

6A0ABDTE040 The Problem of Substance¹

[1 Difficulties]²

Difficulties connected with the idea of substance fall into two classes. First there are problems connected with change,³ and their root is the fact that a real and adequate distinction between substance and accident seems to put the static and the dynamic in watertight compartments. This objection may take any one of five forms, as follows:

1 On the Aristotelian theory of alteration, change of the accidents of the substance *A* results in the limit in substance *A* becoming substance *B*. But the accidents of *A* are really and adequately distinct from the substance *A*. How, then, can change of the former effect change of the latter?

2 In the evolution of chemical compounds out of chemical elements, the higher form is said to be educed out of the potencies of the lower. Now in what precisely does that potency consist? Has the lower form a tendency to self-transcendence, or is the potency in question merely obediential?

3 In some cases (simple fission of the amoeba, cutting of worms into two pieces) mere quantitative division results in the actuation of a substantial form that previously existed in potency. What is the potency of a worm to become two

1 This item appeared in the fifth of the files that Lonergan left with Frederick Crowe in 1953.

2 The item begins with two pages of difficulties (1 to 12). The pages are numbered in pencil, 1-2, but the second page is also numbered in type, 2.

3 The problems connected with change are those numbered 1 to 5.

worms? What is the precise relation between quantity and substance so that quantitative division multiplies substance?

4 In the higher material beings either one holds that there is but one or that there are several substantial forms actually existing. But if there are several, how is the object but one thing? And if there is only one substantial form, what is meant by saying that the lower forms are present only in potency when to all appearances they are actually present? And in what precisely does that potency consist?

5 There is an evident organization and correlation and unity of accidental change (faculties of soul, sense and appetite, biological functions) which cannot be explained except by the unity of the substance, by the radication of the accidents in the one substance. But how can the substance effect this unity when the action of the substance is an accident? Again, how can it do so when all accidents are really and adequately distinct from substance?

But more profoundly, the concept of substance appears gratuitous and incoherent, and this gives another series of difficulties.⁴

6 The substance is known through knowledge of the accidents. But substance and accident are really and adequately distinct. Therefore, knowledge of the substance must be illusory, a mere guess at the unknowable.

7 Nor is there any use saying that knowledge of the accidents gives grounds for inferring substance, e.g., that the appearances of the cat are so concomitant and so intimately correlated that the cat must be one thing. For such correlation is merely a set of relations, a pattern, and a pattern of accidents is not substance; it is simply another set of accidents.

⁴ This is the second class of difficulties connected with the idea of substance.

8 Again, *accidentis esse est inesse* [the being of an accident is to ‘be in’]. But how precisely does *inesse* differ from *esse*? Is not the distinction purely verbal?

9 One predicates accident of substance, e.g., the rose is red. But substance and accident are really and adequately distinct. Therefore, the rose (substance) is not red (accident), and so all accidental predication must be false, or else the real distinction between substance and accident is false.

10 *Accidens perficit substantiam* [accident perfects substance]. But a thing does not become more perfect because something else has perfection. Substance and accident are really distinct. Therefore, accident cannot perfect substance.

11 Reason demonstrates real distinctions between potency and act, essence and existence, matter and form, substance and accident. But there appears no possibility of piecing together this menagerie of *entia quibus* into the real and dynamic unity of a single object. Therefore, reason is discredited.

[2 Principles of Solution]⁵

I The real problem is the problem of the object, for of objects we predicate in the categories substance, quantity, quality, relation, action, passion, place, time, posture, and habit. The mere fact of such predication posits the problem of the object. How reconcile such multiplicity with real unity?

5 There follow six pages of what seem to be principles of solution (I to XIII, in Roman numerals). The pages are numbered in pencil, 3-8. But see below, p. 13, note 8.

II Now this problem can be mitigated by pointing out that a number of the predicaments are merely extrinsic denominations.⁶ Such are time, place, posture, and habit.

Further, action and passion may be reduced to motion and relation, so that action is motion *ut ab hoc* and passion is motion *ut in hoc*. Finally, motion is simply quantity or quality in process.

III However, this leaves us with a residue of multiplicity: substance, quantity, quality, and relation. Thus, the problem of the object remains: how can the object be one?

IV The first thing to be observed are the conditions of possible solution. To explain the unity of the object is not a matter of asserting that it is one and that is

6 'Denomination or predication is intrinsic to a subject *P*, when the metaphysical equivalent of the name or predicate is a constituent of the being *P*. On the other hand, denomination is extrinsic to a subject *P*, when the metaphysical equivalent of the name or predicate is not a constituent or not entirely a constituent of the being *P*.' Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 530. Later in this same piece, Lonergan will say '*ubi, quando, habitus, and situs* are extrinsic denominations, while *actio* and *passio* are a combination of relation and quality or, in the case of local motion, a combination of relation and extrinsic denomination, and in creation a combination of relation and substance.' This leaves substance, quantity, quality, relation as the only Aristotelian predicaments that are intrinsically denominated.

all there is about it. That is not all there is about it. For we ask for explanation of that unity, and the explanation of the unity is something more. It is a call for an act of intelligence.

Again, such explanation is essentially its own end: the actuation of the intellect is at once the *forma* and the *finis* of the activity. We know the object is one, but we wish to understand that unity.

Third, the mere fact that there is a problem of unity in the object and that the solution of this problem is an act of understanding leads to another condition: the object has to be explained in terms of internal principles, *entia quibus est obiectum* [the realities by which the object is].

These principles must be internal, else the internal problem of unity in multiplicity is not met. These principles must be multiple yet intelligibly unified, else either the fact of multiplicity is disregarded, or it is not explained into a unity.

The solution, then, of the problem of the object is necessarily an intelligible structure of internal principles, of *entia quibus*. To reject this is simply to refuse to bother about the issue.

v Now other types of internal principle (essence and existence, substance and accident, matter and form) can all be reduced to the most general type which is the pair ‘potency and act.’

Potency is that by which an object has capacity, ability, tendency, power of a given kind.

Act is that by which there is the fulfilment, the attainment, the realization of potency.

By definition *potency limits act*: what makes the fulfilment, the realization, the attainment of a given kind? Obviously, the potency which is fulfilled, realized,

brought to attainment. If one can understand and if that capacity is realized, then the realization is necessarily an understanding.

By definition *act actuates potency*, as is clear from inspection of the definition of act.

Thus, potency and act are mutually related, and so mutually conditioned that the two principles together give but one thing.

Further, whenever there is a possibility of incomplete actuation, it may also be true that the incomplete act is the potency to a completing act. Thus, in the field of intellect, one may understand a thing or a theorem in its basic principle but not in its details; and in such a case the potency to understand the theorem or the thing completely is the fact that one has grasped the basic principle, for without that one cannot understand the thing at all.

Thus, potency and act may be a series with every act except the ultimate and complete act in potency to subsequent act, and every potency except the initial and basic potency the act to previous potency. And in this case, as in the case of single act and potency, the resultant is the intelligible unity of one object.

VI Now the fundamental division of potencies is into substantial and accidental.

Substantial potency is *id cui competit esse per se*, what has a right to be on its own.

Accidental potency is *id cui competit esse in alio*, what is not entitled to be on its own [but to be in another].

VII The ground for this division would seem reducible to the difference between absolute and relative.

Obviously, relation is relative and presupposes a related. Thus, relation is not entitled to be on its own.

But quantity and quality are also relative in the sense that they are always predicated *secundum plus et minus* [according to more or less]. What is big or small is only more or less so. What is bright or heavy or loud or sweet or hot is not absolutely so but more or less so. Similarly, there is no absolute seeing, no absolute desiring, but only seeing this or desiring that. Finally, though there is absolute understanding, *ipsum intelligere*, it is not accidental; and any accidental understanding is understanding this or that or something else.

Now what is predicated *secundum plus et minus* never seems entitled to be on its own: there would not be any point to a ‘seeing this’ or ‘desiring that’ or a 100% centigrade, being on their own.

On the other hand, substance is predicated absolutely. An object is a tree or it is not a tree; it is not more or less a tree. Similarly, with all substantial predicates. Nor is there any use appealing to doubtful intermediate instances, instances which may be plants or may be animals. Such difficulties can always be explained by the inadequacy of classifications. In any case, there remains the essential difference: what is unmistakably bright is only more or less bright; but what is unmistakably a tree or a cow is absolutely such and not more or less a tree or a cow.

VIII Now, not only is there a radical ground for a distinction between substantial and accidental potency; there is also a radical ground for the connection between them.

The difference we have traced to the fact that the substance is predicated absolutely and the accident relatively.

The connection may be shown to lie in the fact that a group of accidental potencies together constitute a remote potency to *esse per se* [to be on its own].

For if it is true that limited understanding and willing, perceiving and desiring, functioning vitally, and so forth, have singly no right to be on their own, to be per se, it also is true that an aggregate of such limited capacities does somehow constitute the possibility of a title to be on one's own. For, after all, a man is simply the real unity of intellect and sense and vital function and physical capacity.

It follows that what is substantial potency (*id cui competit esse per se* [that to which it is proper to be on its own]) may also be the act that unites into a single thing an aggregate of accidental potencies (*quibus competit esse in alio* [those to which it is proper to be in another]). Thus, substantial and accidental potency are not only distinct; they also are related; and the substantial potency, besides being potency with respect to independent existence, may also be act of union with respect to an aggregate of accidental potencies.

IX But at this point it is necessary to examine more closely the nature of the accident.

Commonly a distinction is drawn between two aspects of the accident: *ut inhaerens* and *ut tale accidens* [as inhering and as such an accident]. Thus, John's intellect is both an accident inhering in John's substance and, as well, an accident that consists in the ability to understand and judge.

Now, this distinction reveals a bipolarity in accidental potency, that is, a capacity to be actuated in different directions, as it were, a capacity to be actuated by different acts.

For the accident *ut tale accidens* [as such an accident, an accident of this kind] is *id cui competit talis actus secundum plus et minus* [that to which a given act is proper according to more or less]; and the accident *ut inhaerens* [as inhering in] is *id cui competit esse in alio*. The actuation of the former is by some quality

or quantity, e.g., a habit of intellect or will. But the actuation of the latter is necessarily by substance: for if capacity to inhere in a substance could be actuated by an accident, there would be actual inherence in a substance without the necessity of there being a substance in which the accident inhered.

x Now by taking together the conclusions of VIII and IX there appears to be a potency-act relation between substantial potency and accidental potency.

Act actuates potency: substantial potency or essence actuates the potency of accident to inhere; it does so by uniting a group of accidental potencies into a single reality.

Potency limits act: but a group of accidental potencies taken together make a substance of a given kind. If there are no more than vital functions, then the substance is vegetal; if as well there is the capacity for local motion, for appetite and perception, then the substance is animal; if in addition there is a capacity to understand and to decide, the substance is a man.

XI Further, just as accidental potency is bipolar, so also is substantial potency.

For substantial potency is in potency to existence: it is *id cui competit esse per se*.

But substantial potency is the act unifying a pattern of accidental potencies; and it unifies not merely these potencies as potencies but also their acts; further, it is in potency to existence because it is the resultant of a number of accidental potencies; and if these accidental potencies are actuated to their accidental acts, then the title of the substantial potency to per se existence is enhanced. A man with developed faculties is much more per se than an infant. Thus, substantial potency is perfected in 'perseity' by accidental act, and it is perfected to existence by substantial act. It is bipolar.

XII Now this solves the problem of the unity of the object as a unity in multiplicity. There are two potencies, one substantial and the other accidental. But both these potencies are bipolar, so that substantial potency and act and accidental potency and act, though four distinct principles of the object, are connected throughout by mutual relationship and conditioning.

The basic potency is accidental potency to accidental perfection. But such a potency, even when actuated, has no title to be on its own, to be *per se*.

However, a group of such potencies in a suitable pattern does constitute the matter for a potency to *esse per se*. And such a potency is realized by substantial essence, which unites into one reality the patterned group of accidental potencies. Further, substantial essence is in potency to *esse per se* even if the accidental potencies are not actuated; but its capacity to *esse per se* is increased and perfected when they are actuated.

Finally, neither the accidental potencies nor their acts nor their substantial union exist, but they are in potency to existence; and this is realized by the *actus existendi*.

Thus, the first act is *esse existentiae* and the first potency is *potentia accidentalis*. The link between existence and accidental potency is the substantial essence, and the perfection of substantial essence is accidental act.

XIII Now, this structure of *entia quibus* will solve the problems of becoming, for it makes the substance such and such a substance by the accidental potencies; a sufficient change in these involves a substantial change.

Again, it solves the problem of knowledge. For unless accident is somehow potency determining substantial act and limiting it, there is no possibility of knowing substance by knowing accident.

Finally, the only novelty in the theory is the potency-act relation between accident and substance, and this relation is necessary to solve the problems.

[3 Solution to the Objections]⁷

1 The major is granted: change of accidents in the limit involves change of substance. The minor is granted: accidents are really and adequately distinct from substance.

The solution to the problem is that in the limit a change of accidents gives a new pattern of accidents united into a single object by the substantial essence; but the essence is precisely such a pattern, and so a new pattern is a substantial change.

2 In chemical compounds the new substantial form is said to be educed out of the potencies of the lower substantial forms.

The solution is that the lower forms are patterns of accidental potencies; their combination into a single pattern gives a new pattern which may be different in kind from the originals.

3 Quantity is the number of accidental potencies united into a single object by substantial essence. When these potencies are to spatiotemporal acts, then quantitative division of the substance is possible. And there result two substantial forms, of the same or of different kinds, according as the new patterns following the cut are similar or dissimilar to the initial form.

⁷ There follow three pages headed 'Solution to the Objections' (pencil numbering on pages, 9-11). The objections in question are the eleven with which this entry began. The numbering reverts to Arabic characters.

4 There is only one substantial form or essence. The higher essence holds the lower in potency because parts of its pattern would be the pattern of the lower. The lower appear to be actually present because the accidental potencies that would constitute the lower (were it present) are present.

5 There is this evident union, correlation, and organization, because the substantial potency or essence actuates into one thing the many accidental potencies along with their acts.

This is possible because the action of the substance as a formal cause is not an accident but the substance itself.

The real distinction between accident and potency is not to the point, because the real distinction is not only a distinction but also the most intimate of connections: the limitation-perfection interrelation of potency and act.

6 Though substance and accident are really distinct, it remains that the group of accidental potencies are the potency that limits the act of substantial essence; hence in knowing the group, one knows *per identitatem* [by identity] the limit or nature of substantial essence.

It follows that knowledge of substance is not a guess at the unknowable.

7 In knowing a substance, say, a cat, one does not merely know a set of phenomena and their pattern of correlations. One also knows a real unity: in what that knowledge consists is another question which here need not be considered.

8 The *inesse* of the accident differs from the *esse* of the substance in two ways: first, the *esse* of the accident is not existential but essential; second this *esse* is an *inesse*, that is, realized by the unification of accidents through a realization of many inferences.

9 One does not predicate accident of substance; the substance (rose) is not the accident (red); the two are really and adequately distinct. One predicates both rose and red of the one object, which is rose in virtue of its substantial essence, and is red in virtue of its accidental essence. Rose as a noun denotes not the substance but the object as determined by the substance.

10 *Accidens perficit substantiam. Distinguo.*

Accidens in quantum est id cui competit esse in alio, Nego, nam perficitur et non perficit.

Accidens in quantum est potentia ad aliquem actum secundum plus et minus, Nego, nam perficitur a substantia et non perficit.

Accidens in quantum est actus potentiae accidentalis, concedo; et optime intelligitur quod perficit, nam quatenus perficit accidens est actus et essentia substantialis est potentia.⁸

8 [Does accident perfect substance? A distinction is in order.

[Accident insofar as it is that to which it is proper to be in another does not perfect substance, for it is perfected and does not perfect.

[Accident insofar as it is potency to some act according to more or less does not perfect substance, for it is perfected by substance and does not perfect.

[Accident insofar as it is the act of an accidental potency does perfect substance; and it is very well understood to perfect, for insofar as the accident perfects it is act and the substantial essence is potency.]

11 This objection [the difficulty of piecing together the *entia quibus* into the real and dynamic unity of a single object] falls to the ground if it can be held that all the distinctions are but particular cases of the general distinction between potency and act.

Essence and existence is obviously a potency-act relation.

Substance and accident we have endeavored to show to be constituted and related as potency and act: substance (*ens per se*) is potency (essence) and act (existence); accident is potency and act; and a group of accidental potencies is the substantial potency.

Now this develops St Thomas's position presented in *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 54, aa. 1-3. St Thomas shows that accident must be potency and act, that substance must be potency and act, and that all four are distinct. He does not show that substantial potency is the act unifying several accidental potencies by actuating the inherence of each.

However, Aristotle's physical theory, which does not bother about essence and existence in the substance, pays no great attention to accidental potency; in fact, it conceives accidental potency as the contrary to accidental act, so that the potency to hot is cold, the potency to cold is the act 'heat'. Aristotle posits matter and substantial form and accidental form; substantial form actuates matter; accidental form actuates substantial form.

One might attempt to interpret St Thomas's metaphysical position in terms of Aristotle's physical position, so that accidental potency, instead of being potency to substance should be an actuation of substance. Whatever may be the right interpretation of St Thomas, who perhaps did not formally advert to the problem, I think that such a position is unsatisfactory. It seems to me to leave unanswered most of the problems raised, notably, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 11.

On the position we have given, matter is to be divided into prime and second. Prime matter gives the potentiality of endless and merely empirical difference, e.g. space, time, and multiplicity. Second matter is any group of accidental potencies. On the other hand, form is the substantial essence which unites the accidental potencies into a single object. Thus, matter passes from the substantial to the accidental order, a passage which helps explain its visibility and tangibility; further, substantial essence instead of being form and matter becomes form alone.

[4 The Problem of Substance]⁹

I Now these and a host of similar objections against the idea of substance can be met in either of two ways. One can provide answers to each objection taken singly, so that the truth of the idea of substance remains clear and evident. More profoundly, one can go to the root of the objections and so present the idea of substance that the understanding is satisfied. In the former case one knows what is true. In the latter case one not only knows what is true but also one understands the truth that is known, one penetrates into truth to apprehend its intelligibility.

In the present discussion we are concerned solely with working out an answer of the second type. Defense of the truth of the idea of substance can be

⁹ There follow six pages headed 'The Problem of Substance.' The pages are numbered in type (3) to (8); the intention seems to be to resume the page numbering of the first 2 pages. But this is also another variation on the pages (3) to (8) already seen (above, pp. 3-11) and so a different presentation of solutions to the objections with which the entire entry begins. Roman numerals are used in both.

found in any manual. But an understanding that cuts at the root of the objections is not to be had, at least to my knowledge.

II To begin, then, there are two definitions of substance and two of accident. Substance is *ens per se*; it also is *id cui competit esse per se*. Accident is *ens in alio*; it also is *id cui competit esse in alio*.

III The difference between these pairs of definitions is the same in both cases.

Ens per se conceives substance as an existing essence. *Ens in alio* conceives accident as an inhering essence. But the essence that exists is *id cui competit esse per se*. And the essence that inheres is *id cui competit esse in alio*.

IV The first question, then, is to find the ultimate ground of the distinction between *competere esse per se* and *competere esse in alio*. Why is it that some predicates such as long, red, produced are conceived as incapable of existing on their own (*per se*), while others are conceived as entitled to such existence?

A partial answer is had by distinguishing between relative and absolute. A relation is not entitled to be on its own, *per se*, because a relation presupposes an absolute to be related. Still, this answer is only partial; it explains why relation is accidental, but it does not explain why quality and quantity are accidental nor does it explain why substance is absolute.

However, both quantity and quality have a characteristic that accounts for their exigence for inherence. For quantity and quality are predicated not simply and absolutely but *secundum plus et minus*. Thus, nothing is absolute in size; it is more or less big or more or less small. Again, no sensible quality is absolute; any heat is not absolutely hot but only more or less hot; any brightness is not absolute brightness but only more or less bright; any weight is not absolutely heavy but more or less heavy; any sweetness or bitterness is not absolutely but more or less

so. Similarly, sense perceptions and appetites are not absolutes and cannot be absolute; there is no absolute seeing or desiring, but only seeing this and desiring that. Finally, a finite understanding does not understand *simpliciter*; it cannot be *ipsum intelligere* [the act of understanding itself]; it is only understanding this and understanding that; and the same holds for finite will or love, which is not *ipsum amare* [the act of loving itself] but *hoc vel illud amare* [loving this or that].

Now this takes in the whole range of accidental predicates. For *ubi*, *quando*, *habitus*, and *situs* are extrinsic denominations, while *actio* and *passio* are a combination of relation and quality or, in the case of local motion, a combination of relation and extrinsic denomination, and in creation a combination of relation and substance.

Accident, then, because it is relative or because it is *secundum plus et minus*, is not *id cui competit esse per se*; it is *id cui competit esse in alio*.

On the other hand, substance is predicated absolutely. What is a tree or a man, is such absolutely and not *secundum plus et minus*. Nor is there any use appealing to transitional cases, to instances in which it is hard to say whether the substance is a plant or an animal. For such difficulty can be accounted for by the inadequacy of the classification. And even if it could not, the basic difference would remain. What unmistakably is a tree or a man is absolutely such; but what unmistakably is bright or heavy or sweet is only more or less bright, more or less heavy, more or less sweet.

Now, since the *plus et minus* is an instance of the relative (the relation is to an ideal incompletely realized), it would follow that the ground of *per se* is the absoluteness of substantial essence while the ground of *in alio* is the relativity of accidental essence.

v Having determined the intrinsic nature of the accident, namely, why the accident is what should inhere, we can go a step further to determine the relation between the two aspects of the accident.

For in quantity, quality, and relation (to which all other accidents are reducible) one distinguishes between the accident *ut inhaerens* and *ut tale accidens*. The question arises, Which is prior? Does the accident inhere because it is *tale accidens*? Or is it *tale accidens* because it inheres?

Obviously, the accident is not *tale* because it inheres, for all inhere. Nor is the accident an accident because it inheres, for then the distinction between the accident and its inherence would be meaningless.

It remains that the inherence results from the accidentality, and the accidentality from the *tale*. Because a given essence is relative or *secundum plus et minus*, it is an accidental essence. And because it is an accidental essence, it inheres.

VI Next, one must note the bipolarity of accidental potency.

First, accident as accident is not actually inhering but only a potency to inhere. It is *id cui competit esse in alio*. Were accident as accident actually inhering, then accident as accident would include substance, for actual inherence is not had without substance.

Second, accident as accident is not only potency to inhere. It also is potency to a given type of accidental act: thus, sight is not merely a potency to inhere; more radically, it is a potency to see things. And similarly, since all accidents are limited realizations of some perfection, they are composed of act and of potency limiting the act to a given kind of perfection.

Thus, in the accident as accident there is a double potency: *ut tale accidens* there is *potentia cui competit actus secundum plus et minus sive actus relativus*; *ut inherens* there is *potentia cui competit esse in alio*.

It follows that accidental potency is bipolar; it points in two different directions; as an accident it points towards accidental act; as inhering it points to the substance in which its potential inhering is actuated.

VII We have now to examine the idea of substance, and this examination is conducted in terms of the foregoing analysis of the accident. The reason for this procedure is that in any particular case we know substance through the accidents. It follows that in the general case the idea of substance has to be developed from the general analysis of the idea of accident. Otherwise we shall arrive at a substance that is conceived as unconnected with its accidents.

VIII The first question is, What is the act that actuates the potential inherence of the accident?

Plainly no accident and no part of an accident can be such an act. For then actual inherence would be possible without actual inherence in a substance. This is contradictory if inherence is understood as inherence in a substance; and it is precisely with regard to that type of inherence that the question is raised.

But if no accident can actuate potential inherence in a substance, then it must be the substance that actuates such potential inherence.

IX The second question is, What is the potency that makes substantial essence an essence of a given kind?

The question admits three answers. One may say that the substantial essence is potency, and the ultimate in its line of potency. On this assumption one may further say that it is this substantial potency that makes accidental acts of a

given kind, limiting them to a given nature and measure of perfection or act; or else one may say that there is no limitation of accident by substantial potency. Thus, the first position subdivides into two positions. The third position is to assert that substantial essence is of a given kind because it is an act limited by the accidental potencies that it actuates.

Now the first position is untenable. As St Thomas demonstrates (*Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 54, a. 3), substantial potency cannot be the limit of accidental act; there has to be an accidental potency limiting accidental act.

The second position is also untenable, for it makes knowledge of substance through the accidents impossible.

There remains the third position. For either accident limits substance or else substance limits accident or else there is no potency-act (limitation-perfection) relation between them.

We say, then, that substantial essence is such because it is limited by accidental potency. Substantial essence is act, perfection; but it is limited to such and such a kind of perfection by the accidental potencies.

This position squares with the conclusion of paragraph VIII. Substantial essence is act to accidental potency: it makes that potency actually inhere; and the inhering potencies make that act of such and such a kind.

Nor is it a sound objection to urge that substantial essence is potency. The same *ens quo* can be potency with respect to subsequent act, and act with respect to anterior potency. Substantial essence is potency with respect to existence; but it is act with respect to accidental potency.

x Another objection, however, raises a profounder question. If substantial potency is act to accidental potency, why is it not accidental act?

The radical answer is the bipolarity of accidental potency. Accidental potency is in potency both to inherence in a substance and to accidental perfection: John's intellect *qua tale* is capable of inhering in John's substance, and it is capable of eliciting acts of intelligence.

This, however, is not the complete answer. That is had by effecting the transition from *id cui competit esse in alio* to *id cui competit per se*. Now all accidental potencies are accidental because they are limited by relativity, by the *plus et minus*. But this is true of them singly, it is not true of them when grouped into the unity of a single object. Because a desire or an act of understanding is not entitled to be on its own, *per se*, it does not follow that a unified aggregate of desires, apprehensions, vital functions, etc., is not entitled to be on its own, *per se*. On the contrary, as we know, some substances are precisely the real unity of capacities to understand, will, see, desire, function vitally, etc.

To return now to the objection, if substantial essence is the actuation of accidental potency, why is it that substantial essence is not accidental act?

The answer is that if the act of accidental potencies is taken singly and in their polarity to perfection *secundum plus et minus*, such an act is accidental. On the other hand, accidental potencies in their polarity to inherence and taken in a unified and patterned group constitute the potency to *esse per se* which is substantial essence.

Thus, the objection falls to the ground.¹⁰

10 The remaining pages in this item are fragments. They may be found on www.bernardlonergan.com at 6A000DTE040, the autograph of this item.