

## DISTINCTIONS IN THE METAPHYSICS OF HENRY OF GHENT

BY ROLAND J. TESKE

The intentional distinction is commonly and rightly recognized as one of the hallmarks of the metaphysics of Henry of Ghent. Raymond Macken, for example, says, "Comme l'on sait, la distinction intentionnelle est une théorie bien caractéristique de Henri de Gand."<sup>1</sup> He adds that it bears the influence of Avicenna and contributes to the view of John Duns Scotus. On the contrary, he notes, "La distinction réelle est une doctrine tout aussi caractéristique de S. Thomas."<sup>2</sup> Certainly the real distinction between essence and existence in creatures is characteristic of the metaphysics of St. Thomas, but Henry too has real distinctions in his metaphysics. However, what Henry means by a real distinction is something quite different from what St. Thomas and his followers mean by a real distinction. So too, it is not really helpful to say that Henry considers the intentional distinction "comme une sorte de distinction intermédiaire entre la distinction réelle et la distinction de pure raison," unless one is clear about what a real distinction and a purely rational distinction are in the thought of the philosopher in question.<sup>3</sup> It is also commonly recognized, as Macken notes, that "Henri, dans ses questions consacrées à cette distinction intentionnelle entre l'essence et l'existence, n'attaquait pas en premier lieu Thomas d'Aquin, mais bien Gilles de Rome, ou plutôt, qu'il répondait à ses attaques."<sup>4</sup> Macken even goes so far as to claim that "la distinction intentionnelle est donc une sorte de distinction réelle," although he admits that "elle a donc un certain lien avec la distinction de raison."<sup>5</sup>

Others interpret Henry's position on the distinction between essence and existence in creatures as close to that of St. Thomas. José Gómez Caffarena, for example, cites several statements of Henry in which he seems to say that there is a real distinction between essence and existence in creatures:

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<sup>1</sup> R. Macken, "Les diverses applications de la distinction intentionnelle chez Henri de Gand," *Sprache und Erkenntnis im Mittelalter*, ed. Jan P. Beckmann et al. (Berlin, 1981), 769–76, here 769.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 770, where Macken quotes Henry to that effect. "Baptizetur ergo ille modus medius et detur ei nomen, et si non competenter possit appellari differentia secundum intentionem, ut omnino sit differre intentione et ratione, detur ei aliud nomen" (*Quodlibet* X, q. 7 [1518 edition], fol. 418rQ).

<sup>4</sup> Macken, "Les diverses applications," 770.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

I understand that every creature differs in existence and in the intellect, because it has existence distinct from essence in the nature of the thing, and the intellect grasps them as distinct and that only God differs in understanding only, that is, when one apprehends his essence under one concept, but his existence under another.<sup>6</sup>

And Henry adds: “And in that way the essence of a creature and its existence differ really (*re*) in some way.”<sup>7</sup> Gómez Caffarena concludes:

Me parece en consecuencia que no es en la *realidad* de la distinción de esencia y existencia donde hay que buscar la diferencia más profunda entre Enrique de Gante y Santo Tomás, aunque el Doctor Solemne se mostró tan celoso impugnador del antiguo bachiller de Angélico.<sup>8</sup>

Gómez Caffarena suggests, “Hay entre Santo Tomás y Enrique una diferencia de Metafísica fundamental, la consistencia especial dada por Enrique al ser de esencia.”<sup>9</sup> The being of essence, as opposed to the being of existence, as we shall see, is the being of a thing (*res*) that is more than a mere figment of the mind. It is a thing in this sense in which Henry speaks of a real distinction (*secundum rem*). A thing in this sense, however, is not something actually existing, but only an essence existing in the mind. A further complication arises because, as Jean Paulus points out, Henry distinguishes the level of metaphysics, which considers primarily essences, from that of physics, which considers really existing things.<sup>10</sup> Separability and inseparability are, as we shall see, tied to the various sorts of distinctions, and they

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<sup>6</sup> “Ubi intelligo quod omnis creatura differt in esse et in intellectu, quia habet esse distinctum ab essentia in natura rei, et intellectus ea capit distincta: et quod solus Deus differt in intellectu tantum, sub alia scilicet ratione apprehendendo eius essentiam, sub alia vero eius esse” (*Summa* 22.3 [Paris: Badius, 1520], fol. 132rE). See José Gómez Caffarena, *Ser participado y ser subsistente en la metafísica de Enrique de Gante* (Rome, 1958), 90.

<sup>7</sup> “Et sic quoddammodo re differunt essentia creaturae et esse eius” (*Summa* 27.1, fol. 162rN). Gómez Caffarena does not cite the rest of the sentence: “quoddammodo substantia et relatio fundata in essentia substantiae, licet huiusmodi differentia respectu differentiae duorum absolutorum sit in ratione tantum,” which seems to undermine the claim that Henry was saying here that they are really distinct, because a distinction between a substance and a relation founded on its essence is, as we shall see, an intentional distinction according to Henry.

<sup>8</sup> Gómez Caffarena, *Ser participado*, 90, where Gómez Caffarena refers to Giles of Rome, who was a student of St. Thomas, probably in 1269–72.

<sup>9</sup> See *Ser participado*, 90.

<sup>10</sup> “La métaphysique étudie les essences d’abord à l’état d’universels et de possibles, et seulement en second lieu, à l’état de réalisations singulières. . . . Le physicien, au contraire, s’il s’intéresse à l’homme, l’examine dans l’existence concrète (*in esse naturae*), nullement dans l’essence abstraite ni dans l’être propre à celle-ci (*in esse intentionali et cognoscitiva*.” Jean Paulus, *Henri de Gand: Essai sur les tendances de sa métaphysique* (Paris, 1938), 210.

provide quite different grounds for a real distinction at the metaphysical and the physical planes of consideration.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, in order to understand the various kinds of distinction in Henry, one cannot assume that what Henry means by a real distinction is the same as what St. Thomas or Giles of Rome meant, and one should not assume that Henry is speaking of real things existing in the external world rather than of essences in the mind. Rather, one needs to pay close attention to what Henry says about distinctions and how they are recognized and to do so without exclusively focusing upon the distinction between essence and existence in creatures. Fortunately, we have two questions in which Henry discusses at considerable length various distinctions and how they are recognized, namely, *Summa* 27.1, which dates from fall of 1279, and *Quodlibet* 5.6, which dates from Easter of 1281.<sup>12</sup> The heart of this article attempts to unpack what Henry says about distinctions in these two questions. In conclusion I shall briefly contrast Henry's distinctions with those found in the Thomistic tradition and point out some presuppositions and consequences of Henry's view.

#### DISTINCTIONS IN *SUMMA*, ARTICLE 27, QUESTION 1

The discussion of distinctions in *Summa* 27.1 occurs in the response to the first and fifth objections. The question had asked what life is in something living. The first objection argued that life is the essence of a living thing. In response Henry says that "this is true in God because in God the essence is not understood as something underlying being, but as that which is being itself, because the essence of God is his being, differing only rationally from him, just as a run and running differ."<sup>13</sup> In creatures, however, essence "is understood as something underlying being, which of itself is related indifferently to being and to non-being in actuality. In fact, considered in itself, it has only non-being."<sup>14</sup> Hence, in the case of a creature one cannot say that

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<sup>11</sup> For example, at the metaphysical level the essence "man" is a single *res*, which is really distinct from another essence, such as "horse," while at the physical level individual men, such as Socrates and Plato, and individual horses, such as Bucephalos and Citation, are really distinct.

<sup>12</sup> See J. Gómez Caffarena, "Cronologia de la 'Suma' de Enrique de Gante por relación a sus 'Quodlibetos,'" *Gregorianum* 38 (1957): 116–33, here 133.

<sup>13</sup> "Hoc verum est in Deo, quia in Deo non intelligitur essentia tanquam aliquid subiacens ipsi esse, sed tanquam quod est ipsum esse, quia essentia Dei est ipsum esse eius, differens solum ratione ab ipso, quemadmodum cursus et currere" (*Summa* 27.1, fol. 161rG.).

<sup>14</sup> "In creatura intelligitur essentia tanquam aliquid subiacens ipsi esse, quod de se per indifferentiam se habet ad esse et ad non esse in effectu; immo quod quantum ex se est, non habet nisi non esse" (ibid.).

“its essence is its being, nor the converse.”<sup>15</sup> But we can say that “its life is really its living . . . and it [i.e., its life] differs only rationally from living, although it differs intentionally from being.”<sup>16</sup> Clearly the criterion for things that are merely rationally distinct is that they can be mutually predicated of each other. As J. Paulus puts it, “Chaque fois qu’Henri se trouve en présence de deux concepts relatifs à la même chose, il se demande: ‘l’un peut-il être énoncé de l’autre?’ Selon que la réponse est négative ou affirmative, la distinction entre les contenus des deux concepts est déclaré intentionnelle ou simplement logique.”<sup>17</sup>

In the resolution of the question Henry had appealed to the example of a runner, a run, and to run (*currens*, *cursus*, and *currere*) to illustrate the relation between a being, an essence, and to be (*ens*, *essentia*, and *esse*). He explains the likeness as follows: “For in a creature a being is an essence that participates in being, as a runner is a substance participating in a run, insofar as a run is outside the nature of the substance and being is outside the nature of the essence.”<sup>18</sup> He points out, however, that “a run is a real, absolute accident in the runner. But being is not like that. Rather, it only has the notion of an accident insofar as the essence of a creature in itself, as it is in itself, does not include the notion of being.”<sup>19</sup> Henry’s reason is that “being is not some absolute thing added to the essence of a creature because of which it is said to be.”<sup>20</sup> He will go on to provide a fuller explanation of this point, which, as we shall see, is crucial to his position.

The reply to the fifth objection throws further light on distinctions. The objection claimed that, if life were not the substance of the soul, God could separate life from it. In his response Henry distinguishes three kinds of distinctions. He says that “certain things differ only according to reason, such as a definition and the thing defined, and those things are in no way separable, because they are indivisibly the same in the thing and in concept. And such things cannot be separated either in terms of the external thing or in terms of the concept, just as the same thing cannot be separated from

<sup>15</sup> “In creatura non possum dicere quod essentia sua est ipsum esse, non e converso” (ibid.).

<sup>16</sup> “Vita eius re est ipsum vivere . . . differens solum ratione ab ipso vivere, licet differat intentione ab ipso esse” (ibid.).

<sup>17</sup> Paulus, *Henri de Gand*, 225 n. 3.

<sup>18</sup> “Ens in creatura est essentia participans esse, sicut currens est substantia participans cursum, quo ad hoc quod cursus est extra naturam substantiae et esse est extra naturam essentiae” (*Summa* 27.1, fol. 161rG).

<sup>19</sup> “Cursus est accidens reale absolutum in currente, esse autem non sic, sed solum ratione accidentis habet in quantum essentia creaturae in se, quantum est de se, non includit rationem esse” (ibid.).

<sup>20</sup> “Esse non est res absoluta addita essentiae creaturae qua dicitur esse” (ibid.).

itself.”<sup>21</sup> Here the criterion for a merely rational distinction is inseparability in the thing and in the mind.

Henry continues, “But certain other things differ in intention, such as diverse differences of one species, which cannot be separated in the same thing because they are found in the same thing in reality.”<sup>22</sup> Thus vegetative and sensitive elements in a brute animal are inseparable in a single animal, although they can be separated in different things, for example, in a plant and in a dog. Inseparability in the same thing and separability in different things are criteria for an intentional distinction.

Thirdly, Henry adds, “But certain other things differ really, and they do this either as absolute from both sides or as relative at least from one side.”<sup>23</sup> Absolute or non-relative things are, as we shall see, substances, quantities, and qualities, while the other predicaments or categories are all relative. But in the case of things that are related, there are two possibilities: “the relation is either founded on the nature and essence of the thing or upon some accident in the thing.”<sup>24</sup> A relation founded upon an accident in the thing can be separated from the thing insofar as the accident can be separated from the thing. Thus the likeness of Plato to Socrates founded on the whiteness of each of them can be lost if one of them becomes black. Such a relation of likeness, therefore, is separable from Plato since it can be lost. Here it seems that separability of the one from the other is the criterion of a real distinction.

But a relation founded upon the nature and essence of a thing is inseparable in terms of reality from the thing as long as the thing remains. Henry explains that “being and living . . . imply such a relation with regard to the essence of a being. For the essence of a being . . . of itself in terms of the concept of the mind — in which it has the character of diminished being — is indifferent to being and to non-being and of itself has non-being in existence.”<sup>25</sup> But the essence has the being of existence insofar as it is the term

<sup>21</sup> “Quaedam differunt secundum rationem tantum, ut definitio et definitum, et ista nullo modo sunt separabilia quia idipsum sunt in re et in intellectu indivisibiliter, et talia separari non possunt, nec secundum rem extra nec secundum intellectum, sicut neque idem potest separari a seipso” (ibid., fol. 161vM).

<sup>22</sup> “Quaedam vero differunt intentione, ut diversae differentiae unius speciei, quae in eodem separari non possunt, quia cadunt in idipsum re, ut vegetativum sensitivum in bruto, sed in diversis separari, secundum quod in plantis est vegetativum sine sensitivo et in brutis sensitivum sine rationali” (ibid.).

<sup>23</sup> “Quaedam vero differunt re, et hoc vel absoluta ex parte utriusque, vel relata saltem ex parte alterius” (ibid.).

<sup>24</sup> “Aut enim relatio fundatur in natura et essentia rei, aut super aliquod accidens in re” (ibid.).

<sup>25</sup> “Talem autem relationem important esse et vivere circa essentiam entis. Essentia enim entis . . . de se secundum conceptum mentis in qua habet rationem diminuti esse, est

of the divine efficient causality. “By reason of that fact that it is the term of the divine action — through itself in its own proper nature — it has it that, without any real, absolute addition, it is something created and made by God and existing in act.”<sup>26</sup>

Henry argues that the being of existence added to the essence cannot be something absolute, that is, something non-relative, because, if it were, that addition would be an essence that has been produced, which would in turn have to have something added to its essence in order to exist. But in that way one is launched upon an infinite series of absolute things added to the essence. Thus “the reason because of which [the essence] is said to be produced or created or a being is founded on the essence itself because it is the term of the divine operation.”<sup>27</sup> Hence, what is added to the essence because of which it is said to be made or created or a being “does not belong to the essence from itself, nor is it something diverse and absolute in the thing, but comes only from the fact that it is the term of the divine operation.”<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, Henry concludes, “the being of existence of any creature is only being that is to be related to something else.”<sup>29</sup> As a relation, the being of a creature is weak, just as the being of any relation is weak compared to the being of a substance. Furthermore, Henry says that “if you remove from the creature relation to another, you withdraw from it every character of being, and if you understand absolute being in a creature, you do not understand the being of a creature, but the being of God with regard to a creature, and falsely.”<sup>30</sup>

It is interesting and informative to note that in *Summa* 29.1 Henry accuses the proponents of a real distinction between being and essence in creatures of making God the formal being of a creature so that they —

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indifferens ad esse et non esse et ex se habens non esse in existentia” (ibid.). According to Henry the being that anything has in the mind of a knower is a diminished being or entity, which, as an accident of the knower, is really distinct from the being of the thing. On the origin of the term “diminished being,” see Armand Maurer, “*Ens Diminutum*: A Note on Its Origin and Meaning,” *Mediaeval Studies* 12 (1950): 216–22.

<sup>26</sup> “Per hoc quod est terminus factionis divinae per se in propria natura sine omni addito reali absoluto habet quod sit creatum quoddam et factum a Deo et existens in actu” (*Summa* 27.1, fol. 161vM).

<sup>27</sup> “Ratio qua dicitur facta vel creata vel ens fundatur in ipsa essentia ratione qua est terminus divinae operationis” (ibid.).

<sup>28</sup> “Quod autem non convenit essentiae ex se, neque est aliquid in ea re diversum et absolutum, sed solum ex eo quod est terminus operationis cuiusdam” (ibid., fol. 161vN).

<sup>29</sup> “Esse existentiae cuiuslibet creaturae non sit nisi esse quod est ad aliud se habere” (ibid.).

<sup>30</sup> “Si absolvas a creatura comparationem ad aliud, subtrahis ei omnem rationem entis, et ita si intelligis in creatura esse absolutum, non intelligis esse creaturae sed esse Dei circa creaturam et falso” (ibid., fol. 162rN).

without realizing it, of course — fall into a form of pantheism. He says, “Although they do not see it, those who say that being in creatures is something really distinct from the essence of the creature are close to the error of the people we have mentioned,” namely, the pantheists.<sup>31</sup> According to Henry, if being in creatures is something really distinct from the essence, it will have to be a *res* other than the thing of which it is the being; that is, it will have to be some other substance, quantity, or quality. Thus a real distinction is one between two things (*res*), where “thing” is understood as something that has the being of essence, that is, that has God as its exemplary cause.

Henry develops his reasons for this claim as follows: “For, since that thing of which they say that it is being itself is apart from the essence of the thing and since it cannot be a true and absolute accident in the thing, because then a substance would have being only through its accident, although the contrary ought to be the case . . . it is necessary, therefore, that it be a substance.”<sup>32</sup> But “since it cannot be the substance of another creature, because the substance of one creature does not give being to another . . . it is necessary that they hold that it is the substance of the creator.”<sup>33</sup> That conclusion is, of course, untenable because the divine essence does not give being to creatures by giving “its own being in an identity of nature, as God the Father communicates his being to the Son.”<sup>34</sup> Nor can this being “be a creature to which the divine being is communicated in that way, but only God the creator.”<sup>35</sup> As Henry explains his own view, God gives being to a creature as an imitation of himself, when he produces any creature in being. What proceeds as God’s proper effect in imitation of the being of God is *in some sense* the divine being, and in accord with this, insofar as the being proper to God causes being *somehow* like to itself in the creature, it is said *somehow* to be the being of the creature.<sup>36</sup> Hence, as

<sup>31</sup> “Errori praedictorum prope sunt, licet non percipient, illi qui dicunt quod esse in creaturis sit aliquid re diversum ab ipsa essentia creaturae” (*Summa* 29.1, fol. 171rF).

<sup>32</sup> “Cum enim res illa de qua dicunt quod sit ipsum esse sit praeter essentiam rei, et non potest esse accidens verum et absolutum in re, quia tunc substantia non haberet esse nisi per suum accidens, cum tamen debet esse e converso, eo quod accidens non habet esse nisi per substantiam, quia accidentis esse est inesse, necesse ergo est eam esse substantiam” (*ibid.*).

<sup>33</sup> “Cum non potest esse substantia alterius creaturae, quia substantia unius creaturae non dat esse alteri . . . necesse igitur habent ponere quod sit substantia creatoris” (*ibid.*).

<sup>34</sup> “Quod omnino est impossibile, quia ipsa non dat eis esse, communicando eis suum esse in naturae identitate, sicut Deus Pater communicat esse suum Filio” (*ibid.*, fols. 171rF–171vF).

<sup>35</sup> “Et non potest esse creatura cui esse divinum sic communicatur, sed solum creator Deus” (*ibid.*, fol. 171vF).

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*

Henry understood the position of those holding a real distinction between the essence of a creature and its being, the being that God bestows on creatures has to be the being of the creator, which would make a creature, indeed every creature, divine, not merely by a likeness of imitation, but by a likeness of form such that every creature was truly divine.

In *Summa* 27.1 Henry provides a criterion for things that differ intentionally: "I say that whatever things of themselves form diverse concepts, one of which does not entirely include the other, differ intentionally, and these are concepts only of those things that differ in different things, although they are really the same in the same thing."<sup>37</sup> With such things that are intentionally distinct, we can understand one without the other, as we can understand sensitive life without rational life. Henry adds that such diverse concepts are formed in two ways. "For things really diverse in different things are either diverse as things existing outside the intellect and in those things that exist outside the intellect, or they are diverse as a thing existing in the intellect first and then outside in reality."<sup>38</sup> The second way is itself subdivided into two: "Such a difference is either one of two absolutes or one of something relative founded upon something absolute. In this second way the essence and its actual being differ in the same thing. In the first way any quiddity in creatures differs intentionally from the thing that participates in it."<sup>39</sup>

In the case of things diverse in intention that are really diverse in different things outside the intellect, "their concepts are either entirely diverse or only partially diverse so that something of one is included in the concept of the other."<sup>40</sup> As an example of the first, Henry mentions diverse differences that are present in the form of a species, such as vegetative and sensitive life in the soul of a brute. These differences are not predicated of each other. Similarly, the genus is not predicated of a difference, nor a difference of the

<sup>37</sup> "Dico differre intentione quaecumque de se formant diversos conceptus, quorum unus non includit omnino alterum, qui non sunt nisi eorum quae in diversis sunt diversa re, etsi in eodem sunt idipsum re" (*Summa* 27.1, fol. 162rO).

<sup>38</sup> "Diversa enim re in diversis aut sunt diversa ut res extra in intellectum existentes et in eis quae existunt extra aut sunt diversa ut res existens in intellectu primo et deinde in re extra" (ibid.). The Latin here is, it seems to me, problematic. The ablative "intellectu" or the phrase "intra intellectum" instead of "extra in intellectum" might be possible improvements of the texts. Henry is, I think, contrasting those things that are diverse as existing in the intellect and as existing outside the intellect in reality with those that exist first in the intellect and subsequently in reality.

<sup>39</sup> "Hujusmodi differentia aut est duorum omnino absolutorum aut alterius respectivi fundati super absolutum. Hoc secundo modo differunt in eodem essentia et esse eius actuale. Primo modo quidditas in creaturis differt intentione a re participante eam" (ibid.).

<sup>40</sup> "Eorum conceptus diversi aut omnino sunt diversi aut sunt tantum diversi in parte, ita quod aliquid conceptus unius includitur in conceptu alterius" (ibid., fol. 162rP).



genus. As examples of the second, Henry mentions the concept of being without qualification and the concept of living “because in a living thing living contains in its concept nothing more than being, but expresses the concept of that being in a distinct way, that is, in such a certain degree.”<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the concept of being does not express the degree of being that living expresses. Hence, the concept of living includes that of being, but the concept of being does not include that of living. Consequently, in a living being, the concepts of being and living differ intentionally.

Finally, Henry comes to things that differ only rationally. He says, “I say that whatever things are really the same and form the same concept but in a different way, such as a definition and the thing defined, differ only rationally.”<sup>42</sup> A circle and its definition differ in this way, as do the divine attributes. By way of contrast, Henry returns to the distinction between essence and being in any creature and says that “the essence of a creature and its being in relation to it, no matter how much it is found in the essence, differs from it intentionally, because the concept that the essence forms of itself, as it is an essence, includes absolutely nothing of being, and for this reason one of them cannot be predicated of the other formally and abstractly.”<sup>43</sup> That is, although things that differ merely rationally can be predicated of each other, the essence and being in creatures cannot be predicated of each other and, therefore, differ intentionally.

#### DISTINCTIONS IN HENRY’S *QUODLIBET* 5

In *Quodlibet* 5, question 6, Henry asks whether a real relation in God differs from the divine essence according to intention (*secundum intentionem*). In order to answer this question Henry says that

it is necessary to see what a difference according to intention is and what sort of difference it is, and because this depends on a knowledge of the other modes of difference, which are, of course, according to reality (*secundum rem*) and according to reason (*secundum rationem*), it is necessary to begin further back and see what is here called a thing and what is called an intention, in order that from this it may be seen what things differ really (*re*) and

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<sup>41</sup> “Quia vivere in re vivente super conceptum ipsius esse nihil amplius continet in suo conceptu, sed praecise exprimit conceptum esse illius, ut scilicet in tali gradu” (ibid., fol. 163vP).

<sup>42</sup> “Dico differe ratione sola quaecumque eadem re sunt et formant eundem conceptum, sed modo diverso, ut sunt definitio et definitum” (ibid., fol. 162vP).

<sup>43</sup> “Dico quod essentia creaturae et esse eius comparatum ad ipsam, quantumcumque incidit in ipsam essentiam, intentione tamen differt ab illa quia conceptus quem format de se essentia, ut essentia est, nihil omnino includit de ratione esse, et ideo formaliter et abstractive unum eorum de altero non potest praedicari” (ibid.).

what differ intentionally (*intentione*) and what differ only by reason (*tantum ratione*).<sup>44</sup>

Henry first explains what is meant by a thing in this context. Here a thing does not mean “a figment and being only in terms of the soul, which is derived from ‘I think, you think’ (*reor, reris*), nor some relation (*respectus*) . . . but whatever is some absolute nature and essence that has an exemplar idea in God, able to come into existence by the divine operation.”<sup>45</sup> Such a thing, which is more than a figment of the mind, is a thing derived from ratification or validation (*res a ratitudine*); it has being of essence (*esse essentiae*), but does not have being of existence (*esse existentiae*). A thing has the latter insofar as God causes it to exist in reality through efficient causality, but a thing has the former insofar as God is its exemplary cause.<sup>46</sup> As examples of things in this sense Henry gives composites, such as man and donkey, and principles of a composite, such as matter and form.<sup>47</sup>

He gives a rule for recognizing things that differ in reality: “Whatever imply diverse natures and essences in terms of reality, whether simple ones, such as matter and form, or composite ones, such as man and donkey, differ really.”<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, “whatever imply the same thing, whether simple or composite, are the same, and one of them does not add any reality to

<sup>44</sup> “Hic oportet ad propositae quaestionis declarationem . . . videre quae et qualis sit differentia secundum intentionem, et quia hoc dependet a notitia aliorum modorum differentiae, qui quidem sunt secundum rem et secundum rationem, ideo altius inchoando oportet videre quid hic appellatur res et quid intentio, ut ex hoc pateat quae sunt differentia re et quae intentione et quae tantum ratione” (*Quodlibet* 5.6 [Paris: Badius, 1518], fol. 161r). Although the critical edition of *Quodlibet* 5 has been announced as in preparation, it has not yet appeared. Hence, one has to rely on the Badius edition of 1518, which has been photographically reproduced by the Bibliothèque S. J. (Louvain, 1961).

<sup>45</sup> “Res hic appellatur non figmentum et ens secundum animam tantum, quod dicitur a reor, reris, neque respectus aliquis . . . sed quicquid est natura et essentia aliqua absoluta habens rationem exemplarem in Deo, nata existere in existentia operatione divina” (*Quodlibet* 5.6, fol. 161rK).

<sup>46</sup> For Henry’s explanation of the senses of thing and the relation of a thing to God as exemplar and efficient cause, see *Summa* 21.4, fols. 127rO–127vP. A thing in the sense in which “thing” is derived from “I think, you think,” is something that can exist or a possible thing, but not something that actually exists.

<sup>47</sup> To someone in the Thomistic tradition it might seem strange to call matter and form “things,” but Henry followed Augustine who, as Paulus has pointed out, “discernait dans l’acte créateur deux opérations successives, dont l’une produit la matière à partir de rien, tandis que la seconde façonne cette matière au moyen des formes” (*Henri de Gand* [n. 10 above], 213). Thus, Henry maintained that God could produce matter as a separate thing.

<sup>48</sup> “Unde re differunt quaecunque diversas naturas et essentias important secundum rem, sive fuerint simplicia, ut materia et forma, sive composita, ut homo et asinus” (*Quodlibet* 5.6, fol. 161rK).

the other.”<sup>49</sup> Examples of things really the same are “a definition and the thing defined and the parts of the definition among themselves and with the thing defined and likewise an absolute thing and the relation founded upon it. For no relation adds any thing (*res*) besides the thing of that on which it is founded.”<sup>50</sup>

Since Henry holds that the being of existence of any creature is a relation to God as its efficient cause that produces it in actuality, the being of existence of any creature is no absolute thing (*res*) added to the essence of the thing. Hence, the essence of any creature and its being of existence are really identical, although they differ intentionally. “Thing” understood in this way, that is, as derived from validation or ratification, “is the foundation of intentions and of reasons. For diverse intentions and reasons are founded on the same thing in reality.”<sup>51</sup>

Henry then turns to “intention” and explains what he does not mean by an intention here. He first of all does not mean: “that which is called a second intention, such as are the following: individual, genus, species, property, accident, definition, and thing defined, and such things that are called intentions only because they are the work of the intellect.”<sup>52</sup> Secondly he does not mean by an intention here a first intention,

such as “man,” “donkey,” “rational,” “irrational,” and so on, which signify what is universal. Because a universal is a natural thing and form in relation to second intentions, they are called their things, and the names of them are called the names of things. But with respect to individuals, which are and are truly said to be things, because they are the work of nature, such as Socrates and Brunellus, they are said to be intentions because they come in some way from the work of the intellect.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> “Re vero sunt eadem, quaecunque eandem rem sive simplicem sive compositam important, nec unum eorum aliquid rei super alterum ponit” (ibid.).

<sup>50</sup> “Definitio et definitum, et partes definitionis inter se et cum definito, et similiter res absoluta et respectus fundatus super ipsam. Nullus enim respectus aliquid rei ponit praeter rem eius super quod fundatur” (ibid.).

<sup>51</sup> “Res . . . est fundamentum intentionum et rationum. Super idem enim re fundantur intentiones et rationes diversae” (ibid.).

<sup>52</sup> “Intentio autem hic appellatur non id quod dicitur intentio secunda, qualia sunt ista: individuum, genus, species, proprium, accidens, definitio, definitum, et talia quae dicuntur intentiones non nisi quia opus intellectus sunt” (ibid., fol. 161rL).

<sup>53</sup> “Cuiusmodi sunt homo, asinus, rationale, irrationale, etc., quae significant id quod universale est. Quod quia res est et forma naturalis respectu secundarum intentionum, dicuntur res, et nomina eorum nomina rerum. Respectu vero individuorum quae vere res sunt et dicuntur, quia sunt opus naturae, ut Socrates et Brunellus, dicuntur intentiones, quia quodammodo sunt ab opere intellectus” (ibid.).

Thus these universal names “are called first intentions on account of the other second intentions.”<sup>54</sup>

Having excluded what is commonly meant by “first intention” and by “second intention,” Henry finally comes to what he means here by intention:

But here an intention is called something really pertaining to the simplicity of an essence, which is able to be separately conceived without something else, from which it does not differ by an absolute thing and which pertains to the same thing. Hence, an intention is said as a tending within (*intus tentio*) because by its concept the mind tends to something that is in a thing and not to something else that is something pertaining to the same thing. And in that way the intellect, to which it pertains to divide those things that are the same in reality, forms diverse concepts of the same thing, as concerning elements diverse within the conception of the mind, but concerning ones the same in reality.<sup>55</sup>

Hence, according to Henry, things that differ intentionally are really the same, but differ only insofar as the mind forms different concepts of them, concepts that, unlike those that differ only rationally, cannot be predicated of each other.

Henry gives examples of six degrees of things differing in intention. In the first two there is, he says, the greatest difference of intentions. Of the first degree Henry says, “At times diverse concepts are formed so that neither of them includes the other in its concept, such as are the concepts of diverse differences that come together in the same thing, for example, in a man rational, sensible, vegetable, insofar as they are differences.”<sup>56</sup> On the second degree of difference Henry says that there are “the genus and the difference that constitute the simple species, such as animal and rational.”<sup>57</sup> Concepts of things differing intentionally in the first two modes of difference are founded upon the same thing, but do not include one another.

<sup>54</sup> “Dicuntur primae intentiones propter alias intentiones secundas” (ibid.).

<sup>55</sup> “Sed appellatur hic intentio aliquid pertinens realiter ad simplicitatem essentiae alicuius, natum precise concipi absque aliquo alio a quo non differt re absoluta, quod similiter pertinet ad eandem. Unde dicitur intentio quasi intus tentio, eo quod mens conceptu suo in aliquid quod est in re aliqua determinate tendit, et non in aliquid aliud quod est aliquid eiusdem rei, et sic super idem in re per intellectum, cuius est dividere ea quae sunt idem in re, formentur diversi conceptus, ut de diversis penes conceptum mentis, eisdem autem in re” (ibid.).

<sup>56</sup> “Aliquando sic formantur conceptus diversi, ut neutrum eorum in suo conceptu alterum includat, ut sunt conceptus diversarum differentiarum quae concurrunt in eodem, sicut sunt in homine rationale, sensibile, vegetabile, in quantum differentiae sunt” (ibid.).

<sup>57</sup> “Et similiter conceptus generis et differentiae quae constituunt simplicem speciem, sicut sunt animal et rationale” (ibid., fol. 161r–161v).

The next four modes of difference entail less difference “because the concept of one intention includes the other, but not the converse.”<sup>58</sup> In the first of these four, “the concept of the species includes the concept of the genus and difference, but not the converse.”<sup>59</sup> In the second, “the concept of living in creatures includes the concept of being, not the converse.”<sup>60</sup> In the third “the concept of the supposit, such as this man, includes the nature, such as humanity, not the converse.”<sup>61</sup> In the fourth “the concept of something relative, such as of that of a being, includes the concept of the essence, not the converse.”<sup>62</sup> Concerning these last four modes Henry adds: “That which contains the other does not differ in intention from that which is contained by it, except by reason of the other part contained in what is signified of the same thing.”<sup>63</sup> For example, the concept of the species does not differ intentionally from the genus and difference. But the genus and difference are said to differ in intention, as happens in the first two modes. “But in these last four modes the whole that contains the other is not properly called an intention, nor is it properly said to differ in intention from that which is like a part of it, except insofar as it includes in itself something else with which it produces some form of composition in that whole, which, if it is conceived by itself, ought to be called an intention in the proper sense.”<sup>64</sup>

Next Henry turns to the meaning of “reason” in speaking about items differing “according to reason alone” (*secundum rationem tantum*). “Reason” does not mean “a certain cognitive power of an intellectual substance from which our soul is called rational,” nor does it mean “a work of reason in accord with which an argument is said to be a reason producing confidence, that is, certitude about something doubtful.”<sup>65</sup> Rather Henry explains that in its general sense reason means

<sup>58</sup> “Quia conceptus unius intentionis includit alterum, sed non econverso” (ibid., fol. 161vI).

<sup>59</sup> “Conceptus speciei conceptum generis et differentiae, non autem econverso” (ibid.).

<sup>60</sup> “Conceptus vivere in creaturis conceptum esse, non econverso” (ibid.).

<sup>61</sup> “Conceptus suppositi sicut hominis conceptum naturae ut humanitatis, non autem econverso” (ibid.).

<sup>62</sup> “Conceptus respectus sicut entis conceptum essentiae, non econverso” (ibid.).

<sup>63</sup> “Id quod alterum continet non differt intentione ab illo quod continetur nisi ratione alterius partis contentae in significato eiusdem” (ibid.).

<sup>64</sup> “In istis quattuor modis id quod alterum continet non differt intentione ab illo quod ab eo continetur, nisi ratione alterius partis contentae in significato eiusdem. Ita quod ista duo proprie dicuntur differre intentione, sicut contingit in praedictis duobus modis. In istis autem quattuor ultimis modis ipsum totum quod alterum continet non proprie dicitur intentio, neque proprie dicitur differre intentione ab eo quod est sicut pars eius, nisi quatenus includit in se aliquid aliud cum quo in toto illo ponit aliquae rationem compositionis, quod si secundum se concipiatur proprie debet dici intentio” (ibid.).

<sup>65</sup> “Ratio autem hic non appellatur vis quaedam cognitiva substantiae intellectualis a qua anima nostra dicitur rationalis, neque etiam opus ipsius rationis, secundum quod argumentum dicitur ratio rei dubiae faciens fidem, i.e., certitudinem” (ibid., fol. 162vM).

some way regarding a thing under which it is able to be conceived determinately without its being conceived under another way, under which it likewise is able to be conceived — and this without any difference of it in reality or intention. Thus the same thing in reality and intention conceived under a different way of conceiving is said to differ according to reason, insofar as it is conceived in one of those ways and not in the other, as is evident in the conception of a definition and what is defined and in the diversity of the divine attributes.<sup>66</sup>

Thus in conceiving God as goodness or as justice, we conceive in these different ways the thing, namely, God, who is the same in reality and intention. Or in conceiving a circle and a plane figure bounded by a single line, each point of which is equidistant from the center, we conceive the thing, namely, the circle, which is the same really and intentionally. Hence, things that are distinct merely rationally are able to be mutually predicated of each other.

In turning to the response to the question, namely, whether a real relation in God differs according to intention from the essence, Henry again states the criteria for an intentional distinction:

A diversity of intentions can exist only between those that are united in the same thing according to reality so that the concept of one completely excludes the concept of the other, and the converse . . . or so that something that is in the concept of the one is excluded from that which is in the concept of the other.<sup>67</sup>

The complete mutual exclusion of the one from the other is found in the first two modes, while the second sort of exclusion is found in the last four modes. Henry adds that

whatever are of this sort necessarily place some composition in that in which they are, but relation and essence put absolutely no composition in God, nor is something found in the concept of the one that is not found in the concept of the other, and for this reason essence and relation in God differ in no way according to intention, but only according to reason, that is, according to a diverse way of conceiving something, namely, according to different notions of the category of substance and of relation, which are found concerning the

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<sup>66</sup> “Modus aliquis circa rem, sub quo nata est concipi determinate absque eo quod concipiatur sub alio, sub quo similiter nata est concipi, et hoc sine omni eius differentia re vel intentione, ita quod idem re et intentione conceptum diversis modis concipiendi dicitur differre secundum rationem in quantum concipitur uno illorum modorum et non alio, sicut patet in conceptione definitionis et definiti et in diversitate divinatorum attributorum” (ibid., fol. 161vM).

<sup>67</sup> “Diversitas intentionum non potest esse nisi inter illa quae uniuntur in eodem secundum rem ita quod conceptus unius penitus excludit conceptum alterius, et e converso . . . vel ita quod aliquid quod est in conceptu unius excluditur extra illud quod est in conceptu alterius” (ibid., fol. 161vN).

same thing without any composition and diversity of the thing, without which there cannot be a diversity of intentions.<sup>68</sup>

Of particular relevance to the distinction between essence and the being of existence in creatures is Henry's claim that a relation places no absolute reality (*res*) in the thing that is related and that the being of existence of a creature is its relation to God as its efficient cause. Henry says, "In the whole universe of creation there are only three kinds of things, namely, substance, quality, and quantity, which . . . agree with one another in the fact that they signify a thing that is a nature and essence to which being pertains, and they differ from the uncreated thing because it is a nature and essence, which is being itself."<sup>69</sup> The other predicaments besides substance, quantity, and quantity "have to be reduced to the one predicament of relation" and "do not have in themselves another thing signified than the thing of an absolute predicament."<sup>70</sup> Since, as Henry sees it, the being of a creature — whether the being of essence or the being of existence — is a relation to God as exemplary cause or as efficient cause, the being of a creature cannot be really distinct from the essence of a creature. For such a real distinction would mean that the being of a creature was another thing (*res*) than the thing of the essence, which, as we have seen, amounts to a sort of pantheism, as Henry saw it.

Henry's claim that a relation does not add something real, that is, another thing (*res*), to something that is related seems to be highly plausible, since the alternative would entail that, for example, countless new things would come into existence in the existing white things when a new white thing came into existence. However, one might still ask whether the being of existence of a creature is a relation of dependence upon the creator as exemplary or efficient cause and not an act of the essence of the creature. But how is such a question to be decided?

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<sup>68</sup> "Quaecumque sunt alia necessario ponunt aliquam compositionem in eo in quo sunt unum; relatio autem et essentia in Deo nullum penitus compositionis facere possunt, neque cadit aliquid in conceptu unius eorum quod non cadit in conceptu alterius. Idcirco in Deo essentia et relatio nullo modo differunt secundum intentionem, sed solum secundum rationem, hoc est secundum diversum modum concipiendi aliquid, scilicet secundum rationes diversas praedicamenti substantiae et ad aliquid, quae circa idem cadunt absque omni compositione et diversitate rei, sine qua non potest esse diversitas intentionum, ut dictum est" (ibid.).

<sup>69</sup> "In tota universitate creaturae non sunt nisi tria genera rerum, videlicet, substantia, qualitas, quantitas, quae . . . in hoc inter se conveniunt quod significant rem quae est natura et essentia aliqua cui convenit esse et differunt a re increata quia illa est natura et essentia quae est ipsum esse" (ibid., fol. 161vO).

<sup>70</sup> "Ad unum praedicamenti relationis habent reduci . . . non habent in se aliam rem significatam quam sit res praedicamenti absoluti" (ibid.).

## SOME CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

We have seen Henry define what he means by “thing,” “intention,” and “reason.” We have seen his criteria for real, intentional, and merely rational distinctions, and we have seen examples of each sort of distinction. The criteria for a merely rational distinction are clear. Concepts that are merely rationally distinct can be mutually predicated of each other, and they cannot be separated from each other in concept or in reality. In that way the divine goodness is merely rationally distinct from the divine power. The criterion for an intentional distinction is also clear. Concepts of the same thing are intentionally distinct if each concept completely excludes the other or if one concept excludes the other, although the converse is not the case. An intentional distinction, furthermore, implies some composition in the thing in which there are the diverse intentions, and yet there are some sorts of composition that are sufficient for a real distinction.<sup>71</sup> The criterion for a real distinction, namely, the separability of one thing from another in thought or in reality is less clear since one can, it seems, understand the separability at the level of metaphysics, that is, of essences, or at the level of physics, that is, of things existing in the external world. Henry frequently contrasts the intentional distinction between essence and being with the real distinction between a substance and a disposition, such as white or black in a thing that is white or black.<sup>72</sup> In the latter case the substance and its disposition, which is a quantity or quality, are two absolute things. It seems to make no difference whether essence and being or a substance and its disposition are considered merely as things existing in the mind or as things that actually exist. That is, a real distinction in Henry’s metaphysics can be between things that have only being of essence, that is, which are merely possible or able to exist, or that have the being of existence, that is, which actually exist. Given Henry’s criteria for the three sorts of distinctions, it seems difficult to quarrel with him about the application of the criteria. Hence, what can one do?

In a single paper, even a fairly long one, the correctness of Henry’s criteria cannot, in my opinion, be decided since the truth or falsity of a metaphysical position is something too complex for a facile solution. What one can do in a short paper is (1) to highlight the difference between Henry’s

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<sup>71</sup> In *Summa* 28 and 29, Henry argues for the simplicity of God by removing from him every form of composition from other things and with other things. While many of the forms of composition that he removes from the divine essence involve merely intentional distinctions, others such as the composition from form and matter and composition with accidents involve real distinctions in Henry’s sense.

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, Henry, *Summa* 21.3, fol. 126rF; 25.1, fols. 147rB and 148rH; 27.1, fol. 148vR, and 28.4, fol. 168rX.



real, intentional, and rational distinctions and traditional scholastic distinctions and (2) to point out some presuppositions and implications of Henry's position in contrast with another metaphysical position, such as that found in Thomistic tradition.

First, Thomistic textbooks distinguish between real major distinctions and real minor distinctions, the former being between two actually existing substances and the latter between two real components of one actually existing substance. Thus Socrates and Plato, or Citation and Brunellus, would be really distinct by a real major distinction, while matter and form or substance and quality in each of them would be distinct by a real minor distinction. Scholastic thinkers also divided mental or conceptual distinctions or distinctions of reason into distinctions of reason "reasoning: *ratiocinantis*" and "reasoned: *ratiocinatae*."<sup>73</sup> In the former the active participle indicated that the distinction was entirely the work of the person thinking who conceived the same reality in different ways; in this way, for example, the divine attributes are rationally distinct. In the latter the passive participle indicated that there was some foundation for the distinction in the thing; in that way animality and rationality differ in a single human being. Many of the examples that Henry gives of concepts intentionally distinct would clearly fall under the distinction of reason *ratiocinata*, while examples of concepts merely rationally distinct would fall under the distinction of reason *ratiocinans*. A Thomist would, of course, not locate the distinction between essence and existence in creatures under that sort of distinction, but under a real minor distinction, rather than under a real major distinction. Furthermore, a Thomist would find baffling or simply wrong-headed Henry's real distinction among things that do not actually exist but that are merely possible, although they can be made to exist by God.

Second, Henry's metaphysics has a set of presuppositions and consequences, which can count for or against his position. For instance, in a recent paper I examined Henry's metaphysical argument for the existence of God and argued that, despite some opinions to the contrary, Henry's metaphysical argument is strikingly similar to Anselm's argument in the *Proslogion*. I claimed that, like that Anselmian argument, it presupposes that existence is originally grasped in a concept or as part of a concept. Hence, if one attains through abstraction and the ways of eminence and negation a concept of the divine quiddity that is absolutely simple, existence is found to be part of or contained in that concept, so that the non-existence of God is incon-

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<sup>73</sup> On the kinds of conceptual distinctions see Joseph Owen, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Milwaukee, 1963), 37–38 n. 17.

ceivable.<sup>74</sup> But, as David Hume said so eloquently — and as most contemporary philosophers agree — “that Caesar, or the angel Gabriel, or any being never existed, may be a false proposition, but still is perfectly conceivable and implies no contradiction.”<sup>75</sup> Hence, if one accepts Henry’s metaphysical argument and its presuppositions, one stands in disagreement with the mainstream of Western philosophy — not merely in disagreement with David Hume, but also with Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, and many others.

Similar problems plague Henry’s account of real and intentional distinctions. For, as we have seen in the present paper, a real distinction is for Henry a distinction between two absolute things, that is, between substances or between a substance and a quantity or quality, where each of them are things in the sense of things that have being of essence. So too, an intentional distinction is a distinction between two concepts of the same thing, one of which does not include the other. Thus the being of existence of a creature is a concept intentionally distinct from the concept of the essence of the creature. Hence, both essence and existence are concepts, which are distinguished insofar as a creature’s essence can be conceived without its existence. There is, moreover, a correlation between how being or “what is” is known and how non-being or “what is not” is known. In *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Bernard Lonergan contrasted the Thomist and Scotist positions on distinctions. He claimed that in the Thomist position “knowledge of the distinction between *P* and *Q* is constituted by the negative comparative judgment.” For he argued that “the real is being, and as being is known by affirmative judgments, so distinctions in being are known by negative judgments.”<sup>76</sup> By way of contrast, in what he calls the counterposition, “the real has to be known before one can make a judgment; it is known by an ocular or a fictitious intellectual look; and so distinctions are known through the occurrence of different acts of looking that cannot be referred to the same object.”<sup>77</sup> Leaving aside Lonergan’s reference to the formation of a concept as a fictitious intellectual look, what he says about distinctions in Scotus holds for the origin of both real and intentional distinctions in Henry’s metaphysics. As being is known in a concept, so one thing’s not being another is, for Henry as for Scotus, known in grasping different or distinct concepts. In the Thomistic tradition, on the other hand, one thing’s not being another is known in a negative judgment. According to Lonergan,

<sup>74</sup> See “Henry of Ghent’s Metaphysical Argument for the Existence of God,” *The Modern Schoolman* 83 (2005): 19–38.

<sup>75</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* XII, 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, 1966), 164.

<sup>76</sup> (New York, 1957), 489.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

a real distinction is known in a patterned set of judgments of fact, such as “This is a computer,” “That is a lamp,” and “This computer is not that lamp.”<sup>78</sup> Similarly, a real minor distinction is known in a similar patterned set of judgments about the components of an actually existing thing. Furthermore, such a judgment that one thing is not the other concerns things that actually exist and are known to exist in affirmative judgments of fact. On the other hand, “things” in Henry’s philosophy are, as we have seen, not primarily actual existents or things with the being of existence, but things with the being of essence. They are merely things that God can create; thus they have essential reality even if God never creates them. Perhaps the most basic point at issue between Henry of Ghent and Thomas Aquinas is whether “real” means what has possible existence or what has real existence. But that is simply to say that Gómez Caffarena was right on target in claiming that Henry’s doctrine of “the being of essence” marks the decisive point of difference from that of St. Thomas.<sup>79</sup>

*Marquette University*

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<sup>78</sup> See my “Bradley and Lonergan’s Relativist,” *Philosophy and Theology* 5 (1990): 125–36, where I contrasted Lonergan’s understanding of distinctions with a Hegelian understanding of distinctions, such as is found in F. H. Bradley, and showed how very divergent views of reality emerge because of them.

<sup>79</sup> See above nn. 8 and 9.