

# *The Logical and Metaphysical Structure of a Common Nature*

## *A Hidden Aspect of Aquinas' Mereology*

David Svoboda<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The paper deals with a type of whole and part that can be found in Aquinas' work and to which no attention has been paid so far. This type of whole and part can be called metaphysical whole and metaphysical part, respectively. In the paper, metaphysical whole and part are put forth on the problem of the logical and metaphysical structure of a common nature.

**Keywords:** Aquinas, mereology, metaphysical whole/part.

In the last few decades a growing attention has been paid to Aquinas' whole-part doctrine (*mereology*), yet it can hardly be said that we have a complete and exhaustive account of his views on this problem.<sup>2</sup> We still miss an exposition of Aquinas' mereology in a broader context of his metaphysical thought and it seems that the complete list of all kinds of wholes and parts has not yet been given as well. In this paper I shall try to set forth a (hidden) type of whole and part to which – so far as we know – no attention has been paid and which can be called the metaphysical whole and the metaphysical part, respectively. In the following, this type of whole and part will be explained

<sup>1</sup> The work on this paper has been supported by the grant project GAAV IAA908280801.

<sup>2</sup> As far as we know, the following important contributions to the problem has been put forth so far: Bro (1967) & (1967a); Desmond (1992); Lofy (1959); Oeing-Hanhoff (1953); Oeing-Hanhoff (1976).

on the problem of the logical and metaphysical structure of a common nature [*natura communis*].

## 1 Aquinas' Account in *De ente et essentia*

In his early treatise *De ente et essentia* (chapter 3) Aquinas considers how the essence of a composed substance must be taken to be called a genus, or a species, or a difference.<sup>3</sup> Aquinas' conclusion is that the composed essence must be taken signified as a whole in order that it may be called a genus, or a species, or a difference. The composed essence is signified as a whole, for instance, by the word "animal" or "man", insofar as it contains implicitly and indistinctly everything that is in the individual.<sup>4</sup>

Now a nature or essence signified as a whole can be considered according to Aquinas (who closely follows Avicenna at this point) in two or three ways, respectively.<sup>5</sup> Firstly, it can be considered accord-

<sup>3</sup> See Aquinas (1976).

<sup>4</sup> Aquinas comes out of the so-called identity theory of predication, according to which - roughly speaking - we identify the content of general concept, signified by predicate, with the object representing the subject of the proposition. Since nature, to which belong intentions of genus, species and difference, is predicated of singulars, it is impossible that a universal intention, like that of genus or species should be predicated of nature, if this is signified as a part, as in the term "humanity" or "animality". As no part is predicated of its whole, we surely cannot say that Socrates is humanity. On the basis of the identity theory of predication Aquinas further denies the view that the notion of the genus or the species belongs to an essence as to some real thing existing independently of singular things, as the Platonists held, because in this way the genus and the species would not be predicated of this individual; therefore, Aquinas concludes, the notions of genus or species belong to the nature insofar as it is signified as a whole. Cf. Aquinas (1976, chap. 3).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Avicenna (1508, f. 12r-12v). Avicenna distinguished three ways in which the common nature can be considered. Firstly, as it exists in singular individuals, secondly, as it is in the intellect, and finally, nature can be considered "absolutely" in which it is nature, i.e. in itself. Nature considered in itself is neither one nor many, neither individual nor universal since, if nature in itself were one it could never be multiplied and if it were many it could never be one, etc. Pursuant to Avicenna, the nature considered absolutely is superior as for being to both the esse in singular individuals and the esse in intellect. According to Owens' interpretation of Avicenna, the nature considered in itself has its own esse different from that in individuals or in intellect. The esse in individuals as well as that in intellect is, relating to abso-

ing to its “proper content” (*ratio*) and this is an absolute consideration of it. In this way nothing is true of it except what belongs to it as such. For example, to a man as a man belongs “rational” and “animal”, and whatever else falls within his definition. But white, black, or anything of this sort, which does not belong to the concept of humanity, does not belong to a man as a man.<sup>6</sup>

The nature considered absolutely cannot be said, according to Aquinas, to be one or many because each is outside the content of humanity and either can be applied to it. For if plurality were of its content, it could never be one, as it is with Socrates. Similarly, if oneness were of its content, then the nature of Socrates and Plato would be one and the same, and it could not be multiplied into many individuals.<sup>7</sup>

In the other two ways a nature can be considered according to its existence in this or that individual on the one hand, and in the soul (or intellect, in other words) on the other hand. There are accidents which follow the nature according to either existence. In singular things it has a multiple existence in accordance with the diversity of these singular things, yet the existence of none of these things belongs to the nature considered in itself, i.e. absolutely. For it is false to say that the nature of a man, as such, has existence in this individual, because if

lutely considered nature, something accidental, whereas the *esse* that pertains to nature in itself is for it (nature) essential. According to Owens’ interpretation, in the Latin translation of Avicenna the absolutely considered nature is an entity that has the *esse* in itself but that has no oneness. See Owens (1959); Owens (1959a); Honnefelder (1976). Honnefelder’s interpretation is similar to that of Owens.

<sup>6</sup> See Aquinas (1976, chap. 3) – „...*ratio generis vel speciei conveniat essentialiter, secundum quod significatur per modum totius, ut nomine hominis vel animalis, prout implicite et indistincte continet totum hoc, quod in individuo est. Natura autem vel essentia sic accepta potest dupliciter considerari: uno modo, secundum rationem propriam, et haec est absoluta consideratio ipsius. Et hoc modo nihil est verum de ea nisi quod convenit sibi secundum quod huiusmodi. ... Verbi gratia, homini in eo quod est homo convenit rationale et animal et alia, quae in diffinitione eius cadunt. Album vero aut nigrum vel quicquid huiusmodi, quod non est de ratione humanitatis, non convenit homini in eo quod est homo.*“.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. – „*Unde si quaeratur utrum ista natura sic considerata possit dici una vel plures, neutrum concedendum est, quia utrumque est extra intellectum humanitatis et utrumque potest sibi accidere. Si enim pluralitas esset de intellectu eius, nunquam posset esse una, cum tamen una sit secundum quod est in socrate. Similiter si unitas esset de ratione eius, tunc esset una et eadem socratis et Platonis nec posset in pluribus plurificari.*“.

existence in this singular thing belonged to a man as a man, a man would never exist outside this singular thing. Similarly, if it belonged to a man as a man not to exist in this singular thing, a man would never exist in it. But it is true to say that a man, but not as his being a man, exists in Socrates or in Plato as well as it exists in the soul.<sup>8</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that the nature of a man, considered absolutely, abstracts (*abstrahit*) from any of these existences, but in such a way that it excludes none of them (*non fiat precisio alicuius eorum*). And it is the nature so considered which is predicated of all individuals.<sup>9</sup>

Yet it cannot be said that the notion of a universal belongs to the nature so considered, because oneness and commonness (*communitas*) are of the notion of a universal.<sup>10</sup> Neither of these belongs to human

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. – „*Alio modo consideratur secundum esse quod habet in hoc vel in illo, et sic de ipsa aliquid praedicatur per accidens ratione eius, in quo est, sicut dicitur quod homo est albus, quia socrates est albus, quamvis hoc non conveniat homini in eo quod homo. Haec autem natura duplex habet esse, unum in singularibus et aliud in anima, et secundum utrumque consequuntur dictam naturam accidentia. Et in singularibus etiam habet multiplex esse secundum singularium diversitatem et tamen ipsi naturae secundum suam primam considerationem, scilicet absolutam, nullum istorum esse debetur. Falsum enim est dicere quod essentia hominis in quantum huiusmodi habeat esse in hoc singulari, quia si esse in hoc singulari conveniret homini in quantum est homo, nunquam esset extra hoc singulare. Similiter etiam si conveniret homini in quantum est homo non esse in hoc singulari, nunquam esset in eo. Sed verum est dicere quod homo non in quantum est homo habet quod sit in hoc singulari vel in illo aut in anima.*“.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. – „*Ergo patet quod natura hominis absolute considerata abstrahit a quolibet esse, ita tamen quod non fiat precisio alicuius eorum. Et haec natura sic considerata est quae praedicatur de individuis omnibus.*“.

<sup>10</sup> It is clear from the explanation that Aquinas understands the nature as a sort of matter that can, in an individual, accept the form of singularity or multiplicity while, in the intellect, assumes the form of universality and oneness. The nature has the form of universality if it (the nature) relates to many things, as one nature, that can be identified with these things and which is in them (the things) multiplied. Hence nature can be predicated of many things. In this sense of the word, oneness and commonness belong to the nature of universal and they are produced by the abstractive act of intellect. (*universale est unum in multis et de multis*). Cf. Aquinas (1989, lect. 19) – „*Sed necessarium est esse unum in multis et de multis, si demonstratio debet esse, quia non erit universale, nisi sit unum de multis; et si non sit universale, non erit medium demonstrationis; ergo nec demonstratio. Et quod oporteat medium demonstrationis esse universale, patet per hoc quod oportet medium demonstrationis esse unum et idem de pluribus praedicatum non aequivoce, sed secundum rationem eandem: quod est ratio universalis.*“ (*universale est unum in multis et de multis*).

nature considered absolutely, for if commonness were of the content of a man, commonness would be found in whatever thing humanity is found. And this is false, because in Socrates there is no commonness, but whatever is in him is individuated.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, it cannot be said that the notion of the genus or of the species comes to human nature according to its existence in individuals, because human nature is not found in individuals with a oneness such that it would be some one thing belonging to all, which the notion of a universal requires.<sup>12</sup>

It remains, therefore, that the notion of the species attaches to human nature according to its existence in the intellect. For human nature exists in the intellect in abstraction from every being that individuates it, which is why it has a content that is the same in relation to all individuals outside the soul: It is the equal likeness of all of them, and leads to knowledge of all insofar as they are men. Since the nature in the intellect has such a relation to all individuals, the intellect discovers and attributes the notion of species to it.<sup>13</sup>

Let us summarize from our point of view the most important thoughts of Aquinas' account. Aquinas, in accordance with Avicenna, distinguished three ways in which a nature or essence can be considered.<sup>14</sup> The nature can be considered firstly as it exists in individuals,

<sup>11</sup> See Aquinas (1976, chap. 3) – „*Non tamen potest dici quod ratio universalis conveniat naturae sic acceptae, quia de ratione universalis est unitas et communitas. Naturae autem humanae neutrum horum convenit secundum suam absolutam considerationem. Si enim communitas esset de intellectu hominis, tunc in quocumque inveniretur humanitas inveniretur communitas. Et hoc falsum est, quia in socrate non invenitur communitas aliqua, sed quicquid est in eo est individuatam.*“.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. – „*Similiter etiam non potest dici quod ratio generis vel speciei accidat naturae humanae secundum esse quod habet in individuis, quia non invenitur in individuis natura humana secundum unitatem, ut sit unum quid omnibus conveniens, quod ratio universalis exigit.*“.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. – „*Relinquitur ergo quod ratio speciei accidat naturae humanae secundum illud esse quod habet in intellectu. Ipsa enim natura humana in intellectu habet esse abstractum ab omnibus individuantibus, et ideo habet rationem uniformem ad omnia individua, quae sunt extra animam, prout aequaliter est similitudo omnium et ducens in omnium cognitionem in quantum sunt homines. Et ex hoc quod talem relationem habet ad omnia individua intellectus adinvenit rationem speciei et attribuit sibi.*“.

<sup>14</sup> Aquinas explains the three possible ways of nature also in: (1965, q. 5, a. 9 ad 16um) and in: (1956, 8, 1).

further as it exists in the intellect, and finally it can be considered “absolutely”, i.e. we abstract from its properties it has both in individuals and in the intellect and we consider only the properties that belong to it as such.

Individual determinations are added to nature insofar as it is in a singular thing and that is why it becomes an individual nature which is multiplied according to the number of individuals. Nature, as it is in the intellect exists in abstraction from all individual determinations and therefore it is one. Since the nature in the intellect is one and at the same time it is the likeness of all individuals that participate in it, it can be identified with them and multiplied in them. However, whatever is related to many in this way is universal.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, nature considered absolutely is neither one nor many, neither individual nor universal, and it exists neither actually nor as a mere object of our intellect, i.e. intentionally.<sup>16</sup> And it is nature considered absolutely that is predicated of all individual. As we know,

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1976, chap. 3) – „ ... est universalitas illius formae ... secundum quod refertur ad res ut similitudo rerum.“ Universal can be considered, however, in two ways: firstly we can consider universal nature together with the form of universality that is produced by the intellect through its abstractive act and, thanks to which, nature relates to many things. Furthermore, it is possible to consider universal according to the nature it has, e.g. insofar as animality or humanity is in individuals. See Aquinas (1888 – 1906, I, 85, 3 ad 1um) – „ ... universale dupliciter potest considerari. Uno modo, secundum quod natura universalis consideratur simul cum intentione universalitatis. ... intentio universalitatis, ut scilicet unum et idem habeat habitudinem ad multa, proveniat ex abstractione intellectus ... Alio modo potest considerari quantum ad ipsam naturam, scilicet animalitatis vel humanitatis, prout invenitur in particularibus.“

<sup>16</sup> If we consider the common nature absolutely, the nature considered in this way has intentional existence as the object of our consideration. This seems to conflict with Aquinas’ opinion, according to which nature understood in this way has no existence. This putative contradiction could be explained by a distinction between the abstractive act of intellect by which we grasp a common nature and that has intentional existence, and the abstractive act of intellect by which we grasp a common nature as absolute and that has intentional existence as well. Since these are two numerically different acts of intellect, their objects have different intentional existences. Intentional existence of the nature considered absolutely, that is the object of our consideration, is only a presupposition for considering a common nature itself but it is not the object of our consideration. For detailed explanation see: Sousedík (2006, 124).

Aquinas describes being (*ens*) as that which has existence (*id quod est*). A real being has a real existence and a being of reason has an intentional existence. Since the nature considered absolutely has no existence, it is not a being (*ens*). If nature considered absolutely is not a being, it has none of the properties of *being qua being*, for instance unity or plurality.

It is clear, from the summary given above, that Aquinas took a realistic standpoint in the famous dispute over universals.<sup>17</sup> Realism taken in this sense, roughly speaking, can be described as the belief according to which the order of our knowledge corresponds to the real order of things. However, according to Aquinas' so-called "moderate realism", the correspondence between both orders is not complete. Now the question is, what is the foundation of the correspondence between our concepts and real things?

Nature considered absolutely is a common component which can be found both in the intellect as the "content" of a universal concept and in individuals as their real individual nature. Nature has in both states some different properties: in the intellect it has the form of universality and unity, in singular things it is individual and many. In the intellect it has an intentional being, in individuals it has a real being. However, what belongs to nature as such can be found both in the intellect and in individuals, for instance human nature includes "animality" and "rationality". Since human nature as the "content" of our concept takes the form of universality, it is clear that its "logical parts" like "animal" or "rational" are also universal.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, since the nature in individuals has an individual being, the animality and the rationality of this individual must have a real individual being. It seems to be evident that nature considered absolutely is the common component that is under different forms both in the intellect and in individuals and that it is the foundation of the correspondence between our concepts and the structure of real things.

Further, it seems that a nature, as it exists in the intellect and as it is in individuals, is not something "homogeneous" but it is structured in

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Gracia (1994).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1888 - 1906, I, 8, 2 ad 3um) - „... *duplex est pars, scilicet pars essentiae, ut forma et materia dicuntur partes compositi, et genus et differentia partes speciei* ...”.

some way. I shall call the structure of a nature, as it exists in the intellect, “the logical structure of a common nature”, and as it exists in individuals “the metaphysical structure of a common nature”. However, what is the character of its components and how are these components united in the whole?

## 2 The Logical Structure of a Common Nature

Firstly, let’s consider the logical structure of a common nature.<sup>19</sup> It can be understood *via* various essential predicates by which we signify this nature and which are more or less complete answers to the question “what is it?”. The complete answer to the question “what is Socrates?” provides the essential predicate “man”, a less complete answer can be given by the essential predicate “animal”, an even less complete reply is “body” and the least complete reply provides the essential predicate “substance”. However, the predicate “substance” can be completed in such a way that it provides a complete answer to the question: it is completed by the predicate “corporeal” to the predicate “corporeal substance” and this predicate may be further completed by a predicate “animated” to the predicate “corporeal animated substance”, which can be completed via “sensuous” and “rational” to the predicate “man”. “Man” then signifies the common (specific) nature of man.<sup>20</sup>

Each essential predicate signifies the common nature of man as a whole, yet they differ since each predicate signifies it in a “more or less determinate way”.<sup>21</sup> The predicate “substance” signifies the human nature in “the least” determinate way, since it signifies only such a thing which enjoys being in itself and not in something else, but any other essential perfection is not excluded. Similarly, the predicate “body” signifies the human nature, in a more determinate way than

<sup>19</sup> In the following section, I am inspired by the interpretation given in: Sousedík (2006, 116 – 118).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1989, lect. 2) – „ ... *intellectus conceptiones, quas nomina et verba et orationes significant immediate, secundum sententiam Aristotelis. Non enim potest esse quod significant immediate ipsas res, ut ex ipso modo significandi apparet: significat enim hoc nomen homo naturam humanam in abstractione a singularibus.*“.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1976, chap. 2) – „ ... *genus significat indeterminate totum id quod est in specie ... genus significet totam essentiam speciei ...*“.



“substance” since it signifies a thing that has a form, thanks to which it has three dimensions, but without excluding other perfections.<sup>22</sup> The predicate “man” signifies the human nature as a whole in the most determinate way, since it expresses every essential perfection of it.

Since the essential predicates can be completed by the given way so that they express the common nature in the most determinate way, the common nature insofar as it exists in the intellect is the *logical essential whole*, which consists of its logical parts.<sup>23</sup> A human nature for instance, as it exists in the intellect, consists of the logical parts “animal” and “rational”, but it includes over and above these the logical parts such as “animated” (*animatum*), “body”, “substance” and so on.

The logical structure of a human nature can be described in the following schema:

Substance substance/ composed or body substance/composed /living or animated substance/composed /animated / sensuous or animal substance/composed /animated / sensuous / rational or man
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

A human nature and its logical parts, insofar as they exist in the intellect, have an intentional being (*esse*) and there is only a “distinction of reason” among the logical parts of a human nature.<sup>24</sup>

Let’s have a look at the relationships among the logical parts of the human nature as it exists in the intellect. Aquinas holds that whatever is in a species, it is also in a genus, but in an indeterminate way (*ut non*

<sup>22</sup> See Aquinas (1976, chap. 2) – „ ... hoc nomen corpus hoc modo accipi ut significet rem quandam quae habet talem formam ex qua tres dimensiones possint in ea designari, quaecumque forma sit illa, sive ex ea possit provenire aliqua ulterior perfectio, sive non; et hoc modo erit genus animalis, quia in animali nihil est accipere quod non in corpore implicite contineatur.”.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1965, a. 4) – „Secunda totalitas attenditur secundum perfectionem essentiae, cui totalitati etiam respondent partes essentiae, physice quidem in compositis materia et forma, logice vero genus et differentia ...”.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1888 – 1906, I, 76, 8) – „Est etiam quoddam totum quod dividitur in partes rationis ... sicut definitum in partes definitionis ...”.

*determinatum*).<sup>25</sup> The concept of a genus thus includes every and each perfection of a species but in an indeterminate way.<sup>26</sup> The genus „animal” is determined to the species “man” by adding the difference “rational”.<sup>27</sup> Thus it is clear that some parts of the essential logical whole are *determined* and other parts are *determinating*. Every part which determines some genus is called “difference” and in the human nature there is only one logical part that is only determined, namely the “substance”, and only one part that is only determining, that is to say the difference “rational”. Other logical parts are both determined and determining, however, in a way such that each of these parts is determined together with the part that determines it within the human nature as a whole. For example, within the human nature as a whole the logical difference “composed” determines the logical part “substance” and these parts together are determined by the difference “living”. The determined part relates to the determining part as a potency to its act.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Aquinas (1976, chap. 2) – „ ... *quidquid est in specie, est etiam in genere ut non determinatum*.”

<sup>26</sup> It follows from this – among others – that genus relates to a subordinate species both as a whole and as a part. The former holds because it includes every subordinate species in a non-determinate way, e.g. “animal” includes in a non-determinate way species “man” or “horse”. In this case genus is so-called *universal (logical) whole*; cf. Aquinas (1965a, a. 11 ad 2um) – „ ... *totum ... universale, quod adest cuilibet parti secundum totam suam essentiam et virtutem; unde proprie praedicatur de suis partibus, ut cum dicitur: homo est animal.*”. Genus relates to the species as a part since the concept of species includes not only the concept of genus, but also difference, e.g. “man” includes concept “animal” and “rational”. In this case genus is so-called *essential (logical) part* and species is its correlative *essential (logical) whole*. Cf. Aquinas (1888 – 1906, I, 85, 3 ad 2um) – „ ... *universale magis commune comparatur ad minus commune ut totum et ut pars. Ut totum quidem, secundum quod in magis universali non solum continetur in potentia minus universale, sed etiam alia; ut sub animali non solum homo, sed etiam equus. Ut pars autem, secundum quod minus commune continet in sui ratione non solum magis commune, sed etiam alia; ut homo non solum animal, sed etiam rationale. Sic igitur animal consideratum in se, prius est in nostra cognitione quam homo; sed homo est prius in nostra cognitione quam quod animal sit pars rationis eius.*”.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. – „ ... *designatio autem speciei respectu generis est per differentiam constitutivam ...*”.

<sup>28</sup> See Aquinas (1976, chap. 5) – „*Omne autem quod recipit aliquid ab alio est in potentia respectu illius ...*”.

### 3 The Metaphysical Structure of a Common Nature

Let us further consider the metaphysical structure of the common nature. The metaphysical structure of a common nature can be considered on the basis of the logical structure of a common nature. The initial presupposition of this theory is the above mentioned Aquinas' "moderate realism" concerning the problem of universals. Let us see what Aquinas says on this problem in the commentary to the first book of *Sentences* (19, 5, 1). Aquinas distinguishes here three kinds of entities which can be signified by different names. Firstly, there are real beings (*entia*) that have complete existence outside the soul, e.g. a man or a stone; secondly, there are "beings of reason", that have no existence outside the soul, e.g. a dream or a chimera; thirdly, there are beings that have outside the soul a foundation in reality, but in the soul they have a nature of a universal, and these are universals. For humanity is something in reality, but outside the soul it has not the nature of a universal since outside the soul there is no humanity common to many real things. However, if humanity is apprehended by the intellect, the form of universality is added to it by the act of the intellect and on the basis of this form it is called the species.<sup>29</sup>

It is clear that according to Aquinas the human nature insofar as it exists in the intellect, has a foundation in reality. Similarly the logical parts of the human nature such as "substance", "animal", or "rational" have a foundation in reality.<sup>30</sup> For the common specific and generic nature is the common component that can be found under various forms both in the intellect and in real individuals. This seems to support the thesis that the logical structure of the common nature

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1929 - 1947, I, 19, 5, 1) - „ ... eorum quae significantur nominibus, inveniuntur triplex diversitas. Quaedam enim sunt quae secundum esse totum completum sunt extra animam; et hujusmodi sunt entia completa, sicut homo et lapis. Quaedam autem sunt quae nihil habent extra animam, sicut somnia et imaginatio chimerae. Quaedam autem sunt quae habent fundamentum in re extra animam, sed complementum rationis eorum quantum ad id quod est formale, est per operationem animae, ut patet in universalis. Humanitas enim est aliquid in re, non tamen ibi habet rationem universalis, cum non sit extra animam aliqua humanitas multis communis; sed secundum quod accipitur in intellectu, adjungitur ei per operationem intellectus intentio, secundum quam dicitur species ...”.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1929 - 1947, I, 2, 1, 3).

corresponds in some way to the metaphysical structure of the same nature in individuals.

However, what is the character of the metaphysical components or parts of the common nature, as it exists in individuals and in which way are these components united in the whole?

According to Aquinas the metaphysical components or parts of the common nature in individuals do not differ, but on the contrary, they are *in re* the same.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the metaphysical parts of the common nature are in individuals in such a way that they can be apprehended by the intellect through multiple and entirely different concepts which have a foundation in reality.<sup>32</sup> Hence the metaphysical components of the common nature in individuals are really the same and yet they can be distinguished by the intellect. If we apprehend and distinguish two different concepts that have a foundation in reality, for instance "man" and "animal", these concepts as well as the natures included in them actually differ. Hereafter I shall call the distinction of concepts which have a foundation in reality in accordance with later Thomistic tradition *a distinction of reason with a foundation in reality (distinctio rationis cum fundamento in re)*.

Now the question is, what kind of distinction is there among the metaphysical parts of the common nature? In other words, if there is a distinction of reason with a foundation in reality among the logical parts of the common nature, as it exists in the intellect, what is the real foundation of this distinction of reason? So far as we know, Aquinas gives no explicit answer to this question. However, it is clear from his texts that there is no real and actual distinction among the metaphysical components of the common nature but that these metaphysical parts are really the same.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1970 – 1976, q. 3, a. 8 ad 2um) – „ ... Socrates, homo et animal non distinguuntur secundum esse. Si autem accipiamus ideam communiter pro similitudine vel ratione, sic, cum diversa sit consideratio socratis ut socrates est, et ut homo est, et ut est animal, respondebunt ei secundum hoc plures ideae vel similitudines.“

<sup>32</sup> See Aquinas (1929 – 1947, I, 2, 1, 3 ad 4um) – „ ... ratio hominis non dicitur esse in homine quasi res quaedam in ipso, sed est sicut in subjecto in intellectu, et est in homine sicut in eo quod praestat fulcimentum veritati ipsius ...“

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1918 – 1930, I, 26) – „Quod est commune multis, non est aliquid praeter multa nisi sola ratione: sicut animal non est aliud praeter socratem et Platonem et alia

Humanity and animality insofar as they exist in Socrates, do not really differ from each other and from Socrates, but these natures in Socrates are *in re* the same.<sup>34</sup> Even if these natures in Socrates are *in re* the same, they can be distinguished by the intellect, or are, one might say, “distinguishable”. These natures are “distinguishable” by the intellect’s activity and therefore they are actually distinct only as different objects of our intellect. Thus there is only a “potential” distinction among the metaphysical parts of the common nature as it exists in individuals. I shall call this potential distinction in accordance with the later (but not the only) Thomistic tradition *the virtual distinction*.

As it is clear from the explanation given above, the common nature, as it exists in individuals, is individuated and multiplied. Thus for instance the human nature, as it exists in Socrates, is individual since individual determinations are added to it (individual matter and accidents determinating the matter).<sup>35</sup> Within this context it is necessary to point out that Aquinas understands these individual determinations on the physical level (i.e. as physical individual entities) and not on the metaphysical level, i.e. as a metaphysical component or a “metaphysical part” of the individual nature by which each and every other metaphysical part of the common nature would be individuated (as it is the case with so-called *haecceitas* of Duns Scotus).<sup>36</sup> The metaphysical structure of the human nature together with the physical individual determinations which are added to it can be described by the following schema:

substantiality/compositeness/animateness/sensuality/  
rationality/physical individual determinations

*animalia nisi intellectu, qui apprehendit formam animalis expoliatam ab omnibus individuantiis et specificantibus; homo enim est quod vere est animal; alias sequeretur quod in socrate et Platone essent plura animalia, scilicet ipsum animal commune, et homo communis, et ipse Plato.*“

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1970 – 1976, 3, 8 ad 2um) – „ ... Socrates, homo et animal non distinguuntur secundum esse.”.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1965, 9, 1) – „Hoc autem quod est in substantia particulari praeter naturam communem, est materia individualis quae est singularitatis principium, et per consequens accidentia individualia quae materiam praedictam determinant.”.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Aquinas (1965, 9, 1); Aquinas (1929 – 1947, I, 23, 1); Aquinas (1929 – 1947, I, 34, 1); Aquinas (1976, chap. 2); Aquinas (1888 – 1906, III, 4, 4), etc.

Now, what kind of relationship is there among the metaphysical parts of the common nature as it exists in individuals? It seems that such relationships are similar to those of logical parts sharing the same nature in the intellect. For it seems that as there is, among the logical parts of the human nature in the intellect, a relationship of a determinable to determinating (the logical part "substance" is determined by the logical part "composed"), so there is a similar relationship among the metaphysical parts of the human nature in individual, i.e. the metaphysical part "substantiality" is determined by the metaphysical part "compositeness" in such a way that both metaphysical parts form together a "composite substance". And as the logical parts "substance" and "composed" are determined only together by the part "animated", it seems that the metaphysical parts "substantiality" and "compositeness" are only together determined by the part "animality". If this interpretation is correct, then there is, among the metaphysical parts of the human nature in individual, just one part, that is just determined, namely "substantiality", and just one component, namely "rationality" that is just determinating. All metaphysical components of the human nature in individual are determined (individuated) together by physical individuating determinations.<sup>37</sup>

If our interpretation of Aquinas' doctrine as presented above is correct, the metaphysical structure of a common nature in real categorical beings can be understood as a special kind of an essential metaphysical whole that consists of its merely potential or metaphysical parts.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Nature of each categorical being consisting of genus and difference, i.e. material and immaterial substances and their accidents, is metaphysically structured. Cf. Aquinas (1965, a. 10) – „*Alio modo dicitur aliquid totum per comparationem ad partes essentielles speciei... genus et differentia partes quodammodo speciei. Et hic modus totalitatis attribuitur etiam essentiis simplicibus ratione suae perfectionis ...*“; Aquinas (1965a, 4) – „*Secunda autem totalitas attenditur secundum perfectionem essentiae, cui totalitati etiam respondent partes essentiae, physice quidem in compositis materia et forma, logice vero genus et differentia; quae quidem perfectio in formis accidentalibus recipit magis et minus, non autem in substantialibus.*“

<sup>38</sup> Aquinas often speaks about the physical essential whole that is composed of the physical essential parts, namely prime matter and substantial form. Cf. Aquinas (1888 – 1906, I, 76, 8) – „*Est etiam quoddam totum quod dividitur in partes ... essentiae*

*Katedra filosofie*  
*KTF UK v Praze*  
*Thákurova 3*  
*Praha 6*  
*Česká republika*  
*svoboda@ktf.cuni.cz*

### References

- AQUINAS, T. (1989): *Expositio Libri Posteriorum*. Opera Omnia I, 2 (ed. Leon.). Romae.
- AQUINAS, T. (1989a): *Expositio Libri Peryermenias*. Opera Omnia I, 1 (ed. Leon.). Romae.
- AQUINAS, T. (1976): *De ente et essentia*. Opera Omnia XLIII (ed. Leon.). Romae.
- AQUINAS, T. (1970 – 1976): *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*. Opera Omnia XXII, 1 - 3 (ed. Leon.). Romae.
- AQUINAS, T. (1965): *De potentia*. In: Pession, P.M. (ed.): *Quaestiones disputatae II*. Turin.
- AQUINAS, T. (1965a): *De spiritualibus creaturis*. In: Calcaterra, M. – Centi, T. (eds.): *Quaestiones disputatae II*. Turin.
- AQUINAS, T. (1965b): *Quaestio disputata De anima*. In: Calcaterra, M. – Centi, T. (eds.): *Quaestiones disputatae II*. Turin.
- AQUINAS, T. (1956): *Quaestiones de quodlibet*. Spiazzi, R.M. (ed.). Turin.
- AQUINAS, T. (1929 – 1947): *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*. Mandonnet, P. – Moos, M.F. (eds.). Paris.
- AQUINAS, T. (1918 – 1930): *Summa contra Gentiles*. Opera Omnia XIII-XV (ed. Leon.). Romae.
- AQUINAS, T. (1888 – 1906): *Summa theologiae*. Opera Omnia IV-XII (ed. Leon.). Romae.
- AVICENNA (1508): *Opera omnia, Logica*. Tertia pars. Venise.
- BRO, B. (1967): La notion métaphysique de tout et son application au problème théologique de l'union hypostatique: I – La notion de tout en Saint Thomas. *Revue Thomiste* 67, 32 – 61.
- BRO, B. (1967a): La notion métaphysique de tout et son application au problème théologique de l'union hypostatique: II – Analytiques de la notion de tout. *Revue Thomiste* 67, 561 – 583.
- DESMOND, P.H. (1992): *Medieval Mereology* (Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie, Vol. 16). Amsterdam: B.R. Gruener.

*...sicut ... compositum resolvitur in materiam et formam.*“. The physical and metaphysical essential whole should be carefully distinguished.

- GRACIA, J.J.E. (1994): Cutting the Gordian Knot of Ontology: Aquinas's Solution to the Problem of Universals. In: Gallagher, D.M. (ed.): *Aquinas and His Legacy, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* 28. Washington, D.C., 16 – 36.
- HONNEFELDER, L. (1976): Natura communis. In: Ritter, J. – Gruender, K. (eds.): *Historisches Woerterbuch der Philosophie*. Band 6, Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe und Co. AG, col. 493 – 504.
- LOFY, C.A. (1959): The Meaning of „Potential Whole“ in St. Thomas Aquinas. *The Modern Schoolman* 37, 39 – 48.
- OEING-HANHOFF, L. (1953): Das Ganze und seine substantialen Teile. In: *Ens et unum convertuntur, Stellung und Gehalt des Grundsatzes in der Philosophie des hl. Thomas von Aquin*. Münster: Aschendorff, 155 – 163.
- OEING-HANHOFF, L. (1976): Ganzes/Teil. In: Ritter, J. – Gruender, K. (eds.): *Historisches Woerterbuch der Philosophie*. Band 3, Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe und Co. AG, col. 3 – 11.
- OWENS, J. (1959): Common Nature: A Point of Comparison Between Thomistic and Scotistic Metaphysics. *Mediaeval Studies* 19, 1 – 14.
- OWENS, J. (1959a): Thomistic Common Nature and Platonic Idea. *Mediaeval Studies* 21, 211 – 223.
- SOUSEDÍK, S. (2006): *Identitní teorie predikace*. Praha: Oikumené.