

CHAPTER 6

Survey of Interpretations

This part is devoted to three things. First, a rapid survey of scholarly opinion on the third Boethian tractate which the medievals called *De hebdomadibus*. Second, a look at the tractate through the eyes of St. Thomas Aquinas. Third, a brief indication of discussions of the good by Boethius and St. Thomas in other places. The deficiencies of the other interpretations will become clear and we will see that better than anyone else St. Thomas enables us (a) to understand the Boethian tractate in itself and (b) to place the solution the tractate reaches in a broader context, as an element of the comprehensive view Thomas constructs from Boethian and other sources.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TRACTATE

There can be no question of surveying *all* interpretations that have been made of *De hebdomadibus* from medieval times to the present. Various partial surveys and appraisals are available.¹ That of Pierre Duhem² has been extremely influential in appraisals of the medieval interpretations of the Boethian tractates, in

1. Cf. Gangolf Schrimpf, *Die Axiomenschrift des Boethius (De Hebdomadibus) als Philosophisches Lehrbuch des Mittelalters* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1966). Volume II of the magisterial Severino Boezio of Luca Obertello (Genova, Accademia ligure di scienze e lettere, 1974), is over 300 pages of Boethian bibliography, which is supplemented by that in his edition of *La Consolazione della Filosofia e Gli Opuscoli Teologici* (Milan, 1979). The introduction and notes of this volume add to its usefulness. It is amazing that the Toronto dissertation of Peter O'Reilly, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino, Expositio super librum Boetii "De Hebdomadibus", an edition and a study*, 1960, shows up on none of the standard bibliographies and seems to have been completely ignored. Since I regard it as easily among the very best ever done on the tractate and the commentary, I am happy to draw attention to it.

2. *Le système du monde*, tome 5, Paris, 1917, pp. 285-316.

particular that of Thomas Aquinas. Since Duhem's point is that the medieval commentators, including St. Thomas, largely missed the point of Boethius's pithy remarks, it will be important for our purposes to look at the reaction of Thomists to such estimates of their master's exposition. Since one of the features of the appraisal by Thomists of the text of Boethius is that it is Aristotelian in its doctrine,³ it should be noted that in recent years a good deal of emphasis has been put on the Neoplatonic origins of Boethius's teaching and we are told that enigmatic remarks in the tractates deliver up their meaning more easily when this is recognized. With the crescendoing of Existential Thomism, there has been an increasing urgency in the effort to show that Boethius did not teach what Thomas takes him to teach on *esse*. Peter O'Reilly is one of the few who has spelled out what such Thomists are saying and the relevance of his criticism is not confined to Thomists.

But once a man sets out to expound the text as of that author, he is committing himself to the job of saying what the text as belonging to that author means; and therefore to the extent that he does anything other than that, he is wrong, dead wrong; and he is (knowingly or not) lying about that author's text and consequently about that author. And no amount of saying it gently or obscurely will lessen the fact.⁴

Among those to whom this refreshingly frank judgment is taken to apply are Duhem, Roland-Gosselin, Fabro and Geiger.

This enables us to see the stakes of the present chapter. It is no small matter if there should be more or less common scholarly opinion that the meaning of the Boethian tractate is significantly different from what Thomas takes it to be. If Boethius means one thing and Thomas takes him to mean another, not on minor points such as the meaning of *hebdomad*, but in the main

3. "Boece est resté en cette doctrine entièrement fidèle au point de vue d'Aristote." M.-D. Roland-Gosselin, O.P., *Le De Ente et Essentia de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris, first edition 1926, second 1948), p. 145. If one holds that there is a chasm between Aristotle and Thomas, linking Boethius to Aristotle has predictable results.

4. O'Reilly, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

moves of the argument, we will have to make a judgment as severe as O'Reilly suggests. There is an amazing tendency among Thomists of late to commend St. Thomas for his inability to read the text he is purporting to expose. Indeed, Thomists seem in the forefront of those insisting on the distance between the text and its interpreter. To echo Kierkegaard in another connection, "Poor Thomas, to have such disciples."⁵

We shall look first at Duhem, go on to Roland-Gosselin and then to other Thomists, look at the suggestions of Pierre Hadot and end with the interpretation of Peter O'Reilly. What we find is not unanimity, but a cacophony of voices. While there are many points of agreement among recent interpreters, it is clear that the disagreements are fundamental. As for the Thomists, while they are in verbal agreement that Thomas's "existential" metaphysics is light-years distant from the thought of Boethius, fundamental disagreement breaks out among them when they set forth the teaching of Thomas on *esse*. What I hope to provide is a representative sampling rather than exhaustive survey, but the authors invoked, given their influence and credentials, provide an adequate picture of the current situation.

Pierre Duhem

The section that interests us in the fifth volume of Duhem's monumental work *Le systeme du monde* is titled "Digression au sujet d'un axiome de Boece: l'*esse*, le *quod est*, le *quo est*." The key to Boethius is to be found in the proposition, *Diversum est esse et id quod est*. What is the sense of this claim? Duhem says it is identical to the distinction Themistius makes between a particular instance and its essential nature, this water, on the one hand, and that thanks to which it is water, on the other. The opposition is expressed in the Greek by a noun, water, *hydor*,

5. "Heraclitus the obscure said, 'One cannot pass twice through the same stream.' Heraclitus the obscure had a disciple who did not stop with that, he went further and added, 'One cannot do it even once.' Poor Heraclitus, to have such a disciple!" *Fear and Trembling*, trans. W. Lowrie (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 132.

and a phrase made up of a definite article, the dative of the noun and the infinitive to be: *to hydati einai*. The phrase expresses what the Greeks call *ousia* and St. Augustine calls *essentia*. The diversity indicated by the proposition, then, is that between a concrete thing and its essence.

That this is what Boethius means is taken to be clear from what he says of God. *Divina substantia sine materia forma est, atque ideo unum, et est id quod est. Reliqua enim non sunt id quod sunt.*⁶ The meaning of this, we are told, is that only in God is there identity of the concrete being and its essence, in all other things they differ. And that is the clear meaning of *omne simplex esse suum, et id quod est, unum habet; omni composito aliud est esse, aliud id quod est.*⁷ Duhem now skips back to the second chapter of *De trinitate*, for corroboration of his interpretation. How does Boethius illustrate what he has said of the divine substance as opposed to the rest (*reliqua*)?⁸ A colored thing is not the same thing as its color, nor generally a substance the same as any of its accidents. God, being pure form, is not subject to accidents, and that is why in him there is identity of *esse* and *quod est*. The *id quod est*, we are assured, is “the concrete and really existing thing which the union of matter and form produces” and *esse* is its essence, the form common to individual things of the same species.⁹ Duhem now careens back to *De trinitate*, to a passage earlier than the one he began by discussing, and cites as proof of his interpretation of what is being identified in God and held to differ in creatures the following: *quae vere*

6. Boethius, *De trinitate*, 2, ll. 29–31. Duhem cites Boethius, not by the text in Migne, but according to the 1570 Basel edition which apparently combines several *opuscula* under the single title *De trinitate*. On p. 286, note 2, Duhem informs us that the *De hebdomadibus* is the same work as the *De trinitate*. This explains his confidence that the passage he cites will provide a gloss on *diversum est esse*. . . .

7. *De hebdomadibus*, ll. 45–48.

8. He seems to be citing *De hebdomadibus*, ll. 100–117.

9. “Le *id quod est*, c’est la chose concrète et réellement existante que produit l’union de la matière et de la forme; l’*esse*, l’essence, c’est la forme commune à toutes les choses individuelles de même espèce, telle la gravité, forme spécifique commune à tous les corps graves.” Duhem, *loc cit.*, p. 289. In short, Boethius is in agreement with Themistius.

*forma neque imago est et quae esse ipsum est et ex qua esse est. Omne namque esse ex forma est.*¹⁰ He continues the quotation which takes him to the passage with which he began, namely, *Sed divina substantia. . .* What follows is an explanation by Boethius of what he meant by saying that all *esse* is derived from form. Something is a statue because of its shape or form, not because of its matter, bronze, and bronze is bronze not because of the earth that is its matter but because of the form of bronze, and earth is earth not because of prime matter but because of the dryness and gravity which are its forms.

What is to be made thus far of Duhem's interpretation of Boethius? His main concern seems to be to establish the agreement of Boethius with Themistius. At this point he repeats it as a kind of Q.E.D.¹¹ The problem we face, however, is one of trying to read the passages of Boethius in the way Duhem suggests.

Even assuming that the passages he quotes are from the same work, it is difficult to see how Duhem can say of them what he does. We are asked to accept the identification of *esse* and essence or specific nature, on the one hand, and of *id quod est* and concrete thing, on the other. On this basis, *reliqua enim non sunt id quod sunt* does not mean what Duhem takes it to mean. He interprets it as saying that things other than God are not the same as their essence. But this requires that *id quod sunt* mean essence and not concrete thing. One can understand why Duhem did not want to read it as saying that concrete things are not the concrete things they are. But it is unsettling that he does not even allude to the inconsistencies of his own interpretation. A passage that should have made him wonder about the identifications of *esse* and *id quod est* with essence and concrete thing is invoked as if it illustrates rather than undermines what he is saying.¹²

10. *De trinitate*, 2, ll. 19–21.

11. Cf. *loc. cit.*, p. 289: "Être de l'eau, avait dit Themistius, c'est posséder la forme de l'eau; être du bronze, répète Boèce, c'est posséder la forme du bronze. Les pensées de ces deux auteurs s'identifient. Lors donc que Boèce écrit *diversum est esse et id quod est*, nous devons entendre: L'essence (*esse*), qui est la forme, ne se confond pas avec la chose concrète et réellement existante (*id quod est*)."

12. Many pages later, on p. 297, in speaking of Robert of Lincoln and later sinuous developments at the hands of medieval divines, Duhem will note that *id*

Nor is he given pause by *omne namque esse ex forma est*, cited in the course of assuring us that *esse* = *forma*. But the remark that all *esse* is from form simply is not an identification of *esse* and form. Is *esse* perhaps the existence of the concrete thing that results from the combination of form and matter? Since true form, in the context, is the divine substance, one might have thought that *omne esse ex forma est* refers to the *esse* of *images*, but the examples of statue and bronze and so forth would not encourage that, since they are said to have forms, not images.

Duhem might have tried this route: *esse* means essence and in compound things the form is the principal component of essence. Then he could have identified *esse* and *essence* and *id quod est* but would have no word left to talk of that of which the essence is the essence. In fact, appealing again to Themistius, Duhem assures us that Boethius identifies essence and form. *Omne namque forma ex forma est*?

One thing is clear. Duhem's suggestions about the relation between some texts taken from *De hebdomadibus* and *De trinitate* simply collapse under scrutiny and the fact that we know, as he apparently did not, that these are different *opuscula* does not seem a sufficiently exculpating circumstance.

Waiving these difficulties, what does Duhem make of St. Thomas's interpretation of Boethius? He likes it. He praises Thomas for seeing, as no one else had, that the distinction between *quo est* and *quod est* cannot be attributed as such to Boethius, whose distinction is rather between *esse* and *quod est*. And indeed he thinks Thomas is getting it just right at the outset of his exposition of *De hebdomadibus*, mainly because he makes no mention of any real distinction between essence and existence.¹³ Indeed,

quod est, taken as an answer to the question *quid est*, is understood as the form or essence and not the determined thing: hence the Scholastic term *quidditas*. On that basis, *diversum est esse et id quod est* takes on a very different valence than it has in Boethius. But, if Duhem applied his own interpretation consistently, he would see that he attributed to Boethius the identification of essence and *id quod est*.

13. "Dans tout ce que nous venons de lire, l'existence (*esse*), le principe de l'existence actuelle (*principium actus essendi*), l'essence (*essentia*) et la forme

Duhem attributes to Thomas the view that *esse* and *principium essendi* and *forma* are synonyms, which Duhem thinks is what Boethius thought. But, alas, a cloud appears. Thomas's fidelity to Boethius weakens when he thinks of simple things, in the plural, whose complexity cannot be explained in terms of matter and form. Thomas, under the influence of Avicenna, we are told, writes, "Quaelibet forma est determinativa ipsius esse; nulla earum est ipsum esse, sed est habens esse: each form makes existence finite; none is existence as such, but something having existence." And thus Thomas departs from the meaning of the text.

Up to this point, for Boethius and his commentator, *esse* signified existence understood in a general and abstract, not a concrete and particular, way; but it signified at once the essence, which was not distinguished from existence; it designated the substantial form which constituted the essence and which at the same time is the principle of existence in act. Now, in the commentary of St. Thomas, all that changes; for an Intelligence, *esse* becomes the existence it has from the supreme being, while the *id quod est* is the form by which this Intelligence is specifically distinct from every other, by which it is of one species and not another, that is, the essence or quiddity of Avicenna.¹⁴

Duhem goes on to discuss Thomas's teaching on essence and existence in other texts, but we can leave him now. This much

substantielle (*forma*) sont constamment regardés comme des expressions équivalentes d'une même notion. Cette notion s'oppose à celle de la chose qui existe (*id quod est*) à la façon dont l'abstrait s'oppose au concret. C'est bien, croyons-nous, ce qu'entendait Boèce. De la distinction entre l'essence et l'existence, à laquelle Thomas d'Aquin attachera, plus tard, tant d'importance, nous ne trouvons encore aucune trace." *Loc. cit.*, p. 306.

14. Duhem, *loc. cit.*, p. 307. "Pour Boèce comme, jusqu'ici, pour son commentateur, l'*esse* signifiait l'existence, prise d'une façon abstraite et générale, non d'une façon concrète et particulière; mais il signifiait en même temps l'essence, qu'on ne distinguait pas de l'existence; il désignait la forme substantielle qui constitue l'essence et qui est, en même temps, le principe de l'existence en acte. Maintenant, dans le commentaire de Saint Thomas, tout cela change; pour une intelligence, l'*esse* devient l'existence qu'elle tient de l'Être suprême, tandis que le *id quod est*, c'est la forme par laquelle cette intelligence est spécifiquement distincte de toute autre intelligence, par laquelle elle est de telle espèce et non point de telle autre, c'est-à-dire l'essence ou quiddité d'Avicenne."

can be said. On the basis of his exegesis here, Duhem is simply an unsure guide to the text of Boethius itself and this must affect what we think of his appraisals of other interpretations. For example, in the passage just quoted, is it the case that Thomas, let alone Boethius, considered *esse* and *essentia* and *forma substantialis* synonyms before taking up the distinction between simple and composite? That neither man so thought will be made clear in the following section.

Roland-Gosselin

To his critical edition of St. Thomas's *De ente et essentia*, Father Roland-Gosselin appended two studies, one devoted to the principle of individuality, the other to the real distinction between essence and existence. Each study is divided into two parts, the first recounting views of philosophers, the second views of theologians. In discussing essence and existence, Roland-Gosselin puts Boethius second among the philosophers, immediately after Aristotle.¹⁵ When he discusses St. Thomas later, he will say a few things about the Angelic Doctor's interpretation of the Boethian tractates.

The first thing to notice about Boethius's language, we are told, is his use of the Aristotelian formula of a noun in the dative plus the infinitive "to be" to express the form of a thing.¹⁶ Despite appearances, this is the sense *esse* has earlier in *De trinitate*, where we read that it is the task of theology to "inspicere formam quae vere forma nec imago est, et quae *esse* ipsum est, et ex qua *esse* est; omne namque *esse* ex forma est: apprehend that form which truly is form, not an image, which is existence itself,

15. The chapter on Boethius runs pp. 142–145 of his edition of the *De ente et essentia* (Paris, 1948).

16. Roland-Gosselin cites the text in Migne, *PL* 64, 1252B. extracting "Idem est *esse* Deo quod iusto" and "idem est enim *esse* Deo quod magno" from the following passage: "Nam cum dicimus 'deus,' substantiam quidem significare videmur, sed eam quae sit ultra substantiam; cum vero 'iustus,' qualitatem quidem sed non accidentem, sed eam quae sit substantia sed ultra substantiam. Neque enim aliud est quod est, aliud est quod iustus est, sed idem est esse deo quod iusto. Item cum dicitur 'magnus vel maximus,' quantitatem quidem significare videmur, sed eam quae sit ipsa substantia, talis qualem esse diximus ultra substantiam; idem est enim esse deo quod magno."

for all existence is from form.” (Chap. 2, ll. 19–21) We might be tempted, Roland-Gosselin cautions, to glide past the identification of what is truly form with *esse* itself and understand the passage in terms of the *ex* which is repeated in *ex qua esse est* and *esse ex forma est*. After all, haven’t we learned from Aristotle that form is the principle of existence? But the immediate sequel cuts us off from that interpretation.

What follows, we remember, is the progression from statue to bronze to earth, where in each case we are told that the thing is the thing it is because of form rather than matter. “Nihil igitur secundum materiam esse dicitur sed secundum propriam formam: nothing is said to be according to its matter but according to its proper form.” (ll. 28–29) “Here it is quite clear that in Boethius’s intention *esse* designates the shape as such, the bronze as such, the earth as such, and in no way signifies their existence.”¹⁷

Roland-Gosselin takes Boethius to be saying that *esse* equals *forma*, no matter that he says that *esse ex forma est*. Moreover, he takes Boethius to mean that the statue is identical with the shape, the bronze with its form, and earth with its forms. This will shortly lead him into trouble since he now quotes the sequel to the lines he has been interpreting. “Sed divina substantia sine materia forma est, atque ideo unum est, et id quod est. Reliqua enim non sunt id quod sunt: unumquodque enim habet *esse* suum ex his ex quibus est, id est ex partibus suis; et est hoc atque hoc, id est partes suae conjunctae, sed non hoc vel hoc singulariter: But the divine substance is form without matter and therefore is one and is what it is. For the rest of things are not what they are, for each of them has its *esse* from those things from which it is, that is, from its parts, and is this and that, that is, its parts conjoined, but not this or that alone.” (PL 64,1250B; Loeb, p.10, ll. 29–35) What now will Roland-Gosselin take this to mean?

What does this passage mean? Evidently this: the divine substance being pure form without matter is perfectly one, “it is what it is,” that

17. *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

is, it is the form that makes it be what is and it is nothing else. Creatures on the contrary “are not what they are,” for their *esse* is composed “of this and that,” man for example is composed of body and soul; so man is not one or the other of his parts, neither body, nor soul. *In parte igitur non est id quod est.*¹⁸

That is, the passage evidently means something other than what we were led to expect. Roland-Gosselin just told us that *esse* is equivalent to form alone; now we confront in the immediate sequel of his assertion talk of things whose *esse* is made up of parts and which cannot be equated with one of them alone. Things like statues, things like bronze, which cannot be equated with their forms. Roland-Gosselin suggests that the dialectic is obscure, “but nonetheless it is clear that existence in no way enters into the composition of the creature: it is a matter of his very essence, composed in the case of man of soul and body, and it is a matter of the distinction that this composition entails between the total essence (*id quod est homo*) and any one of the parts which constitute it.” This mention of existence is purely diversionary, of course, although it suggests the author’s agenda; but what lifts from the page is that this interpretation of Boethius is at cross-purposes with itself. We want to know what the text says, not what it does not say, the latter being infinite.

To give to the thought of Boethius all its precision it would suffice to comment on it thus: the creature is not what it is, in this sense that it is not identified with its form (which makes it what it is); and it is not identified with its form, because it is also matter.¹⁹

In short and precisely, Boethius does not say what he was said to have said. Nor is he simply making the point that a compound

18. “Que veut dire ce passage? Évidemment ceci: la substance divine étant pure forme, sans matière, est parfaitement une; ‘elle est ce qu’elle est,’ c’est-à-dire elle est la forme qui la fait être ce qu’elle est, et elle n’est pas autre chose. Les créatures au contraire ‘ne sont pas ce qu’elles sont’; car leur *esse* est composé ‘de ceci et de cela,’ l’homme par exemple, est composé de corps et d’âme; l’homme n’est donc pas l’une ou l’autre de ses parties; il n’est pas corps, il n’est pas âme; ‘En partie donc il n’est pas ce qu’il est, *in parte igitur non est id quod est.*’ *Op. cit.*, p. 143. The final Latin phrase with which this quotation ends will not be found in the Loeb edition, which punctuates the relevant sentence thus: “. . . non vel corpus vel anima in partem; igitur non est id quod est.”

19. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

is not identical with one of its components. Both components are necessary to the compound, but that which is as form, not that which is as matter, will set the thing off from other kinds of thing. To be a statue, the thing needs bronze to receive the shape, but it is from the shape that we call the thing a statue rather than a lump of bronze. It is of course a brazen statue. Why did not Roland-Gosselin see this as the explanation of the earlier remarks to the effect that the form is that *ex qua esse est* and that *omne namque esse ex forma est*? By identifying *esse* and *forma* he created a barrier between himself and the text.

But it is clear that he has a hidden agenda in reading Boethius. Quite gratuitously when his misreading prompts him to attribute obscurity to the Boethian dialectic he proclaims that existence is not a component of essence. So too, when he notes that things whose *esse* is composed of form and matter can have attributes which are not theirs thanks to the form, he finds it important to say, "Nor is existence mentioned among these accidents."²⁰

It is not too much to say that Roland-Gosselin's is a completely unhelpful account of *De trinitate*. Who reading it would know what Boethius's doctrine is? And doctrine about what? But Roland-Gosselin wants to know if we will find a different doctrine in *De hebdomadibus*. To which he quickly turns.

Here he gives us a resume of the tractate, working up the impasse to which the disjunction "either whatever is is good by substance or by participation" leads Boethius. The solution is to find a third way.

The goodness in creatures is neither accidental nor substantial in the sense just given; creatures are good in what they are, in their *esse*, because their *esse* comes from God and tends to God. Suppress this relation to God and the goodness of creatures can only be an accident like any other or else, as it is objected, the creature is God.²¹

Roland-Gosselin is interested in the question of the tractate only with a view to determining the exact meaning of the principles

20. "L'existence n'est pas non plus mentionnée parmi les accidents." *Op. cit.*, p. 144.20.

21. *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

of the solution enumerated by Boethius. He has no doubt about what that exact meaning is. "In the course of the discussion the term *esse* is always used to mean either the substantial essence or the essence of the accident. The difficulty itself only makes sense if, to explain the substantial goodness of the creature, one thinks he has to identify its substantial essence with the essence of the good."²² So, Roland-Gosselin suggests, it is normal to take *esse* in the axioms in the same sense. In what sense? As essence. In this way, they represent a firm and explicit restatement of the thought already expressed in *De trinitate*.

How these hurried and confusing pages can ground the certainty Roland-Gosselin has that Boethius never speaks of existence distinct from essence it would be difficult to say, unless one notices that, at the very outset of the discussion, Roland-Gosselin cites Pierre Duhem. But this is indeed to build on sand. The brief chapter concludes with the remark that Boethius has remained faithful to the point of view of Aristotle.

Chapter IX of Part Two of Roland-Gosselin's study of the real distinction of essence and existence is devoted to St. Thomas Aquinas.²³ It interests us only insofar as it relates to Boethius and Thomas's interpretation of Boethius. We already know that, so far as Roland-Gosselin is concerned, there is no recognition on Boethius's part of a real distinction between essence and existence. In Boethius *esse* always means form in the sense of essence. St. Thomas, on the other hand, clearly and definitively expresses his thought on the distinction of essence and *esse* from his earliest writings, including, it appears, in his exposition of the *De hebdomadibus* of Boethius. In telling us what Boethius means by *esse* Thomas will "understand the *esse* of which Boethius speaks in the sense of existing, despite the difficulties to which this interpretation exposes him, and the rather subtle procedures to which he is obliged to have recourse in order to surmount them."²⁴

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 144–145.

23. *Op. cit.*, pp. 185–199.

24. "... et lorsque, quelques années plus tard, saint Thomas commente le *De hebdomadibus* il prend l'*esse* dont parle Boèce au sens d'exister, malgré les diffi-

This is an extraordinary remark, apparently meant as a kind of praise of Thomas. O'Reilly's suggestion that one might just as well say that Thomas is lying may seem excessive only because we have become used to this sort of doubletalk in the Thomistic school. If Roland-Gosselin had provided us with an analysis of Boethius less incoherent than he has, we might be able to take more seriously what he says of Thomas's exposition. But if we were led to his conclusion by way of careful study it would hardly seem to form the basis of any commendation of Thomas. We have seen the caliber of Roland-Gosselin's analysis of the Boethian tractates. His analysis of Thomas's exposition of *De hebdomadibus*, of whose meaning he is so strangely certain, is confined to a long footnote. Somehow this strikes one as extraordinarily casual. I suspect that Roland-Gosselin was cowed by the erudition of Pierre Duhem and was trying to make the best of a bad, if unanalyzed, situation.

But what does he say of the exposition? He notes that this passage will tell us the sense Thomas gives *esse* in his commentary: "Circa ens autem consideratur ipsum esse quasi quiddam commune et indeterminatum: With respect to being however, to be itself is considered as something common and undetermined."

The passage is simply quoted. Roland-Gosselin moves on to tell his reader that Thomas interprets the Boethian phrase *sed id quod est, accepta essendi forma* by adding *scilicet suscipiendo ipsum actum essendi* and the Boethian claim that whatever is participates in that which is *esse* in order to be, as meaning that in order for the subject to be simply speaking it must participate in *ipsum esse*. Apparently, all this is taken to speak for itself. Thomas, it is clear to Roland-Gosselin, "has in view the distinction of essence and existence" and here are the passages where one best sees the difficulties of Thomas's interpretation:

[1] When Thomas writes "Secundam differentiam ponit . . ." Roland-Gosselin cites this from the Vives edition of the *Opera*

cultés auxquelles cette interprétation l'expose, et les procédés assez subtils auxquels il est obligé d'avoir recours pour les surmonter." *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

omnia, t. 28, 471b = Marietti, lectio 2, n. 29. Thomas explains the Boethian remark that *omne quod est, participat eo quod est esse ut sit; alio vero participat ut aliquid sit* as meaning that “in order for something to be a subject simply speaking, it participates in *ipsum esse*; but in order to be such-and-such, it must participate in something other, as a man in order that he might be white participates not only in substantial existence but also in whiteness.”

What is the difficulty? “. . . [w]hereas Boethius in this work always takes the term “participate” in the sense of accidental participation, as St. Thomas himself recognizes . . .” (475b = lectio 3, n. 44).

This is confused. As the passage from Boethius on which Thomas is commenting makes clear, Boethius is not there confining participation to participating in an accidental quality. Thomas notes that participation is understood as accidental participation when Boethius is working up the problem of the tractate: if whatever is good, must this not be either because of its substance or by participation, the latter there being contrasted with “by substance.” But this has nothing to do with the clear sense of the axiom.

[2] The next difficulty Roland-Gosselin cites is Vives p. 475b = Marietti, lectio 2, n. 34. Here St. Thomas restricts to God the application of the axiom *omne simplex esse suum et id quod est unum habet* “alors qu'en fait il admet à ce moment, avec Boece, que dans les anges il n'y a pas de distinction entre le sujet et l'essence: even when in fact at this moment he admits, with Boethius, that there is no distinction in the angels between subject and essence.”

What is the difficulty? That Thomas says that only in God there is no distinction between subject and essence while asserting (with Boethius?) that there is no such distinction in angels either?

This is confused. Boethius in this tractate does not take *omne simplex esse suum et id quod est unum habet* to refer to a class

of things, or if he does it is a class with a single member, God. What Thomas in the passage referred to argues is that an existent substance can be simple, in the sense of lacking matter, can be, in short, a subsistent form, and for all that not exhaust the possibilities of being, can be, in short, one form of being among many. God who is wholly simple is in the fullest sense of the term and is thus *ipsum esse subsistens*. Thomas thus introduces, as Boethius did not, a kind of simple entity between complex beings and the wholly simple being God is.

- [3] Roland-Gosselin refers to Vives, tome 28, p. 476a = Marietti, lectio 3, n. 48 ff. and remarks, "St. Thomas adroitly converts the propositions of Boethius to give a sense to his argumentation."

What we actually have in Thomas is an elegant piece of discourse:

- (1) It is necessary that those things whose substance is good be good as to what they are (whatever is required in order for it to belong to the substance of a thing).
- (2) But things are from that which is *esse*: it was said above that something is when it receives *esse*.
- (3) So it follows that the very *esse* of things which are good according to substance is good.
- (4) Therefore if all things are good according to their substance, it follows that the very *esse* of all things is good.

St. Thomas then notes that, since Boethius is arguing from premisses which are convertible, he can proceed in reverse order.

- (5) If the *esse* of all things is good, the things that are, insofar as they are, are good.
- (6) So it will be the same for anything to be and to be good.
- (7) Therefore it follows that they are substantial goods and not good by participation.

This argumentation is the development of the second possible interpretation of *omne quod est bonum est* and is taken to lead to the identification of creatures with God.

What is the difficulty? There is no way to tell. Is Roland-Gosselin suggesting that Thomas could instruct Boethius on the conversion of propositions? Does he think converting propositions requires adroitness? Is he objecting to converting (4) to (5)? We will never know. What we are given is innuendo, not interpretation.

[4] Roland-Gosselin's final point is taken from Vives 478b = Marietti, lectio 4, n. 62 in medio, which shows that "St. Thomas has to agree that Boethius, by the *esse bonum* refused to creatures, means to signify their essence" and the same at Vives 80b = Marietti, lectio 5, n. 71: "Primo quidem, quia hoc quod est bonum significat naturam quandam sive essentiam."

What is the difficulty? Roland-Gosselin sees Thomas as here forced to admit that when Boethius says that the creature is not the essence of goodness, he is denying something of their essence. Thomas is quite ready to admit this. It is thanks to their existence that creatures are called good because the First Good who wills them to exist is at once Goodness and Being.

The second passage deals with the second of two difficulties Boethius raises against his solution. If the identity of Goodness and Existence in God explains that the existence of creatures is good and thus that what they are as receiving that existence is good, why not say that since Justice and Being are one in God that creatures are also just insofar as they are? The response is that to be good looks to essence and to be just to action (*Nam bonum esse essentiam, iustum vero esse actum respicit* ll. 165–166).

I do not know what difficulty Roland-Gosselin sees here. He takes it to be too obvious to require explanation.

But then he sees little need to buttress his extraordinary remarks about the exposition of St. Thomas with detailed analysis of the work. In half a page of text and a footnote twenty-one lines in length, Roland-Gosselin has dismissed as a work of incredible ineptitude what any reader of it will find the most careful and illuminating reading that *De hebdomadibus* ever received.

Herman Josef Brosch

In his monograph on the concept of being in Boethius, Brosch gives us a systematic, not to say pedantic, survey of Boethius's use of *esse* in all his writings.²⁵ This research leads him to conclude that the term *esse* usually has the meaning of existence (*dasein*) in Boethius's second commentary on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, whereas in the *Consolation* it usually means essence (*So-sein*) and when it means existence this is made clear by the addition of *subsistere* or *existere*. In *De trinitate*, Brosch maintains, Boethius always uses *esse* in the sense of essence. Brosch lays out these results for us in the first three chapters of Part One of his monograph. Chapter Four deals with *esse* in *De hebdomadibus*.

In what, given his approach, amounts to real daring, Brosch decides to examine the body of the tractate before looking at the axioms as such. His conclusions are unequivocal. We are told that *esse* never, not once, is used in the tractate as a substantial infinitive meaning existence (*dasein*); it *always* means essence, though sometimes the essence of substance, sometimes that of accidents.²⁶

Throughout his analysis runs a muted polemical note. Brosch's intention is to prevent any reader from finding anything like the distinction between essence and *esse* in what he imagines is its Thomistic sense in the text of Boethius. "Wie kann man da also noch von der Beziehung zur Existenz sprechen?" is a not untypical aside.²⁷ Who the target of this rhetorical question might be at the time Brosch is writing would be interesting to know. Historically, of course, it is St. Thomas Aquinas. But it would seem not to be Thomists contemporary with the author. Indeed, when he goes on to look at the axioms, he can enlist their aid. Roland-Gosselin is no foe of the interpretation Brosch

25. Dr. Hermann Josef Brosch, *Der Seinsbegriff bei Boethius, Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Beziehung von Sosein und Dasein* (Innsbruck, F. Rauch, 1931).

26. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

puts forward, and he solemnly cites the French Dominican's authority for a commonplace. It is normal to assume that *esse* has in the axioms the same meaning as in the sequel. His interpretation of the axioms is thus predestined, a corollary. If *esse* never means anything other than essence in the body of the tractate, it can only mean essence in the axioms.

So sweeping a conclusion requires only a single counterexample to be destroyed. But first a word on the commonplace he takes from Roland-Gosselin. One use of *esse* that does not occur in the axioms and is crucial for the sequel is *esse* as meaning *primum esse* as opposed to *esse omnium*. But Brosch can reply that it means divine essence and essence as predicably common to creatures. Nonetheless, this suggests a certain caution.

What does *ipsum esse nondum est* mean? That essence is not found without accidents. The existent thing must have specific essence as well as qualities. We are struck more and more that Brosch is determined not to permit any interpretation of *diversum est esse et id quod est* that will give textual support to Thomas's interpretation which, following Duhem and Roland-Gosselin, he sees as stemming from the earlier scholastic tradition rather than from Boethius himself.

Imagine trying to maintain Brosch's view when confronted with *Non potest ESSE ipsum esse rerum nisi a primo esse defluerit*. (ll. 131–133) How is that capitalized (by me) *esse* to be taken? Surely, it is existential. And what of *sunt* in *Qua quoniam non SUNT simplicia, nec ESSE omnino poterant, nisi id quod solum bonum est ESSE voluisset*? (ll. 118–119) Surely God wants creatures to exist and to exist in a certain way. You can't have one without the other. Does this make them identical?

Brosch was careful to say that *esse* as a substantival infinitive never means existence in *De hebdomadibus*. But presumably there is a correlation between the finite and infinitive forms of the verb *esse*. *Fit enim participatio cum aliquid iam est; est autem aliquid, cum esse suscepit*. (ll. 32–34) How are we to understand “now or already is” (*iam est*) if not something as

resulting from the reception of *esse*. Whatever else we may understand by *esse* it is clear that it plays an indispensable role in understanding what is meant by saying that a thing exists. We have been told that something exists when it receives a form of being (*forma essendi*). There is no way to speak of the existence of concrete things apart from form, but does it then follow that existence is identical with form?

That Brosch's judgment of *De hebdomadibus* is excessive was pointed out by Schurr.²⁸ He rejects Brosch's view that there is some kind of evolution in Boethius's use of *esse* from the logical to the theological writings. He rejects Roland-Gosselin's view that in *De hebdomadibus* Boethius always and only uses *esse* in the sense of *esse essentiae*, that is the *esse* that is essence.²⁹ Schurr thinks it likely that Boethius did not hold a real distinction between essence and existence. But he concludes with two observations. First, the term *esse* throughout the works of Boethius changes, sometimes meaning essence, sometimes existence, and, second, Boethius's thought is predominantly essential in emphasis such that *esse* in *De hebdomadibus* retains its twofold meaning but more often refers to essence rather than to existence.³⁰

Cornelio Fabro

"Recent critical research conducted by both defenders and adversaries of the real distinction arrives at the same result, that the most correct interpretation of the Boethian texts does not suggest, *at least directly*, a real distinction between essence and existence, since it is completely absent from it."³¹ The first in-

28. Cf. Viktor Schurr, C.Ss.R., *Die Trinitätslehre des Boethius im Lichte der 'skythischen' Kontroversen* (Paderborn, 1935), pp. 32–35, 42–44.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 34, n. 61. The note is extensive, as many of Schurr's are, and is replete with textual bases for his criticism of Brosch and Roland-Gosselin.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 44, the end of the lengthy note 77 which begins on p. 42.

31. Cornelio Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione*, third edition (Turin, 1963), p. 102: "Ricerche critiche recenti, condotte sia da difensori, come da avversari della distinzione reale, portarono al risultato concorde, che l'interpretazione più corretta dei testi boeziani non suggerisce, *almeno direttamente*, una distinzione reale fra essenza, poiche esse n'è completamente assente."

stance of such critical research Father Fabro refers to is that of Roland-Gosselin, but he also cites Brosch and Schurr.³² What does Fabro himself think?

He characterizes *De hebdomadibus* as a work of limpid logic which, despite the Neoplatonic character of the Boethian literary project, expresses in Platonic-sounding formulae Aristotelian doctrine. (He suggests that the title of the work recalls the *Enneads* of Plotinus, which is interesting whether or not Boethius used *hebdomads* as a title of the *opusculum*.)³³ Calling the work logical is meant to distinguish it from Thomas's commentary on it.

St. Thomas in the youthful commentary that he wrote on *De hebdomadibus* (1257 or 1258?) reads its terms in their metaphysical meaning and taking off from the notion of participation elevates on its abstruse propositions the cardinal principles of his own metaphysics, arriving as the ultimate conclusion at the *real* distinction between essence and existence in creatures, which St. Thomas often likes to express in the terms of Boethius as a distinction between *quod est* and *esse*.³⁴

Everything depends on the meaning of the terms in the axioms of Boethius. What does *he* mean by *ipsum esse* and *quod est*? For St. Thomas, Fabro says, *ipsum esse* is the *actus essendi*, and the *id quod est* the concrete substance. The fact is that Fabro does not think Boethius meant by these terms what Thomas understood him to mean, though he does not put it quite that

32. Fabro, p. 102, n. 3, finds tendentious Brosch's use of a phrase dear to Father Pelster that the Boethius of St. Thomas is a *falsch verstandene Boethius*, and appeals to Schurr for a more balanced basis for judging St. Thomas. Fabro offers this somewhat oblique defense. "Invero come é certo che il Tomismo ha fatto realmente progredire le dottrine che si trovavano nelle fonti precedenti secondo una maggior chiarezza concettuale, così é inopportuno e anacronistico voler trovare esattamente dottrine antithomistiche, prima dell'apparizione stessa del Tomismo."

33. *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

34. "S. Tommaso nel Comm. giovanile che fece al *De hebdomadibus* (a. 1257-1258?), prese i termini nel loro significato metafisico, e partendo dalla nozione di partecipazione elaborò su queste astruse proposizioni i principi cardinali della sua metafisica, arrivando alla conclusione ultima, della distinzione *reale* fra essenza ed esistenza nelle creature, che S. Tommaso spesso ama enunciare con i termini di Boezio, come distinzione fra *quod est et esse*." *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

way. A particular merit of Fabro's discussion is that he reminds us that the first anti-Thomist polemics bore precisely on Thomas's interpretation of Boethius, with Henry of Ghent and Peter Olivi insisting that by *esse* Boethius means form. Fabro does not underscore the fact that he is conceding that these early critics were as right as such recent researchers as Roland-Gosselin.³⁵

The above remarks occur well along in Fabro's first work on participation, but there is an earlier discussion of participation as notional and as real composition in which the Thomistic commentary on *De hebdomadibus* features prominently.

Fabro is chiefly interested in some of the Boethian axioms because they called forth from St. Thomas a complete exposition of his conception of the structure of the concrete.³⁶ This suggests that the Boethian tractate is an occasion for Thomas to do his own metaphysical stuff. What Fabro takes Thomistic metaphysics to be about we will put off until we look at what he has to say about the axioms of *De hebdomadibus* and Thomas's comments on them.³⁷

Noting the distinction Thomas makes between discussing the diversity of *quod est* and *esse* on the level of meanings (*secundum intentiones*) and then *realiter*, Fabro nonetheless speaks of a metaphysical demonstration of *diversum est esse et id quod est* by way of the three subaxioms. He remarks that Thomas takes *ipsum esse* to mean the *actus essendi*, and it soon becomes clear that he thinks something very different is going on in the commentary than in the text commented upon.³⁸

35. *Ibid.*, p. 101. In neither of his major works on participation does Fabro take Pierre Duhem into account, although he quotes the French scholar to the effect that Thomism is not so much a synthesis as a desire for a synthesis. It is a mishmash of incompatible doctrines. To the degree that Duhem's remark is historical, which it is, Fabro and other Thomists seem to concede its truth.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

37. There is such an analysis in *La nozione metafisica*, pp. 24–35, and in *Partecipazione e Causalità* (Turin, 1960), pp. 204–213.

38. "Le preoccupazioni di ordine logico che sentiva Boezio nel porre il problema della bontà delle creature sono diventate per S. Tommaso di ordine metafisico et lo inditizzano verso una serie di considerazioni che toccano la struttura intima dell'essere finito, come essere." *La nozione*, p. 26. Boethius, no mean logician, is not the one who characterizes these opening axioms as manifesting a

In discussing Thomas's threefold division of participation, Fabro says this was unnecessary to understand Boethius and is done to facilitate Thomas' independent aims in his exposition.³⁹ We are told that it is essential to notice that Thomas introduces a new use of the notion of participation, that between abstractions, that is, of whiteness in color and man in animal, which is not only extraneous to the text of Boethius, but repugnant to his spirit, since for him the abstract is what is participated and the concrete what participates. It should be said that Boethius overcomes his supposed repugnance on a significant number of occasions.⁴⁰ When Thomas is discussing the third Boethian illustration of the diversity of *quod est* and *esse*, namely that the former can and the latter cannot be the subject of accidents, he observes that this is why the essence abstractly considered is predicated as a part of the concrete whole. Fabro takes this as occasion to speak of Thomas's vacillation between remaining faithful to the text and taking it to its fundamental metaphysical implications, "as Thomas himself understands them, and which certainly could not have been the object of Boethius's preoccupations."⁴¹ We are given little justification for this condescending attitude toward Boethius, which is certainly not shared by St. Thomas.

In discussing the axioms dealing with the difference between being a substance and being an accident, Fabro indicates what he is reading into the text. In commenting on the Boethian doctrine, Thomas speaks of a twofold existence (*duplex esse*) fol-

diversity of meanings (*intentiones*) between *quod est* and *esse*. It seems odd to describe Thomas's commentary as metaphysical and suggest that the text is logical, since it is Thomas who characterizes his and Boethius's procedure as *secundum intentiones*. More alarming, of course, is the insouciance with which it is suggested that Thomas is not commenting on Boethius but engaged in some independent metaphysical activity, presumably of the kind he engaged in in the *De ente et essentia*. But surely Thomas knew the difference between writing a tractate of his own and commenting on someone else's.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

40. "Esse igitur ipsorum bonum est" (ll. 71, 126, and *passim*), not to mention "Omnis diversitas discors." (l. 49).

41. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

lowing on two kinds of form, substantial and accidental.⁴² Fabro portrays Thomas as being put into an embarrassing position by Boethius's axiom: *diversum tamen est esse aliquid in eo quod est, et esse aliquid, illic enim accidens hic substantia significatur.*

[The axiom] puts St. Thomas in the embarrassing but for him logical situation of distinguishing in the concrete participant a twofold *esse*: one that is not *praeter essentiam* and another which instead remains *praeter essentiam*: the first makes [something] be *simpliciter*, the second *secundum quid*. In the subtle explanation that follows is found the observation that there is first participation in *esse* as such, whence the subject is constituted in itself and is capable of participating in other (accidental) formalities. Evidently Boethius can speak here only of formal (substantial) *esse* and not of the *actus essendi*, although the commentator for a moment recognizes it without renouncing his own meaning of *esse* as *actus essendi*, and making of the one difference (much easier to understand) three, passes gradually from the first to the third to conclude his intention: *Est autem haec differentia quod primo oportet ut intelligatur aliquid esse simpliciter, et postea quod sit aliquid.* . . .⁴³

What Fabro seems to be suggesting is that over and above the *duplex esse* of which St. Thomas and Boethius here speak, there is a third, namely, the *actus essendi*. It is easy to agree that this is not to be found in Boethius. But neither is it a doctrine of St. Thomas, in or out of commentaries.⁴⁴

42. *In de Hebdomadibus Boethii*, lectio 2, n. 27.

43. "... pone S. Tommaso nell'imbarazzante ma logica per lui situazione di distinguere nel concreto partecipante un duplice *esse*: uno che non è *praeter essentiam* ed uno invece che resta *praeter essentiam*: il primo fa essere *simpliciter*, il secondo *secundum quid*. Nella sottile spiegazione che segue si ribatte l'osservazione che prima si dà la partecipazione all'*esse* come tale, onde il soggetto si costituisce in se ed è capace di partecipare alle altre formalità (accidentali). Evidentemente Boezio qui non può parlare che dell'*esse* formale (*sostanziale*) e non dell'*actus essendi*, tanto che il Commentatore per un istante lo riconosce, ma senza rinunciare al suo significato di *esse* come *actus essendi*, e facendo dell'unica differenza (molto facile a comprendersi) tre, passa gradualmente dalla prima alla terza per concludere il suo intento. . . ." *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

44. Fabro's *Partecipazione e Causalità* enforces the impression that he wants to understand Thomas as teaching that over and above *esse substantiale* and *esse accidentale* there is some third *esse* which is the *actus essendi*. On p. 198 ff. of the later work, Fabro distinguishes between *esse* when it is a synonym for essence

In *The Metaphysical Notion of Participation*, Fabro ends his treatment of the axioms with the statement of two problems. The first has to do with Thomas's extension of the concrete/abstract distinction to essence/*actus essendi*. This is not in Boethius. Surprisingly, Fabro says there is no need for this distinction in dealing with the problem of the tractate! "Di fatti nella soluzione che Boezio presentera, l'estensione introdotta dall'Angelico, non presenta alcuna applicazione: In fact the extension introduced by the Angelic Doctor has no application in the solution Boethius will give."⁴⁵ This stands out, even against a frieze of extraordinary remarks.

The second problem concerns the introduction of a real as well as notional participation. This too is idle so far as the Boethian tractate is concerned. "Anche questa precisazione restava fuori delle esigenze del problema boeziano, che è risolto facendo

(*esse essentiae*) and *esse* which is the act of essence (*actus essentiae*). "Una conferma ed un'applicazione dell'*esse essentiae* (l'essenza metafisica), è la divisione dell'*esse* in *esse substantiale* ed *esse accidentale* che non può riguardare direttamente l'*esse* come *actus essendi*, il quale è l'atto propria della sostanza completa (*substantia prima*).” (p. 199) “Possiamo quindi concludere che l'*esse in actu* corrisponde all'*esse essentiae*: come all'essenza sostanziale corrisponde un *esse* sostanziale, così all'essenza accidentale (la quantità, la qualità, la relazione . . .) corrisponde l'*esse accidentale*. Ma l'*esse ut actus essendi* è il *principium subsistendi* della sostanza, grazie al quale tanto l'essenza della sostanza come anche quella degli accidenti sono in atto et operano nella realtà: l'*esse* degli accidenti e l'*esse in actu* nel tutto ch'è la sostanza prima, è quindi un'esistenza secondaria derivata dalla sostanza reale come un tutto in atto.” (p. 201) And here is the explicit statement of Fabro's doctrine of *triplex esse*. “Se sostituiamo *quo est* con *esse*, come si trova in Boezio e al quale ritorna San Tommaso, abbiamo non uno ma ben tre *esse*: l'*actus essendi*, l'essenza e la 'forma partis,' ch'è la forma come parte attuale dell'essenza, rispetto alla materia prima ch'è pura potenza, la quale confersisce l'*esse* alla materia. Nulla di più aristotelico di questo *forma dat esse materiae*—come vedremo—e tuttavia San Tommaso ha già trasformato la terminologia aristotelica grazie all'introduzione dell'*actus essendi* il quale si presenta espressamente come il 'mediatore formale' di attualità fra la forma immanente alle realtà singole e la causa estrinseca dell'ente. *L'esse e non l'essenza esprime nelle cose il quid assoluto de realta et il costitutivo della supreme realtà . . .*” (p. 202). Clearly, it is Fabro's interpretation of St. Thomas that is getting in the way of his appreciating the nature of the Angelic Doctor's exposition of the *De hebdomadibus*. For another study by Fabro of this text, see pp. 173–190 of his “Intorno al Fondamento della Metafisica Tomistica” first published in 1960 and included in *Tomismo e Pensiero Moderno* (Rome, Libreria editrice della Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1969).

45. *La nozione . . .*, p. 32.

appello ad altri principi, molto più piani: This precision too is beyond the needs of the Boethian problem, which is resolved by appeal to other and much more obvious principles.”⁴⁶

The two most touted features of the commentary are thus held to be irrelevant to what the tractate is about.⁴⁷

Needless to say, Fabro’s interpretation of St. Thomas is a vast story in itself, but whatever is made of that, his remarks on the exposition of *De hebdomadibus* are difficult to take as praise of St. Thomas. In a nutshell, Fabro agrees with those who hold that Thomas as commentator assigns to the key terms of the tractate meanings other than those intended by Boethius. He is unique in suggesting that the additions Thomas makes are irrelevant to the problem of the tractate.

Pierre Hadot

In two studies, one devoted to Boethius’s distinction between *quod est* and *esse*, the other to the phrase *forma essendi* as it occurs in axiom 1a (p. 203 below), Pierre Hadot attempts to show what Boethius himself might have meant as opposed to what medieval commentators took him to mean.⁴⁸

Hadot conveniently lines up the way in which Boethius pays off on his claim that *diversum est esse et id quod est*.

ESSE

nondum est

ID QUOD EST

acceptit formam essendi

suscipit esse

participat eo quod est esse

est atque consistit

46. *Ibid.*, p. 32. Fabro cites Thomas’s remark about the *De hebdomadibus* in *Q.D. de veritate*, q. 21, a. 5. in fine, as meaning that the real distinction between essence and existence is not required to solve the problem of the *De hebdomadibus*.

47. In *Partecipazione e Causalità*, p. 209, we are invited limpidly to see the embarrassment of St. Thomas who having introduced a notion of intensive *esse* must deal with the *esse essentiae* of Boethius.

48. Pierre Hadot, “La distinction de l’être et de l’étant dans le *De Hebdomadibus* de Boèce,” *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter*, Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 2 (Berlin, De Gruyter, 1963), pp. 147–153, and “Forma Essendi: Interprétation philologique et interprétation philosophique d’une formule de Boèce,” *Les études classiques*, XXXVIII (1970), pp. 143–156.

nullo modo aliquo participat
 nihil aliud praeter se habet
 admixtum

participare aliquo potest
 potest habere aliquid
 praeterquam quod ipsum est

It is noteworthy that Boethius tells us what *esse* is not rather than what it is. We get a better picture of *quod est*. “Il participe donc à la fois à l’être, dans la mesure où il est, et à quelque chose d’autre que l’être, dans la mesure où il est selon une certaine forme, ou il est-quelque-chose: It participates then both in being, insofar as it is, and in something other than being, insofar as it is according to a certain form and is some thing.” (p. 147) Hadot also points out that Boethius speaks not only of the *esse* that is common to all the things that are, and are thanks to having received *esse*, but also of the *esse primum* who is God.⁴⁹

Hadot accepts the view of V. Schurr that in order to understand Boethius we have to find the Greek source from which he borrowed this distinction. The distinction in Greek is that between *to einai* and *to on*. There is a Latin precedent for borrowing these terms in Marius Victorinus who speaks of the first and second Neoplatonic hypostases as *Esse* (l’Être) and the thing that is (l’étant). *Esse* is neither subject nor predicate, it has no attributes and is not in a subject. That which is is determined by its proper form and there begins with it a distinction between subject and object.

Far from being original with Marius Victorinus, Hadot goes on, we find the same thing in Porphyry. The One which is identical with Being is featureless and unknowable; the next participates in Being, not in all its indefinite amplitude, but according to a form. “Autrement dit, à partir de l’Étant, l’être n’est plus pur, il devient l’être d’un étant, et il devient l’être-quelque-chose: Put differently, with the thing that is, being is no longer pure since it has become the being of something that is and becomes to-be-some-thing.” (p. 149) A further note is that Being (*Esse*) is

49. References for Boethius’s talk of *esse omnium rerum* are lines 71, 72, 120, 124, 131 and 132 of the *De hebdomadibus*. The *esse primum* references are lines 133 and 150.

spoken of as pure acting, that is, as Existence. *Esse* is not a substance or an act, it is pure action. The infinitive is thus taken to signify an action rather than a state. It is an Idea, a force, a power, an action which produces form.

Another way of understanding the opposition of *esse* and *quod est* is by way of the traditional distinction between substance and existence.⁵⁰ By existence they mean being as such, being without addition, being which is neither subject nor predicate; by substance they mean some qualified being, the subject, taken with the accidents inherent in the substance. The tendency is to reserve Existence to God.

So we find in the Neoplatonic tradition, and especially in Porphyry, a doctrine which distinguishes *esse* (*l'Être*) and *quod est* (*l'Étant*), identifying them with the first and second hypostase. According to this doctrine, *esse* (*l'Être*) is anterior to *quod est* (*l'Étant*), because it is simple whereas *quod est* necessarily implies composition.⁵¹ A feature of this teaching is that as indetermination increases so too does activity, so that as one rises from individuals through the genera and beyond forms one reaches pure activity, being itself, existence as such. The key to derived being is always form.

This, Hadot concludes, is the doctrine we find in Boethius. *Esse* is the First Being, and can be thought of as pure act (*agir pur*), transcending all forms. It is not yet, that is, it is not substance, because it is anterior to it and to all formed things and is their cause. *Id quod est* is the thing that is. It is and subsists, that is, it becomes a substance as soon as it receives its form of being.

50. "Nous retrouvons la même opposition entre *esse* et *quod est* dans la distinction, également traditionnelle, entre existence et substance, *hyparchis* et *ousia*, et nous retrouvons ici encore, Marius Victorinus et son correspondant, l'Arien Candidus." *loc. cit.*, p. 150.

51. "Ainsi nous trouvons, dans la tradition néoplatonicienne, et spécialement autour de Porphyre, une doctrine qui distingue l'Être et l'Étant, en les identifiant à la première et à la seconde hypostase. Selon cette doctrine, l'Être est antérieur à l'Étant, parce qu'il est plus simple et que l'Étant implique nécessairement une composition." *Op. cit.*, p. 151.

That is how I understand *forma essendi*. I don't in fact think Boethius would have used this formula if he wanted to say that the thing that is receives this form that is *esse*. The being indeed receives *esse*. But it does not receive it as a form.⁵²

The whole argument of the tractate makes clear, in Hadot's view, that the *esse* of the things that are is not a form but is rather anterior to all form. To be a substance, the thing must first of all exist, that is receive *esse*, then receive the form which determines the thing in the way proper to a subject; the *esse* of a thing then will be the *esse* of a man, of an animal, of a rock. In other words, the *esse* of the thing that is always of a certain form. "Ce n'est donc pas l'être qui est forme, c'est la forme qui s'ajoute à l'être: Being is not form, then, it is form that is added to being."⁵³ The opposition of *esse* and *quod est* is then one between pure being without determination and a being determined by a form. The great difference is that, for Boethius, *quod est* is not the second hypostase, but every substance, every thing, produced by Being.

Nonetheless, Hadot sees *De hebdomadibus* as in the mainstream of Neoplatonism and even wonders if it may not be a Latin translation of a Greek work!

We have here a very different picture than we have been given by other interpreters, even those who allude to the influence of Neoplatonism on Boethius. From the perspective made possible by Hadot's essay, the attempt to identify *esse* and form seems fantastic. Perhaps as important as anything else in Hadot's article is his almost throwaway observation that the description of *quod est* by Boethius is not of a putative second entity but renders it a predicably universal phrase applicable to all the things that are.

In the article he devoted explicitly to the phrase *forma essendi* as it occurs in the axioms, Hadot surveys all the medieval inter-

52. "C'est ainsi que j'entends *forma essendi*. Je ne pense pas en effet que Boèce aurait employé cette formule, s'il avait voulu dire que l'étant reçoit cette forme qui serait l'être. L'étant reçoit bien l'être. Mais il ne le reçoit pas comme une forme." *Loc. cit.*, p. 152.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

pretations and then most of the modern.⁵⁴ Of these latter, none tries to place Boethius in his exact historical situation, in the precise philosophical tradition in which he lived and worked. Only when this philological task is done can there be a sound philosophical interpretation. We are familiar from his earlier article with what Hadot takes this historical setting to have been. He reminds us of the way Porphyry among the Greeks and Marius Victorinus among the Latins distinguished *on* and *einai*, identifying the latter with the first and the former with the second hypostase. Boethius differs from them in this, but Hadot maintains that the same structure of relations between *esse* and *quod est* is found in Boethius and his predecessors.

(1) For Boethius *esse* is transcendent to *quod est*: the relation between them is one of participation.

(2) Participation explains the possibility of attribution. "Is" is the first predicate of that which is.

(3) It follows that there are two modes of *einai*: one which is anterior and superior to that which is, another which is a derived mode received by the thing and which is coupled with it like a predicate. "Id quod est (= derived *esse*) participat eo quod est esse (= absolute *esse*) ut sit (= derived *esse*)."

After tracking these matters through Plotinus and Porphyry, Hadot makes this extremely important remark.

The error of most modern interpreters, it seems to me, has been to understand *id quod est* as designating the individual thing. But the in-

54. He mentions Bruder, Brosch, Duhem, Manser, Gilson and De Raeymaeker and summarizes their positions thus. "On constate donc ici les variations des interprètes concernant la notion de *forma essendi*. Tous, sauf G. M. Manser, identifient *forma* et *esse*, sans préciser d'ailleurs la signification exacte qu'ils attribuent à *essendi*. Il leur suffit de reconnaître dans la *forma* l'*esse ipsum* dont parle Boèce. Mais ils se séparent les uns des autres lorsqu'il s'agit de définir l'*esse*. Pour K. Bruder et E. Gilson, l'*esse*, c'est l'exister, mais E. Gilson précise que cet *esse* est Dieu même. Pour H. J. Brosch, P. Duhem et De Raeymaeker, l'*esse* est l'essence spécifique, grâce à laquelle la chose concrète peut être. G. M. Manser, pour sa part, qui comprend l'*esse* comme être transcendantal, entend la *forma essendi* comme la forme ou essence qui délimite l'existence." "*Forma essendi*: Interprétation philologique et interprétation philosophique d'une formule de Boèce," *Les études classiques*, XXXVIII (1970), p. 147.

dividual thing implies a composition of substance and accidents of which Boethius does not speak. On the contrary, the notion of the thing that is (*l'étant, on*) implies only the duality of a subject (the *id quod*) and a predicate (the *est*). To explain the attribution of this predicate to this subject, it is enough, on Platonic principles, to suppose the preexistence of the predicate (*est*) in an absolute mode, that is to say, the preexistence of pure being. So *esse* is that pure being, that being in itself, which is not a pure abstraction but, as we see in Porphyry, an activity all the more efficacious because it is undetermined. As for the *est* in *id quod est*, it is no longer being in itself, it is being related to a subject, the being of some thing. It is no longer absolute and undetermined being, but a determined and limited being.⁵⁵

Hadot does not of course mean that *id quod est* signifies some existing thing like the second hypostase. It is something predicably common to all the things that are.⁵⁶ His point has to do with the content of that concept.

What does *forma essendi* mean? The form that is *esse*? The *id quod est* is constituted when it receives *esse*, but this cannot be the pure and first *esse* who is God. Is then the form identical with the received *esse*? "The *forma essendi* would then correspond to the first predicate the subject receives. Afterward other predicates would come to be added, to constitute *esse aliquid*, for example, animality, rationality, etc. Predicates would be assimilated to forms. *Forma* would have a sense close to *proprietas* or to *qualitas*."⁵⁷ *Forma essendi* would then mean the property of being, essentiality. Hadot thinks this interpretation is a possible one. Boethius would then be saying that the thing that is is and consists when it receives the property of being, essentiality.

Another possible interpretation, suggested by the English translation in Loeb, would see *essendi*, not as the definition of form, but the result of form's action. Form gives being to the thing; it makes it be. Hadot does not like this interpretation because it makes *est*, which is the first predicate, depend for its

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 151–52.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 152, "Il correspond plutôt au concept général d'étant, commun à tous les étants."

57. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

meaning on predicates due to later forms. "To have a substantial form intervene as the principle of the being of the thing would therefore be, for him [Boethius], to introduce an alien element into a relation he wants to be immediate. He would lose what is essential to his doctrine."⁵⁸

The Italian translation of the passage is this: *Ciò che é, é e sussiste dopo aver ricevuto la sua forma d'essere*. The thing that is exists and subsists after having received its proper mode of being. This captures the distinction between pure and undetermined being and that which is. For being to be received introduces a difference between that which receives it and pure and undetermined being. This difference becomes more and more particularized, by generic, by specific, by individual forms, but at the outset is simply the otherness of *id quod est* and pure and undetermined *esse*. Thus it avoids the difficulties Hadot saw in the English translation.

Of the different ways of translating *forma essendi*, I would in the end keep only two as possibles. Either the being (*l'étant*) is when it receives the property of being or the being is when it takes on its proper way of exercising the act of being. This second interpretation seems to me most conformable to the whole of the exegesis I have proposed.⁵⁹

Among the medieval exegetes, Hadot finds Remigius of Auxerre and Thomas Aquinas the most interesting. "The first because he was closer to the universe of thought of Boethius, Thomas Aquinas because his philosophical genius guided him and enabled him to sound the depths of Boethius's formulae by intuition."⁶⁰ How different this appraisal of Thomas from that of Thomists over the past sixty years and more! Thomas intuitively gets to the real meaning of the Boethian axioms despite a limited acquaintance with the philosophical milieu in which Boethius worked. That is as different as can be from the odd claim that Thomas uses Boethian formulas to set forth a doctrine alien to the tractate.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-55.

Luca Obertello

One of the most comprehensive works on Boethius to appear in recent years is the two-volume study by Luca Obertello. In it, Obertello touches on every facet of Boethius's teaching and of the centuries of scholarship devoted to it.⁶¹

As others had before him, Obertello begins his study of Boethius's doctrine of being with the second chapter of *De trinitate*. Does the formula *esse ex forma est* mean that in the creature *esse* is different from form? "Such an interpretation is evidently wrong. In fact Boethius means to say that to be a statue is to have received a form; the being [*esse*] of the statue consists in the actual possession of that form and not in something distinct from it."⁶² If to be a statue is actually to have a certain form, does not this suggest a difference between the form and the actual having of that form? In any case, Obertello seems to accept the identification of *esse* and *forma*. He summarizes the metaphysical structure of created and uncreated being in this way.

In God, form and being are identical; in creatures there is instead a composition of form and matter, with the result that form is only a part of the whole the concrete individual constitutes. The structure thus delineated is an essential one and does not seem to include or exclude actual existence.⁶³

Obertello takes an extensive detour through Aristotle in the course of which he says that the error of the Eleatics was to identify essence and being (p. 624) and that for Aristotle being "coincides with" essence, but this means that ontology must begin with essence, not that it must reduce everything to it. (p. 626) For Aristotle, there are two kinds of being: those that are first,

61. Luca Obertello, *Severino Boezio*, 2 vols., *Op. cit.* The relevant chapter for our purposes is in vol. 1, pp. 619–656. Obertello has also edited and translated Boethius's *De Hypothesis Syllogismis* (Brescia, Paideia, 1969), and *La Consolazione della Filosofia e Gli Opuscoli Teologici* (Milan, 1979).

62. *Loc. cit.*, p. 620.

63. *Loc. cit.*, p. 622.

immobile and simple, identical with their essence, and those whose essence is complex and which are not their quiddity. (p. 627) These Aristotelian reminders are said to be indispensable to a correct and objective understanding of Boethius. Whatever his debt to Neoplatonism, Obertello says, Boethius is radically Aristotelian. But what of *De hebdomadibus*?

The expression *id quod est* means the entire reality of the concretely existing being; it includes matter and form and *esse* and the collection of accidents which constitute the individual being.⁶⁴ And *esse*? "It would thus seem to be used primarily in the sense of *forma*; it is the form of being in virtue of which the whole exists and is what it is. *Esse* is everything that constitutes a thing in its particular being (*id quod est*); it is the nature of the thing considered absolutely in itself, prescinding from the individuating principles of the supposit."⁶⁵ Yet *esse* is said to be received by the subject according to a determinate form (*forma essendi*). He speaks of a twofold participation of the subject, in *esse* in order that it might be, and in a determinate form to be what it is.

It is difficult to find coherence in this account thus far. Obertello now turns to the interpretation of Hadot despite his earlier claim that it is the Aristotelian influence that will enable us to understand Boethius. Thus far that has not led to a crisp account. The appeals to Hadot are simply added on to what has gone before, with the result that no Obertellian account emerges.

What about Thomas's interpretation of *De hebdomadibus*? Obertello once more makes a pastiche of previous accounts with the result that it is difficult to know where he stands. He takes Thomas to be understanding *esse* in Fabro's sense of intensive actuality and, like Fabro, speaks of *esse* being received first,

64. "*Id quod est* é preso come il soggetto dell'essere. . . . Esso indica l'intera realtà di un essere concretamente esistente: include la materia, la forma e l'essere, e la collezione di accidenti che costituisce l'essere individuale." *Op. cit.*, p. 638.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 638.

prior to other determinations. (p. 654) In the end, Obertello accepts the common opinion that Thomas finds in the text something that is not there, the real distinction of *quod est* and *esse*.

Bruno Maioli

In a small work devoted exclusively to *De trinitate* and *De hebdomadibus*, Bruno Maioli gives us the most recent interpretation of the matters that interest us.⁶⁶ *De hebdomadibus* begins by establishing the ontological difference between God and finite being, founding it on the ontological dependence of the finite on the First Being and on the simple nature of God as opposed to the composite nature of finite being. The finite being is composed of *esse* and *quod est*. Thus the analysis begins with *diversum est esse et id quod est*. To understand this we must understand what *esse* and *id quod est* mean and what the reason for their diversity is. Maioli's reader knows from the outset that this book has the same kind of precision as the texts it would interpret.

Writing when he is, Maioli can scarcely discuss these matters without taking into account the variety of modern interpretations, most of which were undertaken with an eye to appraising Thomas's exposition. Maioli notes the claim of Duhem and Roland-Gosselin, but mentions as well a caveat of Vanni-Rovighi.⁶⁷ Fortunately, Maioli does not accept the received opinion unquestioningly. Nor does he leave the views of Hadot uncriticized.

Of the latter, he says that, however sound the historical and

66. Bruno Maioli, *Teoria dell'Essere e dell'Esistente e Classificazione delle Scienze in M. S. Boezio* (Arezzo, 1977).

67. "Non si può quindi interpretare *esse* nel senso di *actus essendi*, atto contingente di essere e di esistere, contrapposto al *quod est*, inteso a sua volta come essenza possibile: ma riconosciuta come storicamente non fondata tale lettura, non si deve cadere—avverte giustamente la Vanni-Rovighi—nell'altra inesattezza di interpretare, sempre in senso scolastico, l'*esse* boeziano come l'essenza in quanto distinta e contrapposta all'esistenza (*quod est*).” *Op. cit.*, p. 19. The reference to Silvia Vanni Rovighi, “La filosofia di Gilberto Porretano,” in *Miscellanea del Centro studi medievali* (Milan, 1955), pp. 8–18. Notice the use of “possible essence” as the complement of *esse*.

philological research of Hadot, his interpretation falsifies something essential to the Boethian position. He has in mind Hadot's suggestion that there is first the reception of *esse* and then of a series of determinations following the genera and species relevant to the thing. "In this sense *esse* is seen as the first perfection, almost as matter with respect to the successive forms which one after the other are added to it."⁶⁸ Maioli finds this quite alien to the true Boethian position.

The axioms of *De hebdomadibus*, like the ontological theses of *De trinitate*, are an original impasto of Platonism and Aristotelianism in the spirit of the typical and banal Boethian eclecticism, in which elements and borrowings are so fused that any attempt to reduce them back to the original theses of this or that author (Porphry, Victorinus, Aristotle himself), besides being very difficult to document, inevitably runs the risk of forcing or betraying—out of love of proof—the unmistakable Boethian savor.⁶⁹

He finds the path laid out by Duhem and Roland-Gosselin more helpful. But against them he brings the objections that, first, it does not seem enough to say that the diversity stated by Boethius between *esse* and *quod est* is simply a logical distinction. As for Brosch, Maioli feels such a noncontextual tracing of a word through the writings of Boethius is unhelpful. Moreover, Brosch's research is governed by a rigid opposition, the essentialistic meaning of *esse* and the existentialistic meaning of *esse*. But "it is more exact to speak of the constitutive co-presence in the Boethian *esse* of this twofold meaning. It is our conviction that the basic meaning of *esse*, substantially constant in the tracts, is that of "the structure that makes be": the *forma essendi*. The basic postulate of the entire Boethian metaphysics is the thesis of *De trinitate: omne esse ex forma est*."⁷⁰ This is not the identification of *esse* and *forma*, although *esse* is always the being of a form which is precisely a *forma essendi*. Each form makes something be in a particular mode, substantial form in

68. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

the strongest sense, accidental forms in a lesser way. As the correlative of form, *esse* is not abstract, universal, undetermined and undifferentiated. Still less is it a form distinct from other generic or specific or differential or proper or accidental forms. "L'esse delle realtà finite é un *esse* partecipato in una forma, attraverso una forma e da una forma: é un essere correlato strutturalmente ad una forma, che per questo é anche *forma essendi*: The *esse* of finite realities is an *esse* participated in a form, by way of a form and from a form: it is a being structurally correlated to a form which is thus also a *forma essendi*."⁷¹ To be is always to be something or other, to be this or that, not on the level of pure numerical individuality, but on the level of essence, nature.

Maioli sums it up in the following deduction:

(1) *omne esse ex forma est.*

(2) Every form is in its own way a determined and determining form (*forma essendi*), although only substantial forms make something be and be such in the strong sense.

(3) The form gives simultaneously being and being such: it is at once the structural and existential ontological principle.⁷²

We have from Maioli a careful interpretation of the axioms which does not see any need to choose between the stark extremes that governed the research of Brosch and the negations of Duhem and Roland-Gosselin and so many of the Thomistic school. Form determines and informs matter, thus constituting *id quod est*; it is thanks to its form that the concrete both is and is a determinate kind of thing existing in the world: *est atque consistit*.⁷³ The form thus is the reason things exist as the things they are; finite things *id quod sunt habent ex eo quod est esse*. (l. 70)

It is natural that Boethius, with his characteristic Aristotelianized Platonism, favors *esse* in its formal-structural rather than in its existential

71. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

aspect; he considers *esse* from a predominantly essentialistic viewpoint, but it would be to impoverish its rich significance to reduce it to the role of pure possible essence which awaits its act of existence. This would be to fall back into the mistake of reading Boethius in the light of the Scholastic distinction between possible essence and act of existence. For its part *esse* is not only the act of existence of a possible essence. The typical trait of the Boethian *esse* is to involve structurally essence and act of existence since for Boethius—more than ever faithful here to the ontological formalism of his masters Plato and Aristotle—the act of existence can only derive from form.⁷⁴

Maioli's interpretation seems clear, but when he notes, with respect to *De trinitate*, that the object of theology is a form which is *esse*, and asks whether this identification is general, he seems to say it is.⁷⁵ He insists that for the statue "to be and to be a statue are the same thing and derive from the same form: the being of the statue consists in actual possession of this certain form and is not something distinct or distinguishable from it. The act of existence of subsistence derives from the form."⁷⁶ But if being derives from form how can it be indistinct and indistinguishable from it? I think Maioli is here making certain that his position is seen to be distinct both from that of Hadot—with existence the first of many constitutive forms of the concrete—and what he takes to be the Scholastic position.

Summary

Our survey establishes one point beyond any doubt. There is no scholarly consensus on the meaning of the Boethian tractate taken in itself. Throughout the modern period, most interpretations of *De hebdomadibus* seem intent on relating what is said of Boethius to what Thomas said, or is thought to have said,

74. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

75. "Inoltre: non solo l'*esse* deriva dalla forma, ma si identifica ontologicamente con esse: la forma è l'*esse* dell'ente, anche se—come vedremo—non è tutto l'ente. Se Boezio intendesse dire che l'*esse* di un ente finito si distingue in qualche modo dalla sua propria forma specifica, l'esempio dovrebbe essere interpretato in questo modo: la forma per cui una statua è tale è distinta dall'*esse* della statua. Tale lettura risulta palesemente erronea. . . ." *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

76. *Ibid.*

about Boethius. However diverse the interpretations of *diversum est esse et id quod est* there is an odd unanimity: the Boethian axiom cannot mean what St. Thomas takes it to mean. There has been oddly little examination of the Thomistic exposition itself. When the text of Thomas is studied it is under the assumption that it contains a metaphysical doctrine quite unrelated to that of the text on which it comments. Oppositions of “essentialistic” and “existentialistic” meanings of *esse* are meant to oppose the true essentialistic meaning of Boethius to the existentialistic meaning of St. Thomas. It does not seem too much to say that the Thomistic interpretation haunts modern scholarship. Some scholars seek to save Boethius from the Thomistic real distinction between essence and existence. Most Thomists seek to drive a wedge between their master and the doctrine of Boethius. This survey should dispel any assumption that scholars are agreed on the meaning of the Boethian axioms and their import for *De hebdomadibus*. It would seem to be equally unwise to assume that the exposition of Thomas has received a single interpretation. In the next section we will look closely at Thomas’s interpretation.