supports his criticism with two considerations. First, he believes that Mastri's doctrine on the distinction between the modifiable and the intrinsic mode is in conflict with the thesis according to which the contraction of being by modes is not a metaphysical composition. Second, he denies that Mastri's doctrine on the contraction of the modifiable by means of the mode is compatible with the thesis according to which God and creatures are essentially different.

I believe I have given a reply to Novák's perplexity about the first point; nonetheless, the problem posed by the second remains open. On the one hand, Mastri maintains that modes are not constituents of the quiddity of what they modify and there-

39. See the concluding pages to the reply to the second part of Novák's criticism here under consideration. Note, however, from here on that Mastri intends the distinction by minor or major explication as a distinction of reasoning reason; cf. for example MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 16 *Num præter præcisiones formales, etiam obiectivæ sint admittendæ*, a. 1 *Præter formales præcisiones, dari quoque obiectivas*, n. 298, vol. I, p. 923a and *Id.*, a. 2 *Argumenta non præscindentium diluuntur*, n. 304, vol. I, p. 931a: «distinctio penes implicitum, et explicitum facit distinctionem rationis ratiocinantis, non autem ratiocinatæ».

fore the contraction by intrinsic modes does not give rise to any essences different from that of the contractible:

modus intrinsecus est extra essentiam rei, nec unquam rem essentialiter variat, sicut facit differentia;⁴⁰

modus intrinsecus nunquam rem posse constituere in suo esse primo, et essentiali; cum rem sic constitutam supponat, et repugnat dicere, quod constituit rem, ut gradum intrinsecum, non ut differentia; quia modus intrinsecus non constituit, sed differentia (...).⁴¹

He also sustains that God and creatures essentially differ. To counter Fabri, who affirmed that «Deus, et creatura proprie loquendo non differunt essentialiter, sed sicut perfectissimum, et minus perfectum in infinitum», he replies: «Fatemur hanc solutionem suo auctore indignam esse, nihil enim absurdius meo videri dici potest». Indeed, if that were so

sequitur Deum, et creaturam eiusdem esse speciei, ut sunt albedo, ut centum, et albedo, ut infinita. Deinde si Deus, et creatura adeo differunt, ut dicantur distare in infinitum, ac esse primo diversa, quomodo non habent diversas essentias, easque essentialiter diversas?⁴²

The reader has to come to the conclusion that modes are not the explanation for the essential difference between God and creatures. On the other hand, as we have already seen, in the case of the contraction of the being common to God and creatures Mastri does not accept any contractors different from intrinsic modes. The result, it seems, is that our author renounces any attempt to explain the essential difference between God and creatures.

Notwithstanding this, I do not accept that this opinion correctly describes Mastri's thought. First of all, I should like to point out that he is aware of the problem; in the sixth *quæstio* of the *disputatio de natura entis*, the following difficulty is posed:

si modus non variat rationem formalem eius, cuius est modus, sequitur prædicamenta non inter se essentialiter distingui, quia ens non descendit in illa, nisi per modos, imo idem sequitur de Deo, et

40. *Id.*, disp. 2, q. 4, a. 1, n. 71, vol. I, p. 120a.

41. *Id.*, n. 72, vol. I, p. 121b.

42. *Id.*, p. 121a-b.

creatura, quia ens ad hæc contrahitur per modos; vel si hæc essentialiter distinguuntur abinvicem, iam modi variabunt rationem formalem rerum, cum non nisi per modos secernantur.⁴³

He therefore knows that he has to explain how the essences of God and creatures differ and what tie the contraction of being by intrinsic modes has with these essences.

The reply to this difficulty is to be found both in the fourth and in the sixth *quæstio* of the *disputatio de natura entis*: infinite being and finite being are essentially different as a result not of the modes of infinity and finitude, but of their essences; however, their essences set up, thanks to our confused mode of knowing, the modes of infinity and finitude.

(...) eadem sunt principia constituendi, et distinguendi apud metaphysicum<;> cum ergo modi intrinseci non sint prima constitutiva Dei, et creaturæ, non erunt consequenter prima distinctiva eorum, et prima divisiva realitatis entis, sed tantum a posteriori eo pacto, quo animal divideretur per admirativum, et non admirativum, esto concedamus modum intrinsecum esse aliquantum passione intimius. (...) quæ faciunt differre essentialiter, sunt differentię essentialiter, quæ modos præcedunt; ergo per hæc primario ratio communis dividitur, non per modos, nisi a posteriori, et secundario, et in hoc sensu Doctor intelligendus est, cum inquit ens contrahi ad Deum et creaturam per infinitum et finitum.⁴⁴

<Deus et creatura> essentialiter distinguuntur proprijs quidditatibus non autem per finitum, et infinitum, nisi quantum ad nostrum modum confuse concipiendi, quia talis contractio non est a parte rei, et a priori, sed tantum a posteriori per nostrum concipiendi modum cum fundamento in re, unde ait Trombetta ens finitum, et infinitum dupliciter sumi posse fundamentaliter scilicet et formaliter; primo modo considerata, inquit, essentialiter distinguuntur, et non præcise ratione finitatis, vel infinitatis, sed essentiæ ipsæ, ad quas ista sequuntur seipsis, essentialiter distinguuntur (...).⁴⁵

The clearest presentation of our author's thesis is perhaps to be found in the very first article of the fourth *quæstio*, at the point when he excludes that transcendental degrees have the

43. *Id.*, q. 6, a. 1, n. 154, vol. I, p. 187a.

44. *Id.*, q. 4, a. 1, n. 71, vol. I, p. 120b.

45. *Id.*, q. 6, a. 1, n. 155, vol. I, p. 187b.

same nature as predicamental degrees and when he shows which type of knowledge can grasp transcendental degrees.⁴⁶ In three passages here Mastri sets out the metaphysical, logical and gnoseological foundations of his reply. In the first, he once again points out the nature and genesis of the concept of the being which is common to God and creatures:

ens non importare realitatem communem ex natura rei præcisam a Deo, et creatura, illisque communem, sed simplicissimum conceptum immediate abstractum ab intellectu a particularibus rationibus Dei, et creaturæ inadæquate conceptis<.>⁴⁷

In the second, he illustrates the nature and genesis of the concepts of the modes that contract such a being and of the contraction they effect:

<conceptus entis> deinde per actum intellectus rursus referentem illum communem conceptum ad inferiora contrahitur ad illas per particulares conceptus finiti, et infiniti dicentes quale; unde sicut conceptus entis re vera non est prior ex natura rei Deo, et creatura, sed posterior quia abstrahitur ab illis iam in suo esse constitutis; ita contractio entis quæ fit per finitum, et infinitum censeri debet contractio a posteriori facta per intellectum cum fundamento in re, non a priori<.>⁴⁸

In the third, he explains in greater detail what happens from a logical and gnoseological point of view:

talis compositio rationis non est aliud, quam extrinseca denominatio resultans in obiecto ex negociatione intellectus dividens idem obiectum adæquatum in plura inadæquata, unde nullam in obiecto imperfectione ponit, sed in solo intellectu, qui unico actu non valet assequi eminentem perfectionem obiecti, ideoque prius illud concipit sub una ratione, postea sub alia, et tandem utramque rationem communem, et particularem componit adinvicem; sic igitur in Deo primo gradum entis communem concipimus, ac veluti potentialem ad infinitum, deinde ratione infiniti concipimus veluti contrahentem ens ad Deum, qui modus concipiendi, ut patet, nullam ponit imperfectionem ex parte Dei, quia a parte rei ens non dicit potentiam, nec infinitas actum.⁴⁹

46. See note 10.

47. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 4, a. 1, n. 75, vol. I, p. 123b.

48. *Ib.*

49. *Id.*, pp. 123b-124a.

Mastri's thesis needs to be explained and supported in many respects. On the plane of the doctrine of knowledge, our author has to demonstrate both that man is capable of a kind of knowledge of the type here mentioned, and that what such a knowledge grasps is not merely the product of cognitive activity. On the plane of the content of knowledge, much still remains to be said about the contraction of being by the modes of infinity and finitude. On the one hand, it is necessary to demonstrate that the latter express essential differences: they are not what lays the foundation for the essential difference between God and creatures, but they do to some degree express it; it is, therefore, necessary to demonstrate that they possess such a power. On the other hand, it is necessary to demonstrate that the modes in question are capable of expressing those differences without making the *ratio* of being explicit, but by being composed with it. It thus becomes necessary to demonstrate that the modes may give rise to contraction by composition and that the modes which contract being do effectively give rise to contraction by composition.

As I have already said, the question concerning the possibility and the nature of the inadequate knowledge of a *ratio* which does not exist as such in reality is tackled by Mastri in the last part of the "main body" of the article just recalled and, by several references, in the *quæstiones* dedicated to the distinction of reasoned reason and to the *præcisiones obiectivæ*. The intellect, our author concludes, has the power to develop an inadequate knowledge of an object simply by abstracting from it one or more confused *rationes*, without these *rationes* mainly being a product of the comparative activity of the mind.⁵⁰

50. See note 10. Cf. in particular MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 16, a. 1, n. 298, vol. I, pp. 922b-923b: «admitti debere præcisiones obiectivas per intellectum factas cum fundamento in re, quoniam intellectus habet vim nedum collativam, sed etiam præcisivam, nedum ergo distinguere potest idem omnino obiectum a seipso penes diversum modum concipiendi illud magis, vel minus clare, sed etiam potest illud in seipso distinguere cum fundamento in re, ac in diversas formalitates mentaliter partiri, formando nempe conceptus inadæquatos circa rem, quam intelligit, ita ut partem tantum eius essentiæ attingat, quod præsertim contingit, quando cognitione præcisiva aliquid novimus, cuius essentia non est nobis adæquate explorata» (quoted from *Id.*, vol. I, p. 923a).

The question can also be faced from the point of view of the object known. One may, in fact, ask oneself whether the being common to God and creatures can be called real. The problem arises both in the confrontation with the criticisms of the Nominalist Jesuits to the doctrine of the *præcisiones obiectivæ*, and within the Scotistic tradition. For the latter, what is real is that concept that corresponds to something that exists, or may exist, in reality.⁵¹ Now, Mastri also accepts this perspective when he writes that «reale dicitur transcendentaliter quid est præter opus intellectus».⁵² It would thus seem that if the concept of being does not correspond to a *realitas*, it is nothing but a product of the mind.⁵³ Our author replies to this difficulty that transcendental degrees also have some reality independently of the work of the intellect. In the course of his work, he defends this theory on the basis of two considerations. God and creatures, he observes, are called being, substance, etc., with reference to what they are in reality, not to what they are in the mind. The proof of this is that such *rationes* express the nature of things just as they exist in reality, not with reference to some property that things possess because they are thought.⁵⁴ The proof of this is the fact that if

51. Cf. *Id.*, disp. 8, q. 1 *An status essentiæ creaturarum ut ab existentia præscindit sit solius possibilitatis an etiam alicuius actualitatis*, a. 3 *Essentia rerum, ut ab existentia præscindit, in sola reali possibilitate consistit, ubi explicatur quid sit, et unde oriatur esse possibile rerum*, n. 47, vol. II, pp. 77b-78a.

52. *Id.*, disp. 6, q. 7, a. 2, n. 163, vol. I, p. 776a.

53. «(...) si talis realitas <præcisa extra intellectum ex natura rei> ei [i.e. to being] non correspondet, conceptus entis non esset realis, sed rationis, quia nihil exprimeret in re, et esset præcise fabricatus per opus intellectus» (*Id.*, disp. 2, q. 4, a. 1, n. 83, vol. I, p. 129a-b).

54. «(...) gradus transcendentes vere existunt in rebus, nam a parte rei Deus dicitur ens, substantia etc. sic etiam creatura, ergo hi gradus non sola ratione ratiocinante distinguuntur, nam (...) extrema distinctionis ratiocinantis fiunt ab intellectu, neque extant in rebus a parte rei» (*Id.*, disp. 6, q. 15 *De identitate, et distinctione rationis ratiocinatæ*, a. 1 *Quid sit ista distinctio, nec ipsam cum formali coincidere*, n. 276, vol. I, pp. 895b-896a). «(...) conceptus entis (...) non potest dici rationis, quia per conceptum entis res exprimuntur, sicut sunt a parte rei, licet inadæquate, et confuse, non autem ut comparantur in aliquo attributo rationis; nec secundæ intentionis, quia præcedit omnem actum collativum intellectus; conceptus vero rationis, et secundæ intentionis fit per actum collativum, et exprimit res non in suo ordine, et ut sunt a parte rei, sed extra suum ordinem, et ut comparantur in aliquo attributo rationis» (*Id.*, disp. 2, q. 4, a. 1, n. 84, vol. I, p. 130a). Cf. *Id.*, nn. 84-85, vol. I, pp. 129b-131a.

such *rationes* are known in their distinction from others, this is for their cognitive content, not for the fact that they are known.⁵⁵ Secondly, he offers an explanation of what happens on the level of the cognitive process: the concept of being is a product of the intellect as it is the product of the abstractive activity of the active intellect, but it is anterior to the work of the intellect as it is anterior to any possible act of the passive intellect;⁵⁶ the result is that such a concept is real both because it is immediately abstracted from the thing, and because it «non habet esse in intellectu obiective per actum intelligendi, a quo dependeat in esse, et in conservari».⁵⁷

55. «(...) falsum est cognitionem præcisivam animalis verbi gratia terminari ad animal secundum illud esse obiectivum, quod habet ex vi cognitionis, et non potius secundum illud esse, quod habet a parte rei, probatur hoc, quia animal, ut cognitum, vel habens esse obiectivum in intellectu, dicit animal, ut subest cognitioni, vel cognitionem, ut terminatam ad animal, sed cognitio præcisiva animalis non attingit ipsam cognitionem, neque est reflexiva supra seipsam, ergo non terminatur ad animal, ut cognitum, et ut substat illi esse intentionali, maior patet, probatur minor, quia sicut aliud est cognoscere animal, aliud cognoscere animal esse cognitum, primum namque fit per actum directum, aliud vero per actum reflexum, ita quoque aliud est præscindere animal a rationali, et aliud cognoscere animal esse præcisum a rationali, nam hoc secundum fieri nequit sine actu reflexivo, sed ad primum sufficit actus rectus, et illud quidem satis est ad distinctionem ratiocinatam constituendam. Confirmatur, quia quando ex vi distinctionis ratiocinatæ cognoscitur animal in homine non cognito rationali, tunc non cognoscitur animal secundum aliquod esse intentionale, quod habeat ex vi cognitionis, sed secundum aliquod esse reale, licet per talem actum non cognoscatur ut præcisum actualiter a rationali, quia ad hoc requiritur actus reflexus, sed eo ipso actu præscinditur a rationali, ergo falsum est ex vi distinctionis ratiocinatæ derivari distinctionem in obiecto præcise, quatenus intentionali modo existit in intellectu, et hac ratione idem obiectum reale secundum diversa esse intentionalia posse diversas terminare cognitiones. Probatur assumptum, nam consequentia patet, quia in præcissione animalis a rationali cognosco animal, secundum quod est substantia animata, sensitiva, et secundum quod ei conveniunt operationes sensitivæ, sed hæc et similia prædicata ei competunt, secundum quod est a parte rei, non autem secundum aliquod esse obiectivum et intentionale» (*Id.*, disp. 6, q. 16, a. 2, n. 313, vol. I, pp. 939b-940a). Cf. also MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 1, q. 5, a. 2, n. 77, pp. 220b-221a: «licet definitio fiat per actum intellectus, non propterea sequitur, quod explicet formaliter aliquid intentionale, sed vere explicat aliquid a parte rei, sicut licet hæc propositio, *Sol est lucidus*, fiat per intellectum enunciantem lucem de Sole, tamen exprimit rem, sicut se habet a parte rei actualiter etiam nullo intellectu cogitante».

56. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 4, a. 1, n. 84, vol. I, p. 130a.

57. *Id.*, a. 2, n. 103, vol. I, p. 144a.

As far as the two themes of a metaphysical nature are concerned, Mastri faces the first and one aspect of the second when discussing some theses by Suárez and by the Scotists Fabri and Meurisse. They agree with the premiss according to which modes are not the reason for the essential difference in what is modified, but they come to different conclusions from those indicated by Mastri. According to Fabri, modes merely express a difference in degree. Therefore, God and creatures differ solely as the perfect and the less perfect in infinity.⁵⁸ According to Suárez and Meurisse, modes only unfold the nature of the thing modified. Mastri quotes two examples from Suárez about quantity and warmth, the sense of which seems to me to be as follows: it is not possible to conceive of mode without the modifiable; therefore the modified is not obtained by adding mode to the modifiable, with a composition of mode and modifiable; therefore the concept of the modifiable and that of the modified are distinguished as confused and expressed.⁵⁹ Meurisse, on the other hand, uses Duns Scotus' own example of mode, that of the degree of whiteness. He thus argues: the concept of whiteness that leaves out the degree of whiteness and that which includes the degree of whiteness are to be distinguished as an imperfect and a perfect concept; the result is that also God and creatures are different explications of the single concept of being.⁶⁰

In answer to Fabri, Mastri says that grading degrees according to the greater or the less perfect may also be a grading of perfection between different essences; he concludes from this that such a grading may express an essential difference and that this is exactly what happens in the case of God and creatures.⁶¹ In other words: in the case of being, modes contribute a specification concerning

58. *Id.*, n. 71, vol. I, p. 121a.

59. *Id.*, q. 6, a. 2, n. 172, vol. I, p. 197b.

60. *Id.*, n. 171, vol. I, p. 196b.

61. «(...) graduatio secundum magis, et minus perfectum, quæ Deum a creatura secernit, non est secundum pluralitatem graduum individualium eiusdem perfectionis specificæ (...), sed est secundum pluralitatem graduum essentialium, cum enim species dicantur se habere velut numeri, quia semper una excedit aliam in perfectione specificâ, dicimus Deum in perfectione essentiali excedere in infinitum species omnes creaturarum tam existentes, quam possibili» (*Id.*, q. 4, a. 1, n. 72, vol. I, p. 121b).

the *gradus essentialis*, or *essentiæ*, or *essendi*, of the modified,⁶² which expresses the degree of perfection of the essence of the latter and, together with the concept of being in its composition with it, is the manifestation to the mind of such an essence. Our Franciscan friar replies to Suárez and Meurisse, then, by distinguishing the case of the examples given by the two authors from that of being. He starts from the premiss that the inferiors of being are its subjective parts, while the degrees of whiteness, or warmth, are not. So, he continues, the superior can descend to the inferiors only through composition; therefore, in the case of being the contraction must be understood as composition.⁶³

One last question, a second aspect of the last theme, remains open: it is necessary to show that the modes contracting being do not quidditatively contain being. Indeed, if such were the case, the contractible and the contractor would not be distinguishable; hence, the contraction would not be a composition. The topic is the main subject of the following seventh *quæstio*, in which Matri sustains the following theses: the modes of infinity and fini-

62. In *Id.*, q. 6, a. 2, n. 161, vol. I, p. 190b Matri writes that, in the case of being, mode contributes a *novus gradus essentiæ*; in *Id.*, n. 162, vol. I, p. 191a he speaks of *gradus entis*; in *Id.*, n. 163, vol. I, pp. 191b-192a of *novus gradus essendi* and of *modus essendi*.

63. «Respondeo non esse eandem rationem de quantitate contracta per bicubitum, et tricubitum, et ente contracto ad creatum, et increatum, substantiam, et accidens, quia ratio bicubiti non importat novum gradum quantitatis, sicut importat Deus, et creatura, substantia, et accidens novum gradum entis, sed solum quandam dicit mensura quantitatis, quæ non est quid a quantitate diversum, sed est quantitas ipsa cum tanta extensione, vel tanta; Ad aliud exemplum de calore constat etiam ex solutione ad argumentum præcedens non adesse omnimodam paritatem, quia calor non respicit suos gradus ut inferiora, et partes subiectivas eius, sed potius ut partes integrales eiusdem entitatis caloris, ens autem respicit Deum, et creaturam, substantiam, et accidens proprie ut inferiora sua, et partes subiectivas» (*Id.*, n. 172, vol. I, p. 197b). «(...) albedo a suis gradibus præcisa, ut sic remanet confusa confusione graduum intrinsecorum, non autem partium subiectivarum, quia gradus non sint partes subiectivæ illius albedinis; ens autem præscindens a finito, et infinito nedum manet confusum confusione graduum intrinsecorum, sed etiam partium subiectivarum, atque ideo ad eius contractionem non sufficit determinatio per modum solius explicationis, quemadmodum sufficit ad tollendam confusionem albedinis præcisæ a gradibus suis individualibus, sed necessaria est determinatio per modum compositionis, et additionis, quia nec aliter, nec alio modo superius potest ad sua inferiora descendere» (*Id.*, vol. I, p. 197a-b).

tude are beings not formally, but really. This means that in reality being and its modes are identical, but when taken formally, as *rationes* that contract being, the modes do not include being. The point is that being affords reality, whereas the mode affords a certain way of being. Therefore, what permits the mode to be is the fact that it contracts being. Indeed, being confers reality to the mode thanks to the fact that the mode contracts it, while the mode confers determination to being thanks to the fact that being confers reality to it. This occurs because being and mode can be identified in the compound they constitute.⁶⁴

Briefly, it seems to me that Mastri's thesis is the following. In the case of predicamental *rationes* (as they are encountered by man), the contractible *ratio* and the contracting *ratio* may be, and are, taken respectively from what in reality is contractible and contracting. Accordingly, their composition in the face of the mind expresses their composition in reality. In the case of transcendental *rationes* (as they are learned by man), the contractible *ratio* and the contracting *ratio* may be, and are, both taken from a sole indivisible essence, inadequately known in the first case as it is shared in common with another, in the second case as being distinguishable from it. Hence, their composition in the face of the mind, as a composition *a posteriori* of two inadequate con-

64. «(...) ad interrogationem, qua quæritur, an determinativum entis sit ens, respondendum est, esse quidem ens, non ex se, sed ratione illius, quod coarctat, ipsum enim coarctando recipit esse ens; in compositione tamen non venit ratione entis, sed ratione determinati modi essendi, quem importat, et hoc pacto salvatur, quomodo hæc duo extrema ens, et modus, concurrant ad hanc compositionem, et utrumque conferat aliquid diversum ab alio; (...) ens determinatur a modis, ut sit tale, vel tale ens, modi vero recipiunt ab eo, quod sint entia, et aliquid reale, quatenus in tertio ex ipsis constituto simul identificantur» (*Id.*, q. 7, a. 1, n. 194, vol. 1, pp. 210b-211a). I should, however, like to mention that Mastri does not take up a clear stance on the question whether the inclusion or the exclusion of being in the quiddity of the modes is merely a matter of point of view, of the logical "use" of notions: when facing the thesis according to which modes, ultimate differences and characteristics (*passiones*) of being considered in themselves are formally being, while when considered denominatively they are not, he writes that «hæc declaratio est subtilis, et acuta, e per eam facilliter evaderentur multæ difficultates», but adds that he has to prefer the former declaration set out since «magis scoticæ doctrinæ consona» (*Id.*, n. 195, vol. 1, p. 211a-b). Cf. in general *Id.*, nn. 179-181, vol. 1, pp. 200b-202a and *Id.*, nn. 193-195, vol. 1, pp. 209b-211b.

cepts into one adequate concept, is nothing but the manifestation to the mind of such an essence. As we can see, Mastri does try to explain both what God and creatures have in common and what distinguishes them, and how both the concept they share and the concepts in which they differ may be formed. Of course, if what one asks Mastri to do is to clarify what the distinct referents *a parte rei* of these two inadequate *rationes* are, he does not satisfy such a request. However, I observe that, if by virtue of this it is claimed that our author does not say what distinguishes God and creatures, it is also necessary to state that he does not say what they have in common, either: not only can infinity or finitude, but also the being contracted by them, not be found as such *præter omnem actum intellectus*. Moreover, I would add, this occurs because he maintains that such a request is (to use an expression he employs on a different occasion) a *stulta interrogatio*, a pseudo-problem.⁶⁵

4. *Mastri's thesis on the being common to God and creatures, its contractors and its contraction to its inferiors*

4.1 *One proposal for interpretation*

I should now like to gather together the elements that make up Mastri's thesis on the formation and on the contraction of the being common to God and creatures and thus try to offer a unitary presentation of his thought.

Our author divides the positions concerning this question into two fields: that of those who sustain the thesis of contraction through explication and that of those who sustain the thesis of contraction through the composition in reality of being and contractors. The first thesis has two basic forms. In the first place, that maintained by the Nominalists and picked up, to a greater or lesser extent, by some Jesuit authors such as Hurtado de Mendoza, Arriaga and Oviedo: the *ratio* of being is produced by the activity of the mind which extends its consideration to every thing; its contraction consists in considering a smaller range

65. The expression is used with regards to the question as to whether the concept of being taken as distinct from its inferiors is or is not to be included in the inferiors; cf. *Id.*, q. 3, nn. 59 e 61, vol. I, pp. 112b e 114a-b.

of reality. In the second place, that maintained by the Thomists in general and by many authors of the New Schools, among whom above all Suárez: the *ratio* of being is produced by the activity of the mind when it sees the similarity among single things; its contraction consists in an explication of this *ratio*, without adding anything external to it. The second thesis is sustained by, probably by most of, the Scotistic School: transcendentals exist as such *ante opus intellectus*; their contraction consists, both when faced by the mind and in reality, in the addition of a mode to a *formalitas*.

Mastri intends to propose a thesis that lies mid-way between these two hypotheses. To this end, first he gives a strict interpretation of the two positions. He presents the first form of the first thesis as if it ignored any extra-mental foundation of the formation and contraction of the *ratio* of being; he presents the second form of the first thesis as if, in such a formation and contraction, it attributed the main role to the mind. He presents the second thesis as if it only recognised the mind as having a purely reproductive role. In the second place, he develops a confutation of the positions upheld. To the first form of the first thesis he objects that the formation and contraction in question has a foundation in reality, and to the first thesis in general that the mind contracts being through composition, thus starting from something it recognises in reality. To the second thesis he objects that being exists as such only *post opus intellectus* and is contracted by the work of the mind. In the third place, he eliminates other attempts at mediation, such as those of Meurisse and of Punch, by breaking them down and assigning their single parts to one or the other field. Finally, he puts forward his own doctrine, which can be in my opinion summed up in three passages. First: on the basis of the essences of God and creatures in as far as they are similar the human intellect produces the *ratio* of being, which, however, is not to be found in reality in the same way as the mind grasps it. Second: on the basis of the essences of God and creatures in as far as they are different the human intellect produces respectively the *rationes* of infinity and finitude, which, however, are not to be found in reality in the same way as the mind grasps them. Third: the human intellect clarifies the notion of being by

compounding it with the notions of infinity and finitude, carrying out a contraction which is found in reality in an embryonic form and in the mind in a complete way.

The demonstration that Mastri offers for his own thesis may be set out schematically in three moments. In the first place, he demonstrates that the contraction of being occurs through composition. On the one hand, he eliminates the obstacles to such a thesis by confuting those arguments that seem to show that the contraction in question occurs through explication; on the other, he provides arguments that prove it. There are essentially two arguments confuted: the one according to which the contractors of being are supposed to include being, and the one according to which the modes, to which he attributes the role of contractors, have the sole function of explicating the modified conceptual content. There are also two arguments that prove that the contraction in question is through composition: the one that shows that being is perfectly abstracted from its inferiors and that which shows that the passage from superior to inferior always takes place through composition. In the second place, our author demonstrates that the contraction takes place by means of the work of the mind. In this case, also, on the one hand, he eliminates the obstacles to such a thesis by confuting those arguments that seem to demonstrate that the contraction in question takes place through composition *ex natura rei*, on the other, he provides arguments that prove his contention. There are essentially three theses confuted: the one according to which all compositions are metaphysical compositions; the one according to which modes modify only within a certain species; and the one according to which the sole confused knowledge of inferiors is that which takes place within the adequate and distinct knowledge of what they have in common. All things considered, it seems to me that Mastri rests on just one argument to prove that the contraction in question takes place only by the work of the mind: the one according to which there can be no composition in God, so that God and creatures are thus revealed as radically different. In the third place, Mastri sustains that such a contraction occurs *cum fundamento in re*. To this aim, on the one hand he uses some elements from his doctrine on knowledge to substantiate the

possibility that the *ratio* of being is formed by the intellect immediately upon contact with the extramental reality; on the other he shows that being and its contractors express the nature of things not relatively to properties they possess as being thought, but relatively to what they are in reality.

To sum up: in facing the question that asks how one passes from what is shared by the infinite and the finite to the infinite and to the finite, Mastri replies that this does not occur either by clarification through explication, or by metaphysical composition. Not in the first way, since the infinite and the finite are less universal than what they have in common; nor in the second, because the infinite is not composed and is radically different from the finite. It occurs, on the contrary, by clarification through conceptual composition.⁶⁶

4.2 *A deeper enquiry: the debate with John Punch*

In a clash of opinion that lasted over ten years, Mastri and Punch face a significant question. The Italian Conventual and the Irish Observant disagree on more than a few points;⁶⁷ I shall here only examine the debate on the distinction between modes and differences and on the nature of genus.

4.2.1 *The question raised by Punch: Mastri's position reveals both insufficiency and incoherence*

As has already been seen, Mastri distinguishes the case of the contraction of transcendentals by modes from that of the con-

66. I think that this is the essence of Mastri's doctrine concerning the contraction of being to God and creatures by means of modes. Nevertheless, what I have proposed in this brief recapitulation is not a synthesis of all of Mastri's theses about the transcendental being. A full exposition should also face the questions concerning the distinction between quidditative predication and identical predication, the unity of being and its univocity, etc., about which cf. *infra*. Furthermore, on the basis of such themes Mastri divides and groups together the positions he faces in a different way from that summarily seen here.

67. A list of them can be found by going through the *additiones* with which the second edition of Punch's *Integer philosophiæ cursus ad mentem Scoti*, published in Lyon in 1649, is studied. See also, besides Novák's study in the present volume: DI VONA, *I concetti...*, pp. 109-114 and 129-133; FORLIVESI, "*Scotistarum princeps*"..., pp. 208-218; St. SOUSEDÍK, "Der Streit um den wahren Sinn der scotischen Possibilenlehre", in *John...*, pp. 191-204.

traction of predicamentals by differences. In the former, there are no distinct *formalitates*, nor is there a metaphysical composition, that is to say, a composition *ex parte rei* of a potential principle and an active one; in the latter, there are distinct *formalitates* and metaphysical composition. I have also recalled that, according to Mastri, on the one hand, being and infinity cannot be *formalitates*, distinguished through formal distinction, since this would give rise in God to a metaphysical composition; on the other, divine attributes are *formalitates* and are distinguished through formal distinction. Now, this complex of doctrines raises two problems. In the first place, one may ask oneself whether the contraction of being through modes really makes it possible to evade the difficulties posed by the contraction of being through differences. In the second place, one may question whether the thesis according to which being and infinity cannot be formally distinguished in God may not contradict the thesis according to which divine attributes are formally distinct.

These questions are known to Mastri and proposed also by Punch. The Italian friar, as we have seen, writes that the difference between mode and difference lies herein: mode is added to the modifiable in such a way as to provoke any variation of the formal *ratio* neither of the modifiable, nor of the modified, nor of the compound of mode and modified; on the contrary, difference gives rise to a compound of specifiable genus and specifying difference whose formal *ratio* is different from that of the former. Nonetheless, one might object to this thesis that if modes do not make the formal *ratio* of the transcendental being vary, then they are not sufficient to sustain the essential difference between God and creatures. Punch writes:

dicunt modum intrinsecum esse, qui non variat rationem formalem constituti per ipsum; circa quam tamen descriptionem explicandam Scotistæ inter se non conveniunt (...). Sed quomodocumque explicetur, non videtur sufficere ad propositum, quia sic [sic] intelligitur, quod modus non variet rationem formalem constituti, specificative loquendo, hoc etiam competit differentiæ, nam rationalitas non variat rationem formalem animalitatis, quam determinat, et constituit in esse hominem, sicut infinitas determinat ens, et constituit in esse Dei. Si vero intelligatur de constituto formaliter, et reductive, omnino videtur, quod illud, quo contrahitur ens, ut sic,

ad esse Dei, tam variet rationem formalem, et entis, et Dei, ac rationalitas variat rationem formalem animalis ac hominis; nam prorsus, aut tanta, aut maior est differentia inter Deum, et ens, quam inter hominem, et animal.⁶⁸

This is why, the Observant friar concludes, it is necessary to admit that the contraction of being to God and creatures occurs by means of true differences, and that consequently being is a genus. Mastri had already objected to this hypothesis, and would always do so, by countering that genus is in itself finite, and therefore something potential.⁶⁹ To this Punch replies that it is true that being and other transcendentals are not in themselves infinite, but they are when they are in God;⁷⁰ and this is possible because genus, taken in itself, is not finite. Either the being common to God and creatures is finite, the Irishman argues, or it is not; if it is, it cannot be contracted to God; if it is not, then the equivalence between genus and something finite and potential in common is false.⁷¹

As far as the second problem is concerned, Mastri himself in *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 9, a. 2, recalls a critical note on the part of the Thomists to Scotus' thought:

urgent passim alij Thomistæ, quod quando etiam hæc distinctio formalis ex natura rei daretur in creaturis, saltem in divinis admitti non potest inter divina attributa, aut relationes origines et essentiam, quia tunc sequeretur compositio in Deo, quantum sufficit ad destruendam summam eius simplicitatem, si non physica, saltem metaphysica (...).⁷²

Briefly: if the formal composition gives rise to a composition of

68. Joannes PONCIUS, *Integer philosophiæ cursus ad mentem Scoti*, Tractatus in Metaphysicam, disp. 2 *De ente ut sic*, q. 3 *De quibus, et quomodo prædicatur ens*, concl. 2, nn. 29-33; Lugduni ³1659 (archetypal edition Lugduni ²1649), pp. 890b-891a. Quoted from *Id.*, n. 31, p. 891a.

69. Cf. for example MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 2, nn. 132-134, vol. I, pp. 169b-173b.

70. PONCIUS, *Integer philosophiæ cursus*, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 3, concl. 2, nn. 34-35, p. 891a-b.

71. *Id.*, *Additio* to q. 3, pp. 891b-900b, in particular p. 892a. Cf. also *Id.*, *Additio* to q. 2 *Quid sit ens reale ut sic, et an dicat conceptum unum tam formalem quam obiectivum*, pp. 885a-888b.

72. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 11, a. 2, n. 231, vol. I, p. 848b.

potency and act, then it is necessary to deny that divine attributes are formally distinct. Well, Mastri does not only state that they are distinct in such a way but also even claims that in God the formal distinction has a greater strength than in creatures;⁷³ nonetheless, he denies that the distinction between being and infinity is a formal one. How is it possible for him to save the first thesis without rejecting the second?

4.2.2 *Mastri's reply: formal distinction, metaphysical composition and posteriority of modes*

In order to understand Mastri's stance with regard to this tangle of difficulties, let us look first of all at his reply to the second.

Mastri clarifies that although the union of formally distinct objects is possible both among infinite things and among finite things, only in the latter case does it involve metaphysical composition.⁷⁴ In *In Met.* he writes that two things distinguished by formal distinction can unite and really identify with each other in two ways, either both having the totality of being, that is both being infinite:

propter enim infinitatem unius rationis, quicquid potest esse cum ea, est idem perfecte sibi<.>⁷⁵

or by relating to each other as potency and act, so that they unite in an ulterior reality with respect to those distinguished by formal distinction:

cum enim ex utriusque finitate, et limitatione neutra habeat totalitatem essendi, nequit alterius entitatem radicaliter continere, ac sibi realiter identificare, quare ut unum per se constituent, opus est ut simul concurrant per modum per se actus, et potentiae; quod si non

73. *Id.*, q. 12, n. 244, vol. I, p. 862a.

74. The theme is discussed in *Id.*, q. 11, a. 2, nn. 225-226, vol. I, pp. 840b-842b; *Id.*, nn. 231-237, vol. I, pp. 848a-854a; MASTRIUS, *In 1 Sent.*, disp. 2 *De divinis attributis*, q. 2 *An, et quomodo attributa, ac relationes originis ab essentia distinguantur*, a. 3 *Satisfit obiectionibus*, ob. 3 *Ex summa Dei simplicitate, et unitate*, nn. 77-84, pp. 49a-52a; *Id.*, q. 8 *De divina simplicitate. An divina simplicitas cohæreat cum pluralitate formalitatum in Deo ubi examinatur sententia Poncij recentioris scotistæ*, a. 1 *Cur admissa pluralitate formalitatum in Deo non lædetur summa eius simplicitas*, pp. 145b-153a.

75. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 11, a. 2, n. 235, vol. I, p. 851b.

habent rationem actus, et potentiæ, sed amborum sunt actus, tunc unum efficiunt unitate aggregationis<.>⁷⁶

Now, finite things do not have the totality of being; therefore, they cannot unite in the first way. But infinite things do not relate to each other as potency and act; thus they cannot unite in the second manner.

(...) compositio non est unio distinctorum utcumque sed distinctorum vere componibilium, quæ ea ratione, qua finita, et limitata sunt ordinantur ad perfectionem alicuius tertij constituendam. (...) ideo enim realitates metaphysicæ compositionem offiunt [sic], quia una est potentialis ad aliam, quod dici nequit de essentia, et personalitate in divinis, cum ambo sint in ultima actualitate.⁷⁷

The conclusion is that all that is composed by means of potency and act is distinguished by formal distinction, but not all that is distinguished by formal distinction is united by the composition of potency and act:

unde falsum est, quod in argumento assumebatur distinctionem scilicet formalem sufficere ad compositionem metaphysicam, non enim ideo realitates generica, et specifica faciunt compositionem metaphysicam, quia abinvicem distinguuntur formaliter, sed quia non sunt perfecte idem realiter inter se, cum tantum in ratione tertij identifitentur, in quo coadunantur<.>⁷⁸

The same tenet is sustained by Mastri in the *Disputationes theologice in I librum Sententiarum*.

Dices realitates generis, et differentie, ideo facere compositionem metaphysicam, quia una est potentialis ad aliam; et unam esse potentialem ad aliam, quia formaliter distinguuntur; ergo ita erit de deitate, et relatione, si ponantur de natura rei distingui. Respondeo concessa prima assumpti parte negando secundam, potentialitas namque realitatis generice ad differentialem non provenit ex distinctione earum formali, sed ex imperfecta earum identitate reali, quam

76. *Id.*, n. 226, vol. I, p. 842a.

77. *Id.*, p. 842b. Cf. also *Id.*, n. 232, vol. I, p. 849b: «ad compositionem opus est, ut alterum sit potentia, et alterum actus, et quod unum realiter distinguatur ab alio, vel saltem non sit perfecte idem cum ipso, quia nihil est in potentia ad seipsum».

78. *Ib.*

habent emendicatam a tertio; non ita est de essentia, et relatione, ac attributis, quæ inter se identificantur ratione infinitatis; ideoque eorum identitas est perfectissima et summa, et consequenter tollit omnimodam potentialitatem unius ad aliud, quia nulla res est in potentia ad seipsam, et a seipsis perfectibilis.⁷⁹

Having said this, Mastri finds himself having to face a new difficulty: why should one not admit that this solution makes it possible to avoid the composition in God even in the case of transcendental degrees? Our author dedicates several pages to the theme, yet it seems to me that the substance of his reply can be thus summed up: in the case in which the things that are related to each another as superior, contractor and inferior (that is, as determinable, determinant and determinate) are *formalitates*, they are related to each other in terms of potency and act; but being, infinity and God are related as superior, contractor and inferior; thus, if they were *formalitates*, they would be related in terms of potency and act. In other words, they would be genus, difference and species in the usual, correct sense of the terms. The question has already been expressed in general terms in *In Met.*:

cum hæc <, id est *substantia, spiritus et vita,*> sint prædicata Dei quidditativa, non autem attributalia, gratis concedi potest non nisi inter se virtualiter distingui, et in unam indivisibilem formalitatem a parte rei coincidere; si enim dicerent diversas realitates a parte rei in Deo existentes, quia se habent ut superius, et inferius, tunc realitas communior esset aliquo modo in potentia ad minus communem, et sic facerent propriam metaphysicam in Deo compositionem (...).⁸⁰

Equally clear is its application to the case of being and of infinity in *In I Sent.*:

79. MASTRIUS, *In I Sent.*, disp. 2, q. 2, a. 3, ob. 3, n. 81, p. 50a. Cf. also *Id.*, q. 8, a. 1, n. 302, pp. 145b-146a: «non enim realitas generica cum differentiali compositionem faciunt metaphysicam eo, quod formaliter distinguantur abinvicem, sed quia non sunt perfecte idem realiter inter se, sed tantum ratione tertij, in quo uniantur, identificantur; unde cum identitas relationum, et attributorum in Deo cum divina essentia sit perfectissima ratione infinitatis, cuius munus est in ente infinito identificare illi omne realiter identificabile, talis summa identitas realis omnem excludit, compositionem, vel componibilitatem».

80. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 11, a. 2, n. 231, vol. I, p. 848b.

formalitas entis de se est indifferens ad finitatem, et infinitatem, et licet neutram formaliter includat, est tamen cum utraque disiunctim coniungibilis permissive; ergo erit vere perfectibilis per infinitatem perfectibilitate imperfectionem involvente.⁸¹

And to Punch's question whether if we suppose that the conjunction of being, taken as a genus, with infinity, should render the former not potential, Mastri replies that

nec modus, nec differentia addita variat naturam realitatis, cui advenit, unde si illa de se est communis, potentialis, et componibilis, talis intrinsece remanet ubicunque ponatur, et semper habebit rationem partis per modum determinabilis (...).⁸²

In this perspective, the argument with which Punch tried to demolish the presupposition according to which genus is perforce finite does not bother Mastri. The Italian friar admits, even sustains, that the being common to God and creatures is neither finite nor infinite, but in his opinion this is possible precisely because the transcendental being is not a contractible genus, i.e. a *realitas*; if it were a contractible genus, it could not be infinite, and it would not be possible to say that God is a being. The question posed by the Irishman, therefore, is the result of an equivocation, the outcome of an incorrect use of language.

As for the point Punch makes about mode and its inadequacy in justifying the essential distinction of God and creatures, what Mastri wrote in the *quæstiones* where he discusses the nature of modes and modal distinction still holds, so that the passages expressly dedicated to the Irishman's objections in the sixth *disputatio* of *In Met.* merely reiterate the theory that the contraction of the transcendental being by means of modes is the contraction *a posteriori* of an inadequate concept.⁸³ As we have seen, according to Mastri mode does not give rise to a variation of the formal *ratio* either of the modifiable, or of the modified, or of the compound of mode and modified, yet it does increase the

81. MASTRIUS, *In 1 Sent.*, disp. 2, q. 8, a. 2 *An sine præiudicio divinæ simplicitatis possit in Deo admitti metaphysica compositio ex genere, et differentia*, pp. 152a-162b; quoted from *Id.*, n. 327, p. 158b.

82. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 6, q. 11, a. 2, n. 235, vol. I, p. 852b.

83. Cf. *Ib.*

appropriateness of the *ratio* of the modifiable, which variation is expressed, in the case of being and its modes, as a composition of inadequate concepts. This reveals to the mind the essential difference between God and creatures, but it still remains that the modes of infinity and finitude are not the reason for their essential difference, nor have they contracted a genus to a species; they have, on the other hand, expressed the birth of two adequate conceptual contents. Hence, what arises in the contraction carried out by the modes is not a new generic, or specific, degree; it is a new degree of existing, such, however, as to point out to the mind the essential difference of that which is essentially different *a parte rei*.

I do not perhaps betray Mastri's thought in saying this. Certainly the formal *rationes* of God and creature are different; certainly the contraction of being by means, respectively, of infinity and finitude expresses such a diversity. However, such a contraction does not express a contraction *a parte rei*; it expresses the passage from a knowledge possessed through inadequate concepts (being, infinity, finitude) to one possessed through adequate concepts (infinite being and finite being). It is, therefore, possible to admit that infinity and finitude express a variation of the formal *ratio*; nevertheless, it must be denied that they are the reason for this. Being, infinity, finitude and the compositions of the former with the two latter are the projections in front of the knowledge of the work and of its products by which knowledge itself, taken as a real activity, grasps infinite being, finite being and their convening.

4.3 *Related theses and problematic aspects*

The thesis examined thus far is closely tied to some doctrines I only incidentally mentioned and which deserve at least some remarks. I hence dedicate to these doctrines the following pages, forewarning readers that I consider some aspects of Mastri's reasoning to be unclear.

I do not intend to tackle questions of a highly general nature, such as the plausibility of an ontology constructed on the distinction among transcendentals, genera, species, differences, modes and individuals, which searches for the different types of extra-

mental referents of such different classes of conceptual contents. It seems to me that to develop considerations of this tenor is of little help in bringing to light the articulation of our author's thought. I prefer to deal with some particular themes, in the hope of encouraging an interchange of historiographical interpretations which may lead to a better understanding of Mastri's theoretics.

Once he has rejected any hyper-realistic reading of the thought of *Doctor Subtilis*, Mastri intends to confirm Scotism as an efficacious middle way between two (in certain aspects) opposing positions: that of the Thomists, taking the term either strictly or broadly according to the single themes I shall speak about below; and that of the Jesuit *nominales*, first and foremost of whom Arriaga, to whom the Italian friar also attributes the origin of Punch's thesis. Among the doctrines that Mastri uses to carry out his project, I shall now draw attention to the following six. Against the Thomists' thesis, which denies the unity and univocity of the transcendental being, he sustains: the perfect distinction (*præcisio*) of being from its inferiors; the purely identical predication of being with regard to the ultimate differences, to the modes of infinity and finitude and to the characteristics (*passiones*) of being; the extrinsic nature of the inequality of being. Against the thesis of the *nominales* and of Arriaga, accepted in some aspects also by Punch, he sustains: the quidditative inclusion of being in the non-ultimate differences; the inequality, although only extrinsic, of being; the radical diversity of it from its immediate inferiors.

4.3.1 *The distinction of being from its inferiors*

In the *disputatio de natura entis* our author intends to prove that the concept of being is unitary, both as an act of knowledge and as a cognitive content, and that it is so perfectly. To such an end, he intends to demonstrate that the *ratio* of being is perfectly distinct (*præcisa*) from the inferiors; he is thus obliged to counterattack the thesis of Peter Auriol, of the Thomists and of Aversa. These authors' criticism of Scotus is constituted by the well-known argument based on the observation according to which being is also included in the differences that contract it. Every particular *ratio*, including that of the contractors, either is

a being, or it is not a being; if it is not a being, it is not, and therefore could not add anything to being; if it is a being, it does not add anything to being. The conclusion is that neither differences can be perfectly distinct from being, nor can the latter be so from them.⁸⁴

In the first and third *quæstio* of the *disputatio* examined here, Mastri replies by saying that what contracts being is really, not formally (i.e. quidditatively), a being.⁸⁵ However, he adds that even in the case in which being were also included essentially in its contractors, it would remain separable from them:

concesso, quod essentialiter in omnibus suis inferioribus, ac etiam contrahentibus imbibatur, adhuc negatur consequentia cum probatione, nam solum ex hoc sequeretur ad summum non posse inferiora, et contrahentia præscindi ab ente, non tamen e contra, alioquin genus præscindi non posset a speciebus, ac differentijs contrahentibus; ratio a priori est, quia licet superius in suis inferioribus intime imbibatur, non tamen quoad formalitatem est omnino idem cum ipsis, sed differunt penes magis, et minus commune, et ideo cum inferiora secundum proprium esse differant, et secundum rationem entis conveniant, potest intellectus rationem convenientiæ concipere, non concipiendo saltim explicite rationem differentiæ, et hæc est obiectiva, vel saltim formalis præcisio superioris a suis inferioribus, et contrahentibus; nec sequitur, si est conceptus superioris præcisus ab eis, ergo non est in eis inclusus, non enim hæc separatio est physica, sed intentionalis, quæ fit præcise ex eo, quod per cognitionem attingitur ratio, in qua inferiora conveniunt, non attingendo illam in qua differunt (...).⁸⁶

In the third *quæstio* he even writes that the question “Do the beings from which being is abstracted include being or not?” is a *stulta interrogatio*:

quía vel quæris an remaneat conceptus præcisus in inferioribus, a quibus abstrahitur, a parte rei, vel per intellectum; et quocunque

84. *Id.*, disp. 2, q. 1, n. 23, vol. I, pp. 85b-86a; *Id.*, n. 25, vol. I, p. 87a-b; *Id.*, n. 26, vol. I, p. 88a; *Id.*, q. 3, nn. 59[omitted by mistake]-62, vol. I, pp. 112a-115a, *passim*.

85. *Id.*, q. 1, n. 23, vol. I, p. 86a; *Id.*, n. 26, vol. I, p. 87a; *Id.*, n. 27, vol. I, p. 88b.

86. *Id.*, n. 26, vol. I, pp. 87b-88a. Cf. also *Id.*, n. 27, vol. I, p. 88b and *Id.*, q. 3, n. 50, vol. I, p. 106b.

modo fiat, est parum consentanea, et parum urget conclusionem nostram; si in primo sensu interrogas, est stulta interrogatio, quia illa præcisio fit per intellectum, et non a parte rei, et ideo adhuc remanet conceptus præcisus in inferioribus a parte rei; si fiat in alio sensu, nil minus insipiens est, quia tunc intellectus præscindens nil cogitat de inferioribus; a quibus præscindit, sed tantum de ratione præcisa (...).⁸⁷

The sense of Mastri's position seems clear: the mind has the power to consider the contractible separately from the contractors whether the latter include or do not include the former; in other words, the abstractive power of the mind is sufficient condition for it to grasp the contractible as a perfectly unitary conceptual content, and which is distinct from the inferiors.

Nevertheless, our author's pages also offer a different thesis. In this very same third *quæstio* he faces Aversa's following objection:

Omnis conceptus præcisus debet contrahi ad inferiora, quæ sub se continet, per quasdam differentias, quæ non includant eundem conceptum communem; sed ens non potest contrahi ad inferiora entia per huiusmodi differentias; ergo ens non habet conceptum perfecte præcisus (...).⁸⁸

Here is Mastri's reply:

Respondeo iuxta allatam doctrinam adhuc dupliciter, primo negando maiorem, quia parum refert ad perfectam præcisionem conceptus contrahibilis, quod includatur in differentijs contrahentibus, vel non; sufficit enim, quod differentia contrahentes non includantur in ipso actualiter (...); verum quia maiorem illam putamus esse veram de quaunque ratione contrahibili, et contrahente etiam in prædicatis transcendentis, ideo iuxta doctrinam scoticam inferius tradendam de modis entis negamus minorem (...).⁸⁹

Furthermore, at the beginning of the seventh *quæstio* he writes:

ad rationem compositionis necessario exigitur, ut pars sit extra aliam compartem; et ideo qui asserunt rationem entis in suis quoque contrahentibus essentialiter imbibit; consequenter eius contrac-

87. *Id.*, n. 61, vol. I, p. 114a-b. Cf. also *Id.*, n. 59[omitted by mistake], vol. I, pp. 112b-113a.

88. *Id.*, n. 60, vol. I, p. 113b.

89. *Id.*, n. 61, vol. I, pp. 113b-114a.

tionem ponunt per modum simplicis explicationis, et maioris expressionis, non autem compositionis, vel additionis.⁹⁰

If I understand this correctly, in the first group of texts Mastri sustains, accepting the Nominalists' instances conveyed by the Jesuit authors, that even in the case in which being were included in its contractors, it would still be perfectly distinct from them thanks to the abstractive power of the mind. On the contrary, in the above text of the seventh *quæstio* he maintains, accepting the realistic instances of Thomism, that if being were included in its contractors, it would not be perfectly distinct from them. Moreover, in his reply to Aversa in the third *quæstio* our author refutes the thesis according to which the abstractive power of the mind is sufficient condition to give rise to a contractible concept by composition, and is, therefore, perfectly distinct from the inferiors. From this, I here pose an open question: is, according to Mastri, the abstractive power of the mind to produce a conceptual content distinct from its inferiors through non-mutual distinction a sufficient condition to produce a *ratio* of being perfectly distinct from the *rationes* of its inferiors and contractors, or not? Accordingly, is the inclusion of the *ratio* of being in the contractors a sufficient condition in order to affirm that its contraction consists in an explication, or not?

4.3.2 *Identical predication*

Whatever reply may be given to the two questions I have just formulated, it is certain that in the seventh *quæstio* of the *disputatio de natura entis* Mastri does his utmost to show that the ultimate differences, the intrinsic modes of infinity and finitude and the characteristics (*passiones*) of being are really, but not formally, beings. To this end, our author proceeds in two phases: at first he demonstrates the plausibility of his theory on a logical plane; after which he indicates the extramental foundation of those propositions which, in his opinion, predicate being really but not formally of ultimate differences, of its modes and of its characteristics.

90. *Id.*, q. 7, a. 1, n. 179, vol. I, p. 201a.

The logical doctrine used by Mastri is that concerning identical predication. The tenth *disputatio* of *In Org.* presents the following explanatory scheme. Predication is divided into formal and identical:

formalis (...) est illa, in qua prædicatum dicitur convenire subiecto per quamdam adiacentiam, et inhæSIONem, et est duplex, vel essentialis, vel accidentalis; prima est, in qua prædicatum adiacet subiecto quidditative, et essentialiter, ut “homo est animal”, secunda, in qua prædicatum adiacet subiecto accidentaliter, ut “homo est albus” <;>⁹¹

identica est (...) in qua prædicatum enunciatum esse idem realiter cum subiecto, non per modum formæ adiacentis, et hæc est duplex, alia est omnimode identica, (...) et est illa, in qua idem prædicatur de seipso, ut “homo est homo” (...); alia non est omnimode identica, ut quando duo, quamvis proprijs rationibus formalibus sint diversa, identificantur tamen realiter, qua ratione possunt ad invicem prædicari <.>⁹²

91. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 10, q. 3 *De regulis bonæ prædicationis ad veras enunciationes efficiendas*, [prologus], n. 62, p. 797a-b. My quotation marks. The passage continues by dealing with denominative predication: «et hæc <secunda> peculiari modo dicitur denominativa, nam si velimus rationem denominativam ampliare etiam ad quidditative prædicata, sic prædicatio denominativa convertitur cum formali in communi» (*Ib.*).

92. *Id.*, n. 63, p. 797b. My quotation marks. In actual fact, Mastri and Belluto also speak of the distinction between formal predication and identical predication in *Id.*, disp. 5, q. 2, a. 4, n. 107, p. 467a. Here, however, “*homo est animal rationale*” is presented as an example of formal (or direct, or *artificiosa*) predication, while identical predication is restricted to cases in which distinct extremes distinguished by reasoning reason are connected: «Identica vero prædicatio est, in qua utrumque extremum eodem modo concipitur, nec distinguuntur, nisi ratione ratiocinante, ut cum dicimus *homo est homo, Petrus est Petrus*». Also worthy of attention is paragraph 63 of the tenth *disputatio* of *In Org.*, which closes with the distinction between the four possible cases of predication afforded by the abstract or concrete nature of the terms: concrete of concrete, concrete of abstract, abstract of concrete, abstract of abstract. *In Met.* applies the first and last case of this scheme in order to introduce a distinction within the identical predication of the second type: «prædicatio identica in abstracto communiter fieri solet sic quod abstractum prædicatur de abstracto, et quando ita fit, tunc identificatio prædicati cum subiecto procedit ex infinitate actuali, vel saltim permissiva alterius extremorum; quando autem identificatio mendicatur a tertio, in quo extrema uniantur per identitatem, tunc nequit fieri prædicatio vera in abstracto, sed tantum in concreto, quia si abstrahantur a tertio tollitur ratio identificationis» (MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 7, a. 2, n. 207, vol. I, pp. 218b-219a). Cf. *infra*.

Having said this, one might ask oneself about what permits the mind to unite as identical in reality *rationes* that it conceives as diverse. The question I pose has two senses. First, one may ask oneself what power the mind expresses when it judges the real identity of diverse cognitive contents. As far as this question is concerned, Mastri writes in *In Met.*:

prædicatio identica est illa, in qua præcise significatur prædicatum eandem rem, ac physicam entitatem importare cum subiecto, præscindendo a denominatione, et a formalitatibus metaphysicis, et obiectivis conceptibus; declarat enim prædicatio identica, totum id, quod est subiective a parte rei, non quod obiective est in intellectu (...); (...) in omni rigore veræ sunt propositiones illæ in sensu identico, et reali, quia propositio identica attingit rem, et non formalitatem<.>⁹³

Second, one might ask oneself what it is, on the level of cognitive content (hence on the extra-mental plane too, to the extent that there are aspects of cognitive contents that do not depend on the mind), that permits the mind to tie together *rationes* which are different. In *In Org.*, Mastri and Belluto merely hint at two possibilities. The first exists if the two *rationes* of which the real identity is affirmed are really identical only in a third one. An example of such a type of identification is that of the real identity of the genus and of the difference in the species. The second is found when at least one of the two *rationes* is infinite. The proof of this, our authors argue, is that there cannot be more than one infinite.⁹⁴

93. *Id.*, a. 1, n. 193, vol. I, p. 210a.

94. «(...) identificatio ex duplici capite provenire potest, vel quia sunt eadem realiter alicui tertio, qua ratione inter se postea identificantur, ut sunt genus, et differentia in specie, nam animal, et rationale sunt idem realiter ratione tertij, scilicet hominis, cui identificantur; et si ab illa unione in tertio præscinderetur, dicendo animalitas, et rationalitas, unum non esset idem realiter alteri. Et possunt aliqua inter se realiter identificari, etiam ut a tertio præscindunt, quia ambo, vel unum eorum est infinitum; infinitas nam est ratio identificationis realis, (...) quia cum implicat dari plura infinita realiter distincta, (...) quicquid convenit alicui infinito, transit in eius perfectam identitatem realem, et per consequens quantumcumque duo abstrahantur a tertio, si saltem unum illorum sit infinitum, habebit in se, unde possit perfecte realiter identificare sibi, quicquid est sibi compossibile» (MASTRIVS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 10, q. 3, [prologus], n. 63, pp. 797b-798a).

In *In Met.*, the scheme is more complex. In his first step, Mastri recalls the case of identity on the strength of infinity, but sets that forth relative to the identity of finite *rationes* in a more generic form: here he speaks of *rationes* conceived of in an inadequate way. Here is the text I withheld in the text recalled just above:

declarat enim prædicatio identica totum id, quod est subiective a parte rei, non quod obiective est in intellectu, cum præsertim res inadæquate concipit, ut formalitates distinguat metaphysicas: cum igitur ita sit a parte rei, quod potentiæ animæ eandem rem cum animæ essentia constituunt, et integrant eandem entitatem; idcirco in omni rigore <etc.> <.>⁹⁵

We already know that for Mastri a thing may be conceived of in an inadequate way, together with other things, in two manners: either in an adequate concept of something in common with that thing and with others; or in an inadequate concept which only expresses the embryonic resemblance among several things.⁹⁶ This permits him to introduce along with the case of the *formalitates* that of the transcendental being as referred to ultimate differences, intrinsic modes and characteristics (*passiones*):

Ita igitur in proposito cum passiones entis identificentur cum ente, sicut et eius modi, et ultimæ rerum differentię cum eisdem rebus, quarum sunt differentię, sequitur hæc omnia esse realiter entia, ac in sensu identico in omni rigore propositiones istas fore concedendas, “passio entis est ens”, “modi entis sunt entia”, “ultimæ rerum differentię sunt entia”, non tamen in sensu formali; Neque ex hoc sequitur esse non entia, vel nihil, sicut non sequitur in divinis, “Pater non est formaliter sapientia ergo absolute est non sapientia”, quia est realiter, ac identice sapientia. Hinc eleganter dixit Doctor cit. q. 21. de Anima. loquens de modis contrahentibus ens, ac ultimis differentijs, quod sunt entia, *realiter, non tamen formaliter; nec tamen ex hoc sequitur, quod secundum se sint non entia, sicut non sequitur “homo secundum se non est albus, ergo secundum se est non albus”, quia nec ex ratione humanitatis habet quod sit albus, nec non albus, entis ergo differentię non per rationem differentię sunt entia, nec tamen sequitur, quod per rationem differentię sint non entia (...)*⁹⁷

95. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 7, a. 1, n. 193, vol. I, p. 210a.

96. See note 10.

97. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 7, a. 1, n. 193, vol. I, p. 210a-b. Mastri's italics, my quotation marks.

As to which consideration, then, on the level of cognitive content, the statement of the real union of being with, according to the case, ultimate differences, its intrinsic modes and its characteristics (*passiones*) is founded on, I have already recalled that according to our author being confers reality on a mode thanks to the fact that the mode contracts it, while the mode confers determination on being thanks to the fact that being confers reality on it.⁹⁸

In a second passage of *In Met.*, which I partly pointed out shortly above, Mastri introduces, on the other hand, a division within the first case: that relative to identical predication through the infinity of at least one of its terms. He distinguishes between actual infinity and permissive infinity and places in the latter the foundation for the identical predication without real composition in the case of transcendentals:

prædicatio identica in abstracto communiter fieri solet sic quod abstractum prædicatur de abstracto, et quando ita fit, tunc identificatio prædicati cum subiecto procedit ex infinitate actuali, vel saltim permissiva alterius extremorum; quando autem identificatio mendicatur a tertio, in quo extrema uniuntur per identitatem, tunc nequit fieri prædicatio vera in abstracto, sed tantum in concreto, quia si abstrahantur a tertio tollitur ratio identificationis; in proposito genus dicitur identice de differentia prædicari secundo modo, non autem primo modo, quia hæc non est vera, “animalitas est rationalitas”, nam in tali statu extrema non concernunt tertium, quod erat eis ratio identificationis; ens autem dicitur de suis inferioribus, ac differentijs non ultimis etiam in abstracto, unde ista conceditur, “animalitas est entitas”, “rationalitas est entitas” (...).⁹⁹

It seems to me that Mastri’s theory about identical predication poses more than one problem of interpretation. I do not see, for example, how he makes the thesis according to which, in the case of transcendentals, identical predication is based on the fact that their contractors are identical and relative to them compatible with the thesis according to which it is based on the permissive infinity of the former. To keep to essentials, I wonder whether saying that «prædicatio identica est illa, in qua præcise signifi-

98. See note 64.

99. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 7, a. 2, n. 207, vol. I, pp. 218b-219a. My quotation marks. Cf. also *Id.*, n. 210, vol. I, p. 221a.

catur prædicatum eandem rem, ac physicam entitatem importare cum subiecto, præscindendo a denominatione, et a formalitatibus metaphysicis, et obiectivis conceptibus», i.e. saying that it expresses «totum id, quod est subiective a parte rei, non quod obiective est in intellectu», means saying that the mind has the power to grasp the structures of reality without taking into account its cognitive contents. One might think that, according to our author, the mind can skip over its knowledge in order to express the reality beyond it, or can compare its cognitive contents (if not even its real states) directly with reality, almost as if they all were objects on the same plane.

From what I have observed elsewhere, and pondering over Mastri's words just recalled, I am of the opinion that the sense of his position is another. He holds that the contents of knowledge declare to it, in different ways and to a different extent according to the case, the structures of reality. It is, that is to say, the very contents of knowledge that express to the mind the aspects for which they are its products and those for which they are not. At the same time, the mind has the power to linger over both and to combine them in judgement in such a way as to express the truth of things.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, as I have already observed, judgements are also for Mastri objective, although complex, concepts;¹⁰¹ what difference is there, then, between a complex objective concept constructed in the form of formal predication and a complex objective concept constructed in the form of identical predication? Similarly, it seems to me not clear whether our author considers the inclusion or non-inclusion of being in the quiddity of modes a matter of point of view (i.e. a matter of aspect of the mode of infinity or of finitude explicated by the mind), or a matter of the nature of mode taken as an object (that is: taken as it is manifested to knowledge, as it does not exist as such in reality).¹⁰² In conclusion, it seems to me that the theme requires further investigation.

100. Cf. what I have written about Mastri and Belluto's doctrine of truth in "La distinzione..."

101. *Ib.*

102. See note 64.

4.3.3 *Being and differences*

In the course of the *disputatio de natura entis*, Mastri discusses on more than one occasion the following well-known dilemma. A property of the genus is being excluded from the differences that contract it; therefore, if being were excluded from such differences, it would be a genus. On the other hand, the property of what is univocal is being contractible by differences that do not include it; therefore, if being were included in its differences, it would not be univocal.

In the fifth *quæstio*, for example, he faces the debate consequent to a well-known objection of the Thomists to a thesis by Scotus: if being were univocal, it would be a genus; but being is not a genus; therefore, it is not univocal.¹⁰³ In the face of such an argument, Mastri writes, some authors, such as Arriaga, Aversa and Punch, concede and sustain that being is a genus; notwithstanding this, the solution must be rejected. According to Aristotle, he writes, being is included in differences, which contradicts the nature of the genus; furthermore, if being were a genus, there would be composition in God, which cannot be.¹⁰⁴ Other authors, among whom the Scotists themselves, deny that everything that is univocal must be a genus. However, the Thomists reply to them that a reality is univocal only if it is potential and contractible; therefore, if being is univocal, it is potential and contractible, but this means a genus; therefore, if being is univocal, it is a genus. Mastri replies that this objection does not affect his doctrine, as he does not admit that being is a potential and contractible reality. On the contrary, he continues, it may be valid for those who sustain that being is both potential and included in differences.¹⁰⁵ After which he adds:

At instat Ioannes de s. Thoma magis contra nos Scotistas eam rationem concludere, quam contra alios, quia in nostra opinione ens non includitur in differentijs, unde nihil ei deficit, quin sit genus; Sed neque hæc instantia cogit, quia, ut est videre loc. cit. <, id est I. d. 3. q. 3. sub N,> Doctor non excludit ens a quibuscunque diffe-

103. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 2, n. 129, vol. I, p. 167a.

104. *Id.*, n. 130, vol. I, pp. 167a-168a.

105. *Id.*, p. 168a-b.

rentijs, sed tantum ab ultimis differentijs, et concedit de aliqua non ultima quidditative prædicari, genus autem cum sit realitas potentialis ad quemlibet differentiam, de nulla prorsus quidditative prædicari potest, et ideo hoc sufficit, ne ens sit genus (...).¹⁰⁶

With this, Mastri advocates the following thesis. He admits both that what is excluded from all its contractors is a genus, and that what is included in all its contractors is not univocal. Consequently, he maintains, on the one hand, that being is not excluded from all the differences, and is thus not a genus; on the other, that being is excluded at least from some differences, and is therefore to some extent univocal. The outcome is that he has to distinguish two types of differences: those in which being is included and those in which it is not included.

A significant part of the seventh *quæstio*, perhaps the most laborious in the whole *disputatio*, is dedicated precisely to this theme. Here, our author intends to demonstrate in the first place that being is not included in the formal and quidditative concept either of its modes, or of ultimate differences, or of its characteristics, and hence that they are not predicated *in quid*; in the second place, that they are predicated really and identically; finally, and consequently, that being is a univocal predicate, but is not predicated in a univocal way.¹⁰⁷ The first article in the *quæstio* develops this programme step by step; the second faces the objections to this thesis in the same order.

Mastri opens the discussion on the inclusion of being in differences by making a distinction between ultimate differences and non-ultimate differences. He distinguishes three types of physical realities: those constituted purely by form; those constituted by matter and by one single substantial form; and those constituted by matter and by more than one subordinate substantial form. Now, forms are constituted by more than one for-

106. *Id.*, p. 168b.

107. «Pro resolutione quæsti dicendum est ens non includi in formali, et quidditativo conceptu modorum eius, ultimarum differentiarum, ac denique passionum suarum, atque ideo ens de illis non prædicari in quid, etiam ut ly *in quid*, dicit prædicatum pertinens ad essentiam rei in primo modo dicendi per se; sed tantum realiter, et identice, unde respectu illorum est quidem univocum prædicatum, sed non univoce dictum» (*Id.*, q. 7, a. 1, n. 178, vol. I, p. 200a).

mality. Both genus and difference are traits of formality; however, there are two cases of this. The difference may be drawn from a formality that belongs to the same form as that to which the formality from which the genus is drawn belongs. In this case the difference supposes only for that formality and is an ultimate difference. Or, the difference may be drawn from a formality belonging to a different form from that to which the formality from which the genus is taken belongs. In this case the difference supposes for all that form from a formality of which it is drawn, and is a non-ultimate difference.¹⁰⁸

Having clarified this, our author applies the distinction just mentioned to the question of the predication of being. Since the non-ultimate difference supposes for the whole form from a formality of which it is drawn, it contains being quidditatively and formally. On the contrary, since the ultimate difference supposes exclusively for a definite and ultimate formality, it is not essentially a being but merely really. The property of this difference, Mastri argues, is purely that of inducing diversity; hence it does not have as one of its properties being a being, otherwise it would cause conformity; on the other hand, it is certainly a being, yet it is so on the strength of the fact that it contracts it and, in doing so, is identified with it.¹⁰⁹

Mastri defends his doctrine against numerous objections. For the moment, I should like to draw attention to the following one:

Secundo obijcitur pro differentijs ultimis, quod ipse [sic] quoque includant formaliter rationem entis, nam Aristoteles 3. Metaph. 10 inde probat ens non posse esse genus, quia in omnibus differentijs, et modis, quibus contrahitur, essentialiter includitur, quod repugnat generi ex 6. Topic. cap. 3. nec valet respondere cum Scoto, ait Suarez, ens non esse genus, quia licet non in omnibus, saltem in aliquibus differentijs includitur scilicet in non ultimis; nam quid refert, quod ens includatur in quibusdam ultimis, et remotis differentijs, ut non sit genus respectu substantiæ, et accidentis, in quæ proxime, et univoce dividitur per differentias proprias, et extra sui rationem? Satis ergo erit ad rationem generis habere differentias ali-

108. *Id.*, nn. 183-185, vol. I, pp. 203a-204b; *Id.*, a. 2, nn. 212-216, vol. I, pp. 222a-225a.

109. *Id.*, a. 1, n. 185, vol. I, pp. 204b-205a; *Id.*, a. 2, nn. 206-208, vol. I, pp. 217b-220a.

quas respectu aliquarum specierum in ordine ad quas salva saltim constitet ratio generis.¹¹⁰

What interests us is the thesis asserted by Suárez *dialectice*: for Scotus the differences that contract being to substance and accident do not include being; therefore, according to the Mediaeval master, being is a genus, with respect to substance and accident.¹¹¹ Mastri replies that it makes no sense to speak of “genus with respect to something”: if I understand Mastri’s point of view correctly, if the genus is a *formalitas*, then it must be excluded not only from the differences that contract it immediately, but also from the differences that contract its inferiors.

(...) cum (...) genus sit entitas potentialis respectu omnium differentiarum, de nulla prorsus prædicari potest in quid, sive sit ultima, sive non ultima, unde ad removendam ab ente rationem generis sufficit, quod in quibusdam differentiis non ultimis quidditative includatur, etiamsi excludatur ab alijs, et ob id neque respectu illarum, a quibus excluditur, poterit dici genus, quia genus ut sic, petit excludi ab omnibus prorsus differentiis, et non a quibusdam tantum, unde sicut ratio generis non potest salvari per inclusionem in una tantum, specie, quia plures respicere debet saltim in aptitudine, ita nec salvari poterit per exclusionem, tantum a quibusdam differentiis, quia ex sui natura postulat ab omnibus excludi.¹¹²

110. *Id.*, n. 206, vol. I, pp. 217b-218a.

111. Mastri quotes correctly the passage from Suárez to which he refers, which says: «nam, quid refert, quod ens includatur in quibusdam ultimis et remotis differentiis, ut non sit genus respectu substantiæ et accidentis, in quæ proxime et univoce dividitur per differentias proprias, et extra sui rationem?» (Franciscus SUAREZ, *Disputationes metaphysicæ*, disp. 2 *De ratione essentiali seu conceptu entis*, sect. 5 *Utrum ratio entis transcendat omnes rationes et differentias inferiorum entium, ita ut in eis intime et essentialiter includatur*, n. 10; in IDEM, *Opera omnia*, ed. C. Berton, Parisiis: Apud Ludovicum Vivès, 1856-1877, vol. XXV, p. 96b). In *Id.*, vol. XXVII, p. 368, Berton (followed, as far as I know, by all the later scholars) suggests emending “*quibusdam ultimis et remotis differentiis*” with “*quibusdam non ultimis et remotis differentiis*”. I hold this correction to be reasonable but not necessary, as is shown by Mastri’s interpretation of the passage: the objection made here by Suárez to Scotus does not depend upon a generic irrelevancy of the inclusion of being in non-ultimate differences; it depends upon the irrelevance of the inclusion of being in any difference that is not an immediate contractor of being.

112. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 2, n. 207, vol. I, p. 218b. In the second part of the paragraph, in disagreement with the Complutensians, our author adds that while genera are predicated to the differences by identical

Here, too, Mastri uses the distinction between ultimate and non-ultimate differences to deny that being is a genus while still saving its nature as a unitary *ratio*.

The interpretation suggested by Mastri of Scotus' argument improves the comprehensibility of the latter. Nonetheless, I doubt the doctrine of the distinction between two types of difference, even in the form expounded by the Italian friar, makes it possible to deny that being is a genus. If I understand rightly, the thesis of our author can be summarised in four points. The genus is always a *formalitas* and, as such, is never contained in the difference. The difference is always drawn from a *formalitas*; however, in the case of ultimate differences it *supponit* for that one *formalitas*, in the case of non-ultimate differences *supponit* for the entire form from which it is drawn. Now, non-ultimate differences include being. Therefore, being is not a genus.

To tell the truth, it seems to me that this thesis demonstrates more than Mastri hopes for. The being which is included in the non-ultimate differences is finite being. If the argument showed that the being included in it is not a genus, it would demonstrate that finite being is also not a genus. Yet our author sustains that finite being is a genus. Hence, if the argument were valid, he would contradict himself. Moreover, I observe that both Scotus and his seventeenth-century disciple exploit two presuppositions: the former, the presupposition according to which there may be things constituted by more than one coordinate substantial form;¹¹³ the latter, the presupposition according to which the genus is excluded from any difference, both whether, taken as a name, it means a single formality, and whether it signifies an entire form.¹¹⁴ Therefore, it is not obvious to me the efficacy of the

predication «tantum in concreto, quia si abstrahantur a tertio tollitur ratio identificationis», on the contrary being «dicitur de suis inferioribus, ac differentijs non ultimis etiam in abstracto»; it still, therefore, remains that being is not a genus even when the level of identical predication is taken into consideration (*Id.*, pp. 218b-219a).

113. Mastri himself recognises that the whole argument is based on this presupposition. Cf. *Id.*, n. 216, vol. I, p. 225a.

114. Cf. SCOTUS, *Ord.*, I, dist. 3, pars 1, q. 3, Ad quæstionem, [Argumenta contra univocationem entis eorumque solutio], n. 160, vol. III, p. 99: «semper illud a quo sumitur conceptus generis, secundum se est potentiale ad illam reali-

reason which should prevent, both for Scotus and for our Conventuals, (having posited the hypothesis a plurality of substantial forms) being from being a *formalitas* included in all the substantial forms of the thing, including that form for which the non-ultimate difference *supponit*. Consequently, it does not seem to me that the inclusion of being in non-ultimate differences makes it possible to exclude that being is a *formalitas*.

Two aspects of Mastri's texts confirm this perplexity of mine. In the first place, I note that he does not make use of the argument in question precisely where it would be useful to him, that is in the fourth *quæstio* of the *disputatio* being examined; and that he does not provides any reason for this omission. In the second place, I have noticed that our author poses a strict parallelism between contraction by mode and contraction by differences. He writes that the contraction of being by modes and the contraction of genera by differences occur in the same way;¹¹⁵ he

tatem a qua accipitur conceptus differentiaë, sive ad illam formam si differentia sumatur a forma».

115. «(...) ut notavimus disp. 5. Log. q. 3. art. 3. quantum attinet ad exclusionem contracti a contrahentibus, eadem fere militat ratio de differentijs respectu generum, et modorum respectu entis, unde rationes omnes ibi adductæ ad probandam exclusionem generis a differentijs contrahentibus, hic pariter ex integro applicari possunt ad ostendendum exclusionem rationis entis a modi ipsum contrahentibus; ac eadem prorsus difficultates quæ fiunt contra exclusionem entis a modis, fieri pariter possunt contra exclusionem generis a differentijs; sicut enim hic quæritur, an præciso conceptu entis, modi ipsum contrahentes sint entis vel non entia, ita de differentijs in genere relationis quæri poterit, an præciso conceptu relationis sint formaliter relativæ, vel absolutæ; et in genere quantitatis an sint extensæ, vel non extensæ; et sicut ibi respondetur de illis differentijs, ita quoque in proposito responderi poterit de modis entis» (MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 7, a. 1, n. 180, vol. I, p. 201a). Cf. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 5, q. 3, a. 3, n. 143, pp. 484b-485b. Note, however, that in *Id.*, n. 146, p. 486b our authors are prompt to anticipate the need to take the transcendental being, its contracting modes, its characteristics and ultimate differences to mean something different from *formalitates* in relationship. They write that genus and difference are one part for the other; but the property of the parts is being external to each other; therefore, genus and difference must be external to each other. On the contrary, being, its modes, its characteristics and ultimate differences are not one part for the others; therefore, «non esse tantam necessitatem, ut ens excludatur ab illis, sicut genus a suis differentijs». Accordingly, «non est tanta necessitas inclusionis generis in differentijs non ultimis ipsum contrahentibus, quanta est necessitas inclusionis entis» (MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 7, a. 1, n. 190, vol. I, p. 208a).

furthermore sustains that, while intrinsic modes do not quidditatively include being, extrinsic modes include it.¹¹⁶ Well, in no place in his work does Mastri make use of this difference to sustain that being is not a genus. In conclusion, I suggest that he accepts this argument because he finds it expounded in Scotus' *Ordinatio* rather than because he holds it to be fully valid.¹¹⁷

The pages of the seventh *quæstio* examined here raise a second question concerning the nature of differences. Mastri defends his own doctrine on the different relationship of being with the two types of differences against numerous objections. The Complutensians deny that differences gather in being as in a unitary *ratio*, yet they sustain that they come together proportionally. De Vio, Barbo, Suárez, Aversa and Hurtado de Mendoza appeal to the fact that it is in any case possible to extract a common concept of any type from differences, so that it is in any case possible to predicate being *in quid* of them.¹¹⁸ Hurtado de Mendoza's objection, as Mastri himself admits, is particularly to be feared:

Respondet Hurtadus disp. 2. Met. sec. 4. se huius argumenti¹¹⁹ lumbos enervasse, quando in Logica probavit ab ultima differentia individuali confuse cognita posse abstrahi rationem communem ultimæ, ac individualis differentiæ, non vero abstrahi conceptum communem ab ultima clare, et in singulari cognita, ut ultima; unde concludit differentias ultimas convenire quidditative in ente, si confuse concipiatur, et se totis differre, si cognoscantur clare, ac distincte<.>¹²⁰

The question of the abstractibility of a common concept from ultimate differences already poses for our author a difficulty on

116. *Id.*, a. 2, n. 199, vol. I, pp. 213b-214a.

117. Cf. SCOTUS, *Ord.*, I, dist. 3, pars 1, q. 3, Ad quæstionem, [Argumenta contra univocationem entis eorumque solutio], nn. 158-161, vol. III, pp. 95-100.

118. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 7, a. 1, nn. 186-190, vol. I, pp. 205a-208b; *Id.*, a. 2, nn. 206 and 208, vol. I, pp. 218a and 219b-220a.

119. The argument in question, which Mastri takes from Scotus, is the first of those he presents as valid in order to deny that being is quidditatively included in ultimate differences: if they were to include being, *Doctor Subtilis* argues, they would be different; if they were different, they would have to differ in some difference; if these ultimate differences, in their turn, were to include being, they would be in their turn different; and so on *ad infinitum*. Cf. *Id.*, a. 1, n. 185, vol. I, pp. 204b-205a.

120. *Id.*, n. 188, vol. I, p. 206b.

the level of exegesis. There are Scotists that maintain that such abstractibility is admitted by Scotus,¹²¹ while others deny it,¹²² and the latter, as Mastri himself writes, constitute the majority.¹²³ Nevertheless, the most serious difficulty is posed on a theoretical level. In his *In Org.*, as our author immediately recalls, he has sustained not only that it is possible to abstract from all individuals a common concept predicable of them *in quid*, but also that the argument by Scotus contested by Hurtado de Mendoza merely proves that it is not possible to abstract an adequate concept from ultimate differences, that is one that could refer to a *realitas*; therefore, it does not prove that it is not possible to abstract an inadequate concept from them.¹²⁴ Mastri replies to the difficulty with a dual strategy: on the one hand, he admits that the inadequate common concept of individuation can be abstracted from ultimate differences, just as they differ from the latter only by means of clarification of the same; on the other hand, he denies that this concept is that of being.

121. *Id.*, [prologus], n. 177, vol. I, pp. 199b-200a.

122. Cf. *Id.*, q. 4, a. 2, n. 97, vol. I, p. 138a-b.

123. *Id.*, q. 2, n. 46, vol. I, p. 103a. The text Mastri is referring to is, according to the Scotist Commission, an interpolation from the first *distinctio* of the third book of the *Ordinatio*: JOANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Ord.*, I, dist. 26, q. unica, nn. 93-94, [Sequitur textus interpolatus], vol. VI, p. 52.

124. «Fateor hanc solutionem magnam apparentiam præsertim in sententia nostra, qui disp. 5. Log. q. 2. art. 4. admisimus rationem individui, ut sic, univoce communem omnibus individuis, et de singulis prædicabilem in quid; imo hanc ipsam solutionem ibidem adhibuimus, ut præfatis Scoti rationibus responderemus, quatenus contra nostrum illud assertum adduci poterant, dicebamusque solum probare, quod ab ultimis differentiis nequeat abstrahi conceptus communis adæquatus, et realitatem importans, sic enim ponendo sequitur processus in infinitum; at ponendo quod talis conceptus abstractus, in quo conveniunt, sit inadæquatus, evitatur talis processus in conceptibus, quia individua considerata sub illa ratione communi non distinguuntur rursus per alias differentias individuales, sed per easdem adæquate, et clare consideratas» (MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 7, a. 1, n. 189, vol. I, p. 206b). Cf. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 5, q. 2, a. 4 *Quo sensu, et an recte hic definiatur individuum a Porphyrio*, nn. 97-104, pp. 461b-465b, in which, I note, our authors say nothing about which *rationes* contract that of “individual”, but merely write that «individua sub illa ratione communi <, id est individui,> non distinguuntur rursus per alias differentias individuales, sed per easdem adæquate, et clare consideratas» (*Id.*, n. 100, p. 463a).

(...) quamvis enim concedamus ab ultimis differentijs posse abstrahi conceptum communem individuationis in eis essentialiter inclusum, non tamen idem iudicium ferendum est de conceptu entis; quia ad conceptum hæcceitatis comparantur, ut inferiora ad suum superius, sed ad conceptum entis comparantur, ut contrahentia ad contrahibile; unde etiam gratis abstractionem conceptus entis ab ultimis differentijs non ex eo capite implicare, quia ab ultimis differentijs non sit ullus conceptus communis abstrahibilis, ut passim dicere solent alij Scotistæ; sed ex eo præcise, quia ultimæ differentie respiciunt ens quodammodo a latere, et veluti contrahentia suum contrahibile, quod nunquam quidditative includitur in illis.¹²⁵

Once again Mastri reveals all his vast philosophical culture and shows his remarkable intelligence. Nevertheless, I wonder whether this solution is compatible with one of the central theses in his thought. In the case of an individual *ratio*, or of *hæcceitas*, the contraction of the superior to the inferior takes place through clarification: «individua considerata sub illa ratione communi non distinguuntur rursus per alias differentias individuales, sed per easdem adæquate, et clare consideratas».¹²⁶ Well, with the aim of demonstrating that being is contracted to its inferiors not by greater expression (that is by explication), but rather by the composition with something additional, in the previous *quæstio* he sustains that all superiors are contracted to inferiors by *additio*: «necessaria est determinatio per modum compositionis, et additionis, quia nec aliter, nec alio modo superius potest ad sua inferiora descendere».¹²⁷ Having posited this, either one or the other has to be the case: either the contraction of the concept of being can be taken as an explication, or the contraction of the concept of individual must also occur by composition.

Mastri seems to be somehow aware of the problem. In the same paragraph as the one in which he admits the abstractibil-

125. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 7, a. 1, n. 189, vol. I, p. 207b. Cf. also MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 5, q. 3, a. 3, pp. 483b-490a.

126. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 7, a. 1, n. 189, vol. I, p. 206b. Cf. also MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 5, q. 3, a. 3, n. 150, p. 488b, in which our authors argue that apart from the *hæcceitas* there are no further differences; hence the *hæcceitas* used in general cannot be perfectly distinct from the *hæcceitas* referring to one or the other specific thing.

127. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 6, a. 2, n. 172, vol. I, p. 197b.

ity of the concept of the individual, or of individuation, from ultimate differences, he writes that «contrahibile semper est extra conceptum contrahentis, quando contractio fit per modum compositionis, et additionis, ut re vera sit in conceptibus univocis». ¹²⁸ One first hypothesis for a solution might therefore be the following. Univocal concepts are contracted through composition, while equivocal concepts are contracted by explication; the concept of individual would thus be an equivocal concept. A second hypothesis for a solution might play on the fact that, as we have seen, Mastri intends the distinction by lesser or greater explication as a distinction of reasoning reason, and therefore could be used in the field of second intentions. ¹²⁹ The concept of individual would hence be a concept of second intention.

Nevertheless, both hypotheses proposed present some difficulties. Mastri undoubtedly holds that there are equivocal nouns. He also holds that there may be analogy of proper proportionality and that this is a form of equivocity. ¹³⁰ However, it does not seem that he maintains that the concept of individual is an equivocal term. Furthermore, he holds that only non-ultimate names and concepts (that is concepts of a significant expression) may somehow be equivocal; on the contrary, the ultimate concept (that is the concept of the “thing” meant by the expression) cannot, in his opinion, be equivocal. ¹³¹ Once again, it does not seem that he sustains that the concept of individual is a non-ultimate concept. Likewise, as far as the second hypothesis is concerned, it can be noted that our author considers, in this context, the concept in question a concept of first intention. ¹³²

128. *Id.*, q. 7, a. 1, n. 189, vol. I, p. 207a.

129. See note 39.

130. Cf. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 1, nn. 56-60, pp. 266a-268a.

131. Cf. *Id.*, q. 4, a. 1 *Examinatur peculiariter natura æquivocorum*, nn. 35-38, pp. 254b-256b.

132. According to Mastri and Belluto the *ratio* of “individual” may be taken both as a concept of first intention and as a concept of second intention. Cf. *Id.*, q. 2, a. 4, nn. 96-97 and 105-110, pp. 461a-b and 465b-468b.

4.3.4 *The intrinsicity of extrinsic inequality*

Both in the fifth *quæstio* of the *disputatio de vocibus, et communibus earum affectionibus* of the *In Org.*, dedicated to the analogy of nouns, and in the fifth *quæstio* of the *disputatio de natura entis* of the *In Met.*, dedicated to the analogy of being, Mastri finds himself faced with a second dilemma, to a certain extent connected to the previous one.

The *ratio* of being can be considered in a state of contraction, that is to say, together with its contractors, or in a state of abstraction, that is to say separately from them. If considered in its inferiors, together with its contractors, it is neither unitary, nor combinable with its contractors, nor univocal. For this reason Mastri continually states that he wishes to dedicate his attention to the nature of being taken as distinct from its inferiors. To Hurtado de Mendoza, for whom being is analogous in the sense that beings are converging thanks to the *ratio* of being considered distinct from them but that they differ thanks to the differences included in it, Mastri objects:

cum ens consideratur in differentijs involutum, non amplius consideratur in statu abstractionis, sed contractionis; et non sub nomine entis, sed differentiaë, quando autem hic quærimus, an conceptus entis sit analogus, et qua analogia, non est quæstio de ente in statu contractionis, sed abstractionis, et præcisionis; sicut enim univocatio conceptibus, et realitatibus convenit in statu abstractionis præcindendo omnino a statu contractionis, ita etiam analogia.¹³³

On the contrary, if considered separately from its contractors, being is a perfectly unitary *ratio*, such as to show exactly the same property in all that of which it is predicated, that is existing

133. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 1, n. 115, vol. I, p. 153b. A little lower down he adds: «diversitas in statu contractionis univocationem non tollit, ad quam requiritur in statu præcisionis tantum rationem significatam esse omnino eandem, ut constat ex ipsa univocorum definitione». Cf. also *Id.*, n. 119, vol. I, p. 157b, once more against Hurtado de Mendoza, and *Id.*, q. 2, n. 30, vol. I, p. 91b, against Pasqualigo: to the argument with which the Theatine, on the basis of the radical diversity of God and creatures, denies that it is possible to produce a concept common to both, Mastri replies that in this argument «semper loquitur de ratione entis, ut contracta ad Deum, et creaturam per proprias rationes, non autem ut ab illis omnino præcisa, et abstracta, ut procedit argumentum».

or potentially existing in reality; it would seem, therefore, perfectly univocal. And herein lies the difficulty: by admitting such a *ratio*, what distinguishes it from a genus?

Mastri is aware of the problem. When dealing with the question of the nature, whether analogous or univocal, of being, he tackles two contrasting hypotheses. For the first, analogies exclude equivocity and express a unitary concept distinct from that of the inferiors;¹³⁴ for the second, the analogy excludes univocity and expresses a concept that is not distinct from that of the inferiors.¹³⁵ To this antithesis, Suárez provides a solution that our author reports seizing, with his usual insight, its essential core: analogues, and being in particular, have a unitary *ratio*, distinct from that of the inferiors; nevertheless, they can participate in the inferiors in an unequal way because of an intrinsic inequality embedded in themselves.¹³⁶ Against this theory, which (as has already been observed from another viewpoint) he never ceases to judge incoherent, Mastri upholds Hurtado de Mendoza's objection: given that the concept of something is unitary and distinct from its inferiors, the inequality found in it derives from the contractors; it is thus extrinsic to that concept, so that, when it is considered in itself, it is univocal.¹³⁷ As is known, and as Mastri

134. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 2 *Num analogum dicere possit conceptum unum ab analogatis præcisum*, n. 72, pp. 273b-274a.

135. *Id.*, n. 75, p. 275a.

136. «Si dicatur cum Suarez, posse analogum præferre conceptum communem, et unum, sed inæqualiter inferioribus communicabilem per differentias dependentiæ, et independentiæ, ita quod intelligatur prius descendere ad unum analogatum, et posterius ad aliud in virtute prioris, ac proinde non esse univocum, de cuius ratione est esse æqualiter communicabilem inferioribus sine essentiali dependentia unius ab alio; et sic adhuc in eo consistere rationem analogiæ, quia in illo uno, et eodem conceptu conveniunt inferiora, et differunt, conveniunt ratione unitatis eius, differunt ratione illius inæqualitatis...» (*Id.*, p. 275a-b). Mastrius, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 1, n. 116, vol. I, pp. 153b-154a. Mastri denominates the type of analogy that Suárez attributes to being “*analogia inæqualitatis*”, yet it seems to me different from what de Vio indicated by this expression. In effect, in MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 1, n. 47, p. 261[wrongly numbered 161]b he and his Brother express themselves with a prudent “*ita videtur sentire Suarez*”.

137. «Contra istat Hurtadus conceptus communis non est diverso modo, et inæqualiter participabilis, nisi ratione modorum contrahentium, sed hi modi non includuntur in conceptu abstracto, neque igitur includetur illa inæqualitas. Neque dicas, quod licet in conceptu abstracto non includantur hi

himself points out on several occasions, Hurtado de Mendoza's thesis was assumed and surpassed by Arriaga, Pasqualigo and Oviedo: the latter three consider totally irrelevant the fact that the contractors may introduce an inequality into the *ratio* of being and, consequently, they sustain that being, taken in a state of abstraction, is perfectly and exclusively univocal. Arriaga even goes so far as to state that being is a genus.¹³⁸

This is then our author's dilemma. Having asserted the perfect distinguishability of the concept of being from the inferiors, he seems trapped between the alternatives of Suárez and Arriaga. If he concedes that inequality is intrinsic to the *ratio* of being even in a state of abstraction, he must conclude that being is not univocal. If he concedes that inequality is extrinsic to it, he must conclude that it is in no way analogous; it would then present itself as an adequate, univocal concept, that is as a genus.

Mastri's thesis when faced with the question of the univocal or analogous nature of the *ratio* of being has already been the subject of the important studies referred to several times. I shall thus restrict myself to recalling that he believes, on the one hand, that the univocity is founded on the unity of the *ratio*, on the other that analogy is founded not on a lack of unity, but on a lack of equality in the relationship with the inferiors. From this he derives that it is possible for univocity and analogy to coexist and can hence sustain that being is at the same time univocal and analogous, and precisely analogous of attribution. Let us rather look at his reply to the question of the intrinsicity or extrinsicity of the inequality bringing about analogy. On the one hand, he su-

modi, tamen includitur ordo ad hos modos, quatenus ille conceptus est suapte natura capax, et exigitivus talium differentiarum inæqualium. Nam in conceptu abstracto, vel consideratur hic ordo, et tunc non potest esse abstractus ab his modis, sicut neque ordo potest considerari non consideratis terminis, ad quos est ordo, vel non consideratur, et sic abstrahit ab ipsomet ordine. Accedit, quod admissa hac inæqualitate ex parte ipsius rationis communis prodeunte, et non præcise ex parte differentiarum, iam ille conceptus non erit in se unus, sed potius geminatus, et duplex, quia inæqualitas necessario exigit duo» (*Id.*, a. 2, n. 75, p. 275b).

138. Cf. for example Mastrius, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 5, [prologus], n. 105, vol. I, p. 145b; *Id.*, n. 112, vol. I, p. 151a; *Id.*, a. 2, n. 130, vol. I, p. 167a. See also the reconstruction of the various aspects of the question in the works of Di Vona already recalled.

stains that even if we admit that the inequality is intrinsic, univocity still remains:

tum quia non destruit unitatem conceptus obiectivi ipsius entis, in qua fundatur univocatio, tum quia nullam affert diversitatem conceptui entis in statu præcisionis, quæ univocationem excludat, quia per unam, et eandem formalitatem potest inæqualiter respicere sua inferiora, sicut materia per eandem prorsus potentiam inæqualiter appetit formas ex dictis num. 116. et tota diversitas in illo provenit ex modis contrahentibus, non ex ipsa ratione superiori, quæ præcise est una.¹³⁹

On the other hand, polemicizing against Pasqualigo, that even if we admit that inequality is extrinsic, analogy still remains:

quia cum Aristoteles docet ratione inæqualitatis analogiam emergere in genere 7. Phys. 31. et 3. Phys. 70. ait naturam infiniti non esse unam, et eandem id est univocam in pluribus quia dicitur secundum prius, et posterius, et 3. Met. 11. insinuat prius, et posterius non stare cum perfecta univocatione, plane loquitur semper de inæqualitate a differentijs proveniente, ergo hæc est sufficiens ad analogiam inducendam. Tum tandem quia etiam et hic ipse auctor [i.e. Pasqualigo] loc. cit. disp. 39. sec. 4. n. 4. fatetur ens esse analogum secundum esse, quod habet in statu contractionis atque ideo hanc analogiam in ipsum redundare ex vi rationum contrahentium, at neque nos in ente maiorem, vel magis intrinsecam astruimus analogiam, quam quæ sibi advenit ex modis contrahentibus nec alio modo, aliave ratione Aristoteles et Scotus illud faciunt analogum, ergo, sed de hoc rursus dicemus infra n. 138.¹⁴⁰

Otherwise, presented in these terms, Mastri's thesis seems to be the following: being is univocal because, taken as distinct from its inferiors, its contractors do not induce any inequality in it, while it is analogous because the same contractors induce in it inequality when they contract it. To put it in a nutshell: being is perfectly univocal in a state of abstraction, while it is analogous

139. *Id.*, a. 1, n. 119, vol. I, p. 157b.

140. *Id.*, n. 120, vol. I, p. 159a. The same thesis is expressed in MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 1, n. 55, p. 265b: the contracting difference «sufficit (inquit Doctor) ad inducendam analogiam, ut docet Aristoteles 7. Phys. 31. ubi ait in genere analogiam latere ex hac sola diversitate ab extrinseco prodeunte, et ratio est, quam adducit 3. Met. 11. quia prius et posterius (quocumque modo sit) non stat cum omnimoda univocatione».

in a state of contraction. Mastri goes to the point of stating it openly, although in the form of a quotation:

colligere licet (...) contra eundem Suarez totam inæqualitatem in conceptu entis redundare ab extrinseco ex modis contrahentibus, et analogiam vertentem inter Deum, et creaturam in ratione entis non attendi debere ex aliqua inæqualitate reperta in ente in statu præcisionis, et ex natura sua intrinseca, ut dicebat Suarez, quia iam ipse fatetur loco modo citato [i.e. *Disputationes metaphysicæ*, disp. 28, sect. 3, n. 16] impossibile esse, quod creatura sub ratione entis, ut sic, dicat habitudinem dependentiæ ad Deum, sed attendi debere ex statu contractionis.¹⁴¹

Therefore, it seems that in this passage he concedes to Arriaga and Pasqualigo (and in a certain aspect also to Hurtado de Mendoza) precisely what they ask for and ends up by sustaining exactly what they sustain; thus his attempt to find both univocity and analogy in being as it is taken in a state of abstraction collapses. However, it also seems that he is aware of the problem. In paragraph 138, to which he refers readers at the end of the penultimate text quoted, once more polemicizing against Pasqualigo, Mastri reiterates that the inequality brought extrinsically by the contractors (yet again: in a state of contraction) is sufficient to carry with it analogy,¹⁴² yet he introduces an interesting addition:

sed hæc etiam analogia posset aliquo pacto enti intrinseca dici, quia licet inæqualitas illa principaliter oriatur ex modis contrahentibus, adhuc tamen dici quoque potest oriri ex ipsa ratione communi, quatenus in illo statu abstractionis, etsi præscindat a differentijs, est nihilominus adhuc fundamentaliter capax, et exigitiva differentiarum sic inæqualium, quod quidem contingere potest absque læsione, et præiudicio unitatis conceptus ipsius entis, quia per unam, et eandem formalitatem potest inæqualiter respicere sua inferiora, ut diximus

141. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 1, n. 117, vol. I, p. 155a-b.

142. «(...) ens ab inferioribus non ex æquo participari, sed perfectiori modo reperiri in uno, verbi gratia in substantia, quam in alio, scilicet accidente, et ex hoc capite analogum esse, quod adeo clarum est, ut hoc ipsum asserat quoque hic auctor disp. cit. 39. sect. 4. esto dicat hanc inæqualitatem esse extrinsecam, et non oriri ex natura ipsius entis, sed ex modo essendi, quem acquirat in statu contractionis in inferioribus, hoc autem parum refert, dummodo hæc inæqualitas sufficiens sit ad analogiam inducendam, ut supra ex Aristotele ostendimus, nec ipse negare potest, cum in hoc sensu sect. 4. cit. concl. 3. analogiam admittat in ente» (*Id.*, a. 2, n. 138, vol. I, p. 176b).

sub n. 119. unde utraque ex illis solutionibus admitti potest; esto secunda magis placet, ex qua non sequitur omnes gradus prædicamentales fore analogos, quia gradus specificus, utpote qui est physice, et in primo gradu univocus, omne prorsus excludit analogiam (...).¹⁴³

All things considered, it seems that Mastri attempts, on the one hand, to reject Hurtado de Mendoza's solution, for whom (leaving aside the thesis, in this context accidental, according to which being is included in its contractors) the analogy of being consists precisely in the different nature of such a *ratio* when it is taken in a state of abstraction or in a state of contraction; on the other hand, he attempts to evade the alternatives of the theses of Suárez and of Arriaga and Pasqualigo. It is, however, not clear to me how he could think he had managed to succeed in this task. In some passages he sustains that the *ratio* of being taken in a state of abstraction is totally extraneous to its contractors. In others, he admits that univocity and analogy concern being as

143. *Ib.* «(...) Maironis q. penultima De univocatione entis negat minorem [i.e.: *ens non participatur æqualiter a suis inferioribus*; cf. *Id.*, n. 125, vol. I, p. 163a] contenditque ens æqualiter dicere de inferioribus, quia secundum unum, et eundem præcisum conceptum dicitur de omnibus, nec ulla intervenit inæqualitas, nisi quæ accidit ex parte contrahentium, quæ cum sint posteriora nequeunt variare rationem prioris, qua de causa aliqui ex recentioribus faciunt ens omnino univocum; præstat tamen dicere, quod inæqualiter participatur ens ab inferioribus quia nec secundum eundem ordinem essentialem, nec secundum eundem perfectionis gradum; et hæc inæqualitas saltim extrinsece redundat in conceptum entis, quod sufficit ad aliquam analogiam inducendam; sed non ad omnino excludendam univocationem; tum quia est inæqualitas penitus ab extrinseco proveniens scilicet ex parte contrahentium; tum quia etsi intrinseca esset, ut contendit Suarez, si tamen non destruit unitatem conceptus obiectivi, ut idem Suarez dicere tenetur, adhuc univocationem secum compatitur; quia ut ait Doctor sæpe cit. I. d. 8. q. 3. lit. P. *quantumunque illud, quod concipitur sit secundum attributionem, vel ordinem in diversis, si tamen de se conceptus unus est, itaquod non habet aliam rationem, secundum quam dicitur de hoc, et de illo, ille conceptus est univocus*, itaque inæqualitas impedit univocationem perfectam, et in primo gradu, non autem in cæteris» (*Id.*, n. 126, vol. I, p. 164a-b. Mastri's italics). The same thesis is expressed also in *In Org.*: «non esse omnino certum talem inæqualitatem ex ipsa rationem communem pullulantem possibilem esse, et forte nulla alia inæqualitas in rationibus communibus, et præcisus adinveniri potest, nisi quæ illis supervenit extrinsece, ex differentijs contrahentibus»; but, «etsi hæc inæqualitas ex differentia oriatur, adhuc tamen ex ipsa ratione communi oriri dicitur suapte natura exigente talem differentiarum inæqualitatem» (MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 1, n. 63, p. 269b).

taken respectively in a state of abstraction and contraction. In yet others, he proposes the thesis according to which the *ratio* of being as taken in a state of abstraction is, although perfectly unitary, intrinsically orientated to being contracted to inferiors unequal in perfection and disposed according to a certain order. I point out once again the “*forte*” and the “*probabilius*” with which Mastri gradually reduces the strength of the solutions he relies on¹⁴⁴ and I wonder what the unity of his thought on this theme actually is.

4.3.5 *The role of the possibility of God in the determination of the nature of transcendental being*

Mastri develops the kernel of his doctrine about the nature of the transcendental being on the basis of a dialectic between God and creatures in which the *ratio* of being performs the task of the element of conjunction and those of infinite and finite the task of elements of disjunction. Within this framework, he faces two contrasting solutions. To those Scotists who hold that being is a *formalitas*, or a genus, he objects that what is perfectly in act, perfectly unitary, (that is God) does not contain potentialities or parts; that God and creatures are radically diverse; and that what characterises God and creatures (I take the liberty of saying: what characterises the one and the many) are supreme differences. From this he concludes that transcendental being is given as such only *post opus intellectus*. To the Thomists, who hold that the being attributed to God and creatures is a purely analogous concept, and more radically to Pasqualigo, who even sustains that it is equivocal,¹⁴⁵ Mastri objects that God is cognisable and is so precisely as a being. His conclusion is that though the *ratio* of

144. For example, it is surprising that Mastri, after having criticised Suárez' thesis so strongly, should write, following Pasqualigo's thesis: «censeamus *probabilius* esse talem inæqualitatem enti advenire ab extrinseco, et a modis contrahentibus, non autem ei convenire ab intrinseco, quia in statu præcisionis est conceptus omnino unus, et idem» (MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 1, n. 120, vol. I, p. 159a). My italics.

145. As far as Pasqualigo's thesis is concerned, cf. P. DI VONA, *La sovranità di Dio nella scolastica del '600*, in *La storia della filosofia come sapere critico. Studi offerti a Mario Dal Pra*, (Filosofia, 2), Franco Angeli, Milano 1984, pp. 209-220.

being is given only *post opus intellectus*, it is unitary and manifests, although inadequately, the reality of things.¹⁴⁶

As can be seen, the doctrine about the nature of being recalls and requires, in order to acquire a complete foundation, that concerning the nature and cognisability of God. With this questions are opened up such as those about the possibility of a natural knowledge of God, the possibility of a supernatural knowledge of God, the distinction between this and the natural one, the possibility and distinguishability of metaphysics and revealed theology, the distinguishability, in metaphysics, of ontology and rational theology. I have no wish or opportunity here to discuss all these questions; nonetheless, I wish to highlight at least two of the problematics that Mastri's approach to dealing with being raises.

In the first place, I should like to focus on which role, according to Mastri, God does not play in the knowledge and in the determination of the *ratio* of being. We have seen that our author denies that being is a concept endowed with a solely proportional unity; on the contrary, he sustains that this *ratio* is something absolute. The result is, as Mastri himself explicitly writes, that a created being does not imply, as a being, any reference to God. The question is posed by the Thomists in these terms:

ens quantumvis abstracte, et confuse sit conceptum, tamen ex vi sua postulat hunc ordinem, ut primo, et per se competat Deo, et per illum descendat ad reliqua, quibus non insit, nisi cum habitudine, et dependentia a Deo.¹⁴⁷

Mastri certainly concedes that the fact that a creature is a being depends on the fact that God is, yet he denies that this implies what the Thomists claim:

si Deus non esset, creatura non esset, deficiente siquidem ente per essentiam, opus est quod et ens per participationem deficiat, et hæc est maxima illa analogia attributionis, quam inquit Doctor versari inter Deum, et creaturam; (...). Hic tamen advertendum est, quod bene Suarez adnotavit disp. cit. 28. sec. 3. n. 16. ubi, et ipse hanc

146. See on this point the whole of the second *quæstio*, dedicated precisely to the theme «An conceptus entis sit unus nedum respectu substantiæ et accidentis, sed etiam Dei et creaturæ», of the second *disputatio* in *In Met.*

147. MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 5, a. 1, n. 116, vol. I, p. 154a.

analogiam agnoscit in ente, quod cum dicimus ens dici de creatura per attributionem ad Deum, id non ita intelligendum esse, quod creatura concepta sub abstractissima, et confusissima ratione entis, ut sic, habitudinem dicat ad Deum; id enim est impossibile, cum sub ea ratione non concipiatur creatura, ut ens finitum, et limitatum sed omnino abstrahatur, et solum concipiatur sub ratione existentis extra nihil, sed est ita intelligendum, ut in re ipsa creatura non participet rationem entis, nisi cum subordinatione quadam essentiali ad Deum, cum essentialiter sit ens ab alio; ex quo (...) colligere licet (...), quod supra innuimus n. 41. quod cum dici solet ens prius ad Deum contrahi, quam ad creaturam, non debet ita intelligi, quasi in contrahendam entis rationem opus sit nostram cognitionem prius tendere in Deum, quam in creaturam, quia postquam concepimus rationem entis abstractam a Deo, et creatura, possumus immediate nulla alia cognitione intercedente ens creatum apprehendere; imo si de nobis loquamur, ratio entis prius ab hominibus concepta est in ente finito, quam infinito, quia ex cognitione creaturarum devenerunt in cognitione Dei.¹⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the discourse on God plays a decisive role in the formulation of the doctrine by Matri (and by Scotus) on being. Once again against the Thomists, Matri observes that God would not for us be naturally cognisable if we did not have a concept of being distinct from the inferiors at our disposal:

negata semel unitate conceptus obiectivi ad Deum, et creaturam præcluditur via omnis cognoscendi Deum ex creatura aliquo conceptu simpliciter, et essentiali contra illud Pauli *invisibilia Dei etc.* ad Rom. I.<.>¹⁴⁹

148. *Id.*, n. 117, vol. I, pp. 154b-156a. In the passage seen here Matri refers to paragraph 41 of the *disputatio* under examination, yet there he had expressed himself more hesitantly. There he faced the following question: «tota ratio entis reperitur in Deo, ergo nequit esse quid superius Deo, et creaturæ» (*Id.*, q. 2, n. 40, p. 98b). And this was his reply: «quia hæc contractio <entis ad inferiora> non est omnino a parte rei, sed fit per intellectum cum fundamento in re, negant aliqui ens prius contrahi per nostrum intellectum ad Deum, quam ad creaturam, postquam enim ego concipio rationem entis abstractam ab ente creato, et increato, possum immediate nulla alia cognitione intercedente apprehendere ens creatum, ergo ratio entis non prius contrahitur ad ens increatum, quam ad ens creatum, quo admissio dicendi modo non evidentem improbabiliter multa labuntur argumenta, quæ contra unitatem, et univocationem conceptus entis a Thomistis objici solet; ita novissime tenet Oviedus controversiæ I. Met. punc. 6» (*Id.*, n. 41, p. 100a).

149. *Id.*, n. 39, vol. I, pp. 97b-98a. Quotation from p. 97b. The arguments that support this thesis, and defend it from the criticisms of the Thomists and

It is clear that the possibility of developing a rational theology provides a decisive impulse towards a conception of the *ratio* of being as perfectly unitary. It is a double impulse. On the plane of argumentation, the thesis according to which there is a rational theology and the one according to which this is possible only if being is a perfectly unitary *ratio* lead to the conclusion that being is such a *ratio*. On the plane of subjective dynamics, the wish to develop a rational theology and the conviction that this is possible only if being is a perfectly unitary *ratio* lead to the development of arguments that may support this conviction. From these points of view, it can be said that ontology comes to exist in order to satisfy the needs of rational theology.

More radically, the very notion of God as pure act, and correlatively the notion of genus as potency, is the foundation for the thesis according to which being is a *ratio* to which a *formalitas* does not correspond in reality. The proof of it is that this thesis is based, as we have seen, on a comparison between the properties of God and of creature, which are revealed as radically different, and on the fact that in God there can be no composition. I think that we may hence conclude that for Mastri the existence, or more radically the possibility of God, decides the nature of being; if God did not exist, i.e. He were not possible, being would be a *formalitas*. Of course, this affirmation cannot be found to the letter in Mastri's work. Nevertheless, in *In Met.* we can read that the *ratio* of finite being does not give rise to any of the difficulties resulting from the hypothesis according to which the being common to God and creatures is a genus, that is to say a *formalitas*:

hoc asserendo de ente finito <, id est ens esse genus,> non sequuntur illa absurda, quæ sequerentur id asserendo de ente transcendentali communi Deo, et creaturæ, ut discurrenti patebit, nam certum est negantes ens esse genus ea præsertim motos esse ratione, ne Deum sub genere concluderent (...).¹⁵⁰

of Aversa, are taken literally from Scotus' *Ordinatio* and are based on the observation which says: «effectus nequit participare causam, nisi ex hoc, quod in aliquo conceptu convenit cum causa, nam si effectus in nullo conceptu convenit cum causa, signum est nihil participare ab ea» (*Id.*, p. 98a).

150. *Id.*, q. 5, a. 1, n. 122, vol. 1, p. 160b.

From this I deduce that if there were no being other than finite being, nothing would prevent, according to Mastri, being from being a genus. Furthermore, once again in *In Met.* we read that if an immaterial being were not possible, metaphysics would be identified with physics. In facing, in the first *disputatio* of the work, the question of the adequate object of metaphysics, our author excludes some positions concerning it; among these, is that for which adequate objects of metaphysics are only spiritual substances (*immaterialis*). He here expresses the following thesis: the adequate object of metaphysics is not exhausted by spiritual substances, but it does comprehend them. Mastri defends the first part of his thesis on the basis of this consideration: if it is true that the object of metaphysics has to leave out every matter, it is also true that «etiam rationes transcendentales abstrahunt a materia secundum rationem, licet non secundum rem».¹⁵¹ Nonetheless, this is true precisely because there are immaterial substances, i.e. because they are possible. Facing Aristotle's statement according to which if there were no separate substance besides the natural ones, physics would be the primal science,¹⁵² our author writes:

Ad confirmationem ex 6. met. 3. illa conditionalis est vera, non quia substantia immaterialis sit adæquatum obiectum, sed quia hac substantia ablata aufertur etiam adæquatum obiectum metaphysicæ quia non solum tolleretur immaterialis substantia, sed etiam omnes rationes entis, vel substantiæ communes rebus materialibus, et immaterialibus, quæ entia sic abstracta constituebant, ut dicebamus, adæquatum obiectum huius scientiæ, unde ea hypothesi data omne ens esset physicum, et naturale, et ens materiale esse supremum prædicatum, si non essent alia entia possibilis; hæc est communis, et facilis illius loci expositio, quam etiam ibidem tradit Doctor, et Trombetta 6. met. q. 3.<.>¹⁵³

151. *Id.*, disp. 1, q. 2, n. 41, vol. I, pp. 30b-31a, quoted from p. 30b.

152. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VI, 1, 1026a27-29 (ARISTOTELES, *Metaphysica*, VI, t. 3; AL, vol. XXV/3/2, p. 127). MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 1, q. 2, n. 39, vol. I, p. 29b: «Conf. quia 6. Met. 3. ait si non essent substantiæ separatæ, tunc scientiam naturalem fore primam philosophiam, unde supponere videtur eam adæquate versari circa substantias separatas».

153. *Id.*, n. 40, vol. I, p. 30a-b. As we can see, Mastri refers to Aristotle's *Metaphysica* and to Scotus' relative comment, yet it seems to me that neither of

With regards to this thesis, Mastri considers the objection made by Pasqualigo: even if there were no separate substances, the intellect could still abstract from the natural substance the concept of being; therefore, metaphysics would still be distinct from physics.¹⁵⁴ Our author, however, can avail himself of Trombetta's answer to the same question:

licet intellectus eo casu posset abstrahere a substantia naturali conceptum entis, et substantiæ, semper tamen consideraret ista, ut sunt aliquid substantiæ materialis, quia non possent convenire alijs a tali substantia, quod et ipse Pasqualiguus fatetur ibid. n. 7. [i.e. Zacharia PASQUALIGUUS, *Disputationes metaphysicæ*, disp. 15, n. 7] cum ait huiusmodi conceptus data hypothesi ex natura sua non latius paterent, quam substantia naturalis, unde re vera non essent con-

the two authors develops an argument similar to Mastri's. Aristotle strictly says that if there were no separate substances besides the natural ones, physics would be the first science; if, on the other hand, there is an immobile substance, it will be the science of this that will precede other sciences and that will be primal philosophy, and as the first it will be universal and will have the task of studying being as being, that is to say what being is and which properties belong to it as being (ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, VI, 1, 1026a27-32). As far as Scotus is concerned, he mentions this passage merely in the context of expounding Avicenna's thesis on the *subiectum* of metaphysics, where he writes: «Item, <Aristoteles> ibidem dicit: "Si non est substantia altera præter natura consistentes, tunc physica erit prima scientia", quia physica esset tunc de omnibus entibus, sicut nunc est de omnibus naturalibus, quia tunc omnia entia essent naturalia. Sed nunc est ita de omnibus naturalibus quod primum subiectum eius est aliquod commune omnibus naturalibus, et non aliquod primum ad quod omnia alia attribuuntur (...). Subiectum igitur primæ scientiæ est communissimum, alioquin non videtur valere consequentia Aristotelis» (JOANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Quæstiones super librum Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, I, q. 1, [Opiniones aliorum, Opinio Avicennæ, Opiniones expositio], n. 70; in IDEM, *Opera philosophica*, ed. G.J. Etzkorn, St Bonaventure (N.Y.): The Franciscan Institute – St Bonaventure University, 1997-, vol. IV, p. 39). On the contrary, Trombetta sustains precisely what Mastri reports: Antonius TROMBETA, *Opus in Metaphysicam Aristotelis Padue in Thomistas discussum*, VI, q. 3 *Utrum si esset tantum substantia natura consistens, physica esset prima philosophia*, Venetiis 1502, f. 48va-b.

154. «(...) adhuc admissa hypothesi conceptus entis, substantiæ, et similes abstrahi possent a materia sensibili, eo quia omnem rationem intelligibilem, et omnem conceptum in aliquo inferiori inclusum potest intellectus abstrahere, et ipsum concipere absque hoc quod concipiat illud, a quo fit abstractio (...); data ergo illa hypothesi adhuc superstites forent conceptus a materia sensibili abstrahentes» (MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 1, q. 2, n. 40, vol. I, p. 30b).

ceptus metaphysici, quia non essent abstracti a materia nec per essentiam, nec per indifferentiam.¹⁵⁵

Here we can note that the hypothesis discussed in the argument is not the actual non-existence of separate substances; it is, instead, the impossibility of separate substances. Given that it is impossible for immaterial substances to exist, then the concept of being must include in its notion a reference to matter. If this is not so, it is only because there are separate substances, where “there are” means above all “are possible”. I deduce from this, moving the terms of the question from immateriality to infinity, that, in Mastri’s perspective, if the infinite being were not possible, the notion of being should include a reference to the finitude from which an operation of the mind *cum fundamento in re* could not separate it.¹⁵⁶

These pages elucidate the real extent of the difference existing between the Thomistic vision of metaphysics and the vision proper to Scotus. For the Thomists, and perhaps for Thomas Aquinas himself, being is taken to mean something in itself as something from God, so that the dependence of the created being on the supreme being is a fact which human intelligence grasps, though in an confused way, as soon as it conceives being. Hence, metaphysics is conceived of as that science which focuses on the created being as comprehensible only by starting from an enquiry into God. To use a famous statement by Cornelio Fabro: once the Thomistic theory of the analogy of being has been abandoned, we have already yielded to atheism. In contrast to this, Scotus and Mastri (and to a certain extent Suárez too) believe that the case is rather the contrary. They intend being as an

155. *Ib.*

156. Thus, also on this theme Mastri is coherent with Suárez and opposed to Perera and the new “ontologies” of Protestant area; cf. M. FORLIVESI, *Ontologia impura. La natura della metafisica secondo Francisco Suárez* [<http://web.tiscali.it/marcoforlivesi/mf2004oi.pdf>], 2004 (an earlier version of this article was published on paper: ID., “Ontologia impura. La natura della metafisica secondo Francisco Suárez”, in *Francisco Suárez. “Der ist der Mann”. Homenaje al prof. Salvador Castellote*, (Series Valentina, 50), Facultad de Teología “San Vicente Ferrer”, Valencia 2004, pp. 161-207) and ID., “Impure Ontology. The Nature of Metaphysics and Its Object in Francisco Suárez’s Texts”, in *Quaestio*, 5 (2005), at press.

absolute that also extends to God but (while considering what our author writes about the intrinsicity of extrinsic inequality of being) which does not include *actu* in itself a reference to God any more than it includes a reference to the creature. They thus consider metaphysics to be that science that deals with this absolute and with everything linked and common to this absolute. To keep the rhetorical register of Fabro's statement: once the theory of the perfect distinction of being from its inferiors has been abandoned, the possibility of speaking of God is lost.¹⁵⁷ At the same time, however, Mastri sets a link not only between God and created being, but also between God and transcendental being; a link that can be traversed in both opposing directions. The theorization of a notion of being that excludes finitude affords the possibility of a discourse on God; at the same time, the demonstrations of the fact that God exists (and therefore is possible) and is pure act are the foundation for the comprehension of being as a *ratio* distinct from that of finite being and produced by the work of the mind, though not exclusively by it, but on the basis of an embryonic – although actual – likeness between God and creatures. The various parts of Mastri's metaphysics are hence linked according to ties that may be traversed in several directions. This is by no means improper in an author whose systematic way of proceeding does not consist in the deduction of the consequences of first principles; on the contrary, it consists in showing the foundations of the various theses and their connections according to an itinerary in which the most suitable order of learning (*ordo doctrinæ*) takes priority over that of the things (*ordo naturæ*)¹⁵⁸ and whose accomplishment lies in demonstrating in a circular fashion the causes and effects in accordance with one another.¹⁵⁹

157. It is intended, here, in a philosophical (that is scientific), not in an existential sense. Although they are undoubtedly religious, these authors distinguish among speaking of God, to God, on God's behalf, etc.; from this point of view, Scotism offers fewer pretexts to religious existentialism, whether that of the Neo-Platonists or of Heidegger's school, than are afforded by Thomism.

158. MASTRIUS – BELLUTUS, *In Org.*, disp. 1, q. 6 *De ordine, et methodo procedendi in facultatibus tradendis*, nn. 97 e 99, pp. 233b e 235a.

159. Cf. *Id.*, *Institutiones dialecticæ*, pars 2 *De attinentibus ad materiam syllogismi*, tract. 1 *De syllogismo demonstrativo*, cap. 4 *De demonstratione prop-*

5. *Eclecticism and polemics in the speculation of Bartolomeo Mastri*

Mastri shares with many authors of Baroque scholasticism a paradox that is at least only apparent: the fierce defence of theses formulated in the past goes hand in hand with a subtle and lively creativity. He is aware, for example, of the peculiarity of his own doctrine on the nature of the transcendental being compared to the Scotistic tradition, and there are places where he interprets the words of Scotus, the Master he relies on, very freely, even going so far as to belie his actual words.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, he also reveals that he is constantly convinced of the fact that what he proposes is the authentic thesis of *Doctor Subtilis*.

Doctor I. d. 8. q. 4. §. *contra istam positionem*, lit. E. (...) non vult absolute admittere illam propositionem, quod distinctio rationis sumitur semper per comparationem ad distincta realiter, et extrinseca connotata; quia bonum, et verum, ait, in creatura distinguuntur di-

ter quid, n. 25, pp. 116b-117a and *Id.*, disp. 13 *De demonstratione*, q. 4 *De circulo et regressu demonstrativo*, pp. 936b-940b, in particular nn. 72-73, pp. 939b-940b. It is not the case of a vicious circle. According to Mastri and Belluto scientific knowledge mainly begins with the effect and only later, with a *quia* demonstration, does it reach the cause of this. However, the knowledge of the cause and its nature does not end here. Once the *quia* demonstration has been concluded, «paulisper iuxta maiorem, vel minorem intellectus perspicacitatem sistatur in cognitione distincta causæ investigando ulteriori cognitione, et alijs vijs quid sit causa, et qualis sit connexio cum effectu, quæ cognitio erit perfectior, quam illa habita per demonstrationem *quia*». At this point, and only at this point, is it possible to elaborate a true demonstration *propter quid* of the effect; and only then is the latter known in a complete scientific way. It more rarely happens to us, our authors add, that we know the cause before the effect. In this case it is possible to elaborate immediately a demonstration *propter quid* of the effect; nevertheless, even a *quia* demonstration of the cause starting from the effect experienced can be useful: it transmits to the knowledge of the cause the vividness of the knowledge by means of the experience of the latter. Only at the end of this circular itinerary can we have a «certissima cognitio et scientifica de rebus».

160. See, for example, MASTRIUS, *In Met.*, disp. 2, q. 6, a. 2, n. 174, vol. I, p. 198a-b, in which, in discussing the contraction of finite being to its inferiors, he writes that, referring to a passage of Aristotle, «dixit autem Scotus ibi, ac interdum alibi <ens finitum> contrahi per modos, ne videtur recedere a communi opinione, attamen iuxta eius principia sentiendum est contrahi per differentias», and, after having summed up the reasons for his own thesis, that «eodem modo solvi possunt rationes Doctoris q. 4, prædicament. quibus ibi oppositum aliquando defendit, nam coincidunt cum allatis».

stinctione rationis (intellige ratiocinatæ, et nota hic Doctorem manifeste docere inter transcendentia non dari distinctionem formalem ex natura rei, ut in gradibus inferioribus, sed solum distinctionem ratiocinatam, quæ est peculiaris sententia nostra inter Scotistas) et tamen a nullis in re distinctis sumitur hæc distinctio, sed a bono, et vero in Deo, quæ ratione differunt.¹⁶¹

To an equal degree, he presents himself as the inheritor of a speculative and hermeneutic tradition within the Scotistic school itself, which is passed down through Vigerio, Tartaret, Trombetta, Lichetto, Vallone, Malafossa (*Bargius*), Herrera (whom, however, he judges on other occasions to be misled by Thomism), Volpe (except for reproving him for not distinguishing between predicamental degrees and transcendental degrees) and Camerani.¹⁶²

His relationship with other schools of thought is also very dynamic. In the case of the discussion of the question concerning the nature of the transcendental being, his position with respect to the Thomists and to Suárez is particularly delicate. In general, Mastri rejects both the Thomists' doctrine on the transcendental universal, and the Thomists' doctrine on the predicamental universal; however, he accepts the Thomists' doctrine on the predicamental universal as a valid explanation of the nature of the transcendental universal. He also shares with Suárez the thesis of the *præcisio* of being from its inferiors, and with Maas even that concerning the nature of the objective concept of being as an inadequate concept. Our author does not fail to point out that it is the Thomists who have drawn closer to the Scotists, not the contrary, only then to conclude sustaining, in terms at least implicitly generic, that the convergence of positions is the result of the strength of truth:

ex qua explicatione constat opinionem modo Thomistarum parum, vel nihil a nostra differre; nihil enim aliud Scotistæ contendunt quam huiusmodi conceptum imperfectum, et inadæquatum entis

161. *Id.*, disp. 6, q. 16, q. 15, a. 2 *De fundamento huiusmodi distinctionis secerne a distinctione rationis ratiocinantis*, n. 283, vol. I, p. 906b. See also the often-recalled article, entitled «Quæ fuerit Scoti sententia circa præcisionem, et realitatem conceptus entis»: *Id.*, disp. 2, q. 4, a. 2, vol. I, pp. 137a-145b.

162. *Id.*, [prologus], nn. 65-66, vol. I, pp. 116b-117b.

ab inferioribus præcisum, quem mordicus ad hæc usque tempora negarunt prisci Thomistæ; vel saltim hæc olim adeo famosa inter Scotistas, et Thomistas controversia facta modo est quæstio quasi de nomine, sicut quæstio de actu entitativo materiæ in physica, et hoc evenit eo quia adversarii veritate coacti tandem et ipsi veritati subscribunt.¹⁶³

The affirmation is perhaps a sign of ingenuity, but is certainly an expression of intelligent eclecticism.

What has been said so far, does not prevent him from taking up a clear stance against those theses which he does not consider acceptable. Mastri rejects the doctrine of the Jesuit Nominalists, in particular that of Arriaga, for whom the transcendental being is a true genus, perfectly univocal and produced substantially by the activity of the mind. And he rejects it even more strongly in the version accepted and defended by the Scotist Franciscan friar, John Punch.

The middle path that he follows, also in his programme, cannot, therefore, be considered a simple composition of contrasting doctrines within a static framework of reference. Subtilius: it is a proposal attentive to the considerations of others but speculatively meditated on his own, within a framework of reference seen as being capable of interpretation in the sense of truth-seeking. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to establish whether for Mastri truth is inherited or discovered. More probably, it is a conquest in which we are all neither alone nor the first to participate.

163. *Id.*, q. 1, n. 14, vol. I, p. 78a-b. To tell the truth, in the course of the seventeenth century this convergence diminishes: the Complutensians and Poinsot return to the doctrine of the concept of being as a confused concept but actually including its inferiors. Cf. what Mastri himself writes in the following columns.

