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## THE PHILOSOPHY OF PARTICIPATION<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The theory of participation in being is the most general theory and can be called the theory of everything. From such a general point of view, more detailed theories can be combined in terms of existence. The basis of this theory is the existential aspect of being. The true distinction between essence and existence changed Plato's original theory of participation in a completely new, existential way that changes our view of the relationship between God and the world and the relationship between philosophy and the exact sciences. The theory of participation in the existential interpretation of Aquinas was not developed after Thomas, but was interpreted in the 20th century by Louis B. Geiger and Cornelio Fabro. Their approaches to the Thomistic version of the theory of participation differ from each other. Geiger's approach is more Platonic, and Fabro's is more in line with existential Thomism. However, the question remains open as to which interpretation is truly "Thomistic".

**Keywords:** participation, essence, existence, Louis B. Geiger, Cornelio Fabro, Thomistic.

The issue of participation in philosophy has been present at least since Plato. Its importance is unchanging, as it shows the relationships between each being, both horizontal and vertical. Plato is considered to be the originator of the theory of participation. The discovery of extrasensory reality contributed to its creation. The existence of Transcendence is necessary for vertical participation, i.e. between God and the world. On the other hand, Aristotle also contributed to the theory of participation, despite the fact that he rejected the theory of ideas. The pluralistic interpretation of reality made it possible to develop the horizontal side of the theory of participation, i.e. between created beings. The contemporary theory of participation is therefore the heir to two ancient visions of the world: Platonic and

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<sup>1</sup> The main theses of this article are taken from my Polish-language work: R. Szopa. *Św. Tomasz z Akwinu teoria partycypacji bytu w ujęciu Louisa Geigera i Cornelio Fabra: studium historyczno-metafizyczne*. Legnica 2017. Geiger and Fabro's description of participation theory is based on this book.

Aristotle. Between antiquity and modernity, the theory of participation underwent two transformations. The first because of Christianity and the second because of medieval philosophy. Christianity added theological creationism to participation, while St. Thomas Aquinas added philosophical creationism. Sometimes these two creationisms, theological and philosophical, are confused with each other. Undoubtedly, the theological creationism was preceded by the philosophical one<sup>2</sup>, because the latter needed to discover the real distinction between essence and existence. Within Christianity, it took about 1,200 years for theology and philosophy to become complementary in terms of the doctrine of creation. Modern times did not develop the theory of participation directly, at most adding some aspects to the understanding of the relationship between Transcendence and the rest of reality. It was only in the 20th century that the theory of participation experienced a renaissance, mainly thanks to Louis B. Geiger and Cornelio Fabro. I will mainly focus on their contributions in this article.

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<sup>2</sup> Gerhard May claims that the theory of *creatio ex nihilo* was created by Christian thinkers and is not of biblical origin – G. May. *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation Out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought*. Edinburgh 1994 p. 29. Such a statement by May would be justified if there was no reference to creationism at all in the Bible. In Genesis the term *bara* does not mean “create”, but expresses God’s action towards creation. A more fitting translation would be to “separate” – E.V. Wolde. *Why the Verb bara Does Not Mean 'to Create' in Genesis 1.1-2.4a*. “Journal for the Study of the Old Testament” Vol 34.1 (2009) p. 21. However, using the method of analogy, one can defend the thesis about the presence of creationism in the Bible. For example, the following opinion of one of the Polish biblical scholars indicates that the theory of *creatio ex nihilo* is *implicite* in the Bible: “the word *bara* also means the action of God within the already existing reality and history [...]. It seems that the author of Hexaemeron does not deal directly with the idea of creating ex nihilo. If it is present in his text, it is rather implicitly: if everything that exists comes from God, then before [...] nothing existed” – R. Pietkiewicz. *Czy Bóg stworzył świat w siedem dni? Początek według księgi Rodzaju*. In: *Jaki początek? Część I. Wiara i rozum o początku świata*. Ed. R. Pietkiewicz. Wrocław 2013 p. 34-35. The vagueness of biblical teaching regarding *creatio ex nihilo* leads to a Platonic interpretation of even such clear passages as this: “Reflect on the fact that God did not create them from things that already existed and that the human race came into being in the same way” (2 Maccabees 7:28). Maren R. Niehoff claims that this fragment does not indicate creationism, but Platonic understanding of matter as not belonging to the realm of real existence – M.R. Niehoff. *Creatio ex Nihilo in Genesis Rabbah in Light of Christian Exegesis*. “Harvard Theological Review” 99 (2006) p. 44. The Platonic interpretation of the God-world relationship was obviously dominant in early Christianity, but that does not mean that the creation theory was not present in the Bible. Rather, I would say that today’s interpretations of the origin of theological creationism show that Platonism and creationism did not fit together from the point of view we have today.

## 1. THE MEANING OF “PARTICIPATION”

Participation is related to causality. It is efficient, exemplary and purposeful causation<sup>3</sup>. Efficient cause means that participation is a relation between a being that causes another being to come into existence, which somehow becomes dependent in existence on the agent-being. Thus, there is a participated and participating being. A participated being can be God, but it can also be a being that plays the role of an indirect cause. Anyway, the participated being becomes an exemplary being for the participating being. If the participated being is God, then he is also the final cause of the participating being. Here we have a hierarchy of beings in terms of “quality”: existence and possessed properties.

Participation is a continuous process. This is indicated by the doctrine of the real difference between essence and existence. If we assume that only participated being is the fullness of being, then participating beings are completely dependent on existence to such an extent that the need to be created never ceases. Dependence in existence entails interdependence in other characteristics. Hence the need for a different kind of participation than just the one describing the direct relationship between God and the world. God is not responsible for what beings are, but only that they exist at all. This is God’s direct responsibility for the world – existence, and indirect – what the world is like. Participation theory is also the most general theory focusing on two features of beings: existence and essence. Due to its generality, the theory of participation combines more detailed theories and shows the relationships between them. So it is such a philosophical theory of everything.

Below I present the most important findings of the theory of participation in terms of these two authors. Importantly, their interpretations relate to Thomas’ theory of participation, as the authors themselves claim. Interestingly, their interpretations are very different from each other, as if it were two theories and not one theory of one author – Thomas Aquinas. Both also claim to describe truly Thomas’s approach to participation. I believe that they show two interpretations that can still be called Thomistic, except that Geiger shows more the role of the creator of the theory – Plato, and Fabro focuses on the difference that Aquinas presented in his approach to participation.

## 2. THE DOCTRINE OF THE REAL DISTINCTION AFTER AQUINAS

The problem of existence after Thomas slowly lost its importance, and with it the theory of participation. From the 14th century, through the 15th century – when the existential aspect of being in the terms of Thomas became more and more

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<sup>3</sup> Z. Wolak. *Analogia w filozofii i nauce*. „Zagadnienia filozoficzne w nauce” n. 30 (2002) p. 92.

forgotten – and the 17th, the problem of the existence of being that we had in Aquinas' philosophy<sup>4</sup>, practically ceased to be present in the philosophical

<sup>4</sup> Here are some examples: 1) Thomas Aquinas. *De ente et essentia* IV. <<https://dhspriority.org/thomas/DeEnte&Essentia.htm>> [24.06.2019]: “philosophi dicentes quod Deus non habet quidditatem vel essentiam, quia essentia sua non est aliud quam esse eius. Et ex hoc sequitur quod ipse non sit in genere, quia omne quod est in genere oportet quod habeat quidditatem praeter esse suum [...] in substantiis sensibilibus, quia in sensibilibus genus sumitur ab eo quod est materiale in re, differentia vero ab eo quod est formale in ipsa. [...] Tertio modo invenitur essentia in substantiis compositis ex materia et forma, in quibus et esse est receptum et finitum, propter hoc quod ab alio esse habent, et iterum natura vel quidditas earum est recepta in materia signata”. 2) Thomas Aquinas. *Scriptum super libros Sentientiarum. Commentum in primum librum sentientiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*. Vol. 1. Parisi 1929 I, d. 8, q. 5, a. 2: “Si autem inveniamus aliquam quidditatem quae non sit composita ex materia et forma, illa quidditas aut esse suum, aut non. Si illa quidditas sit esse suum, sic erit essentia ipsius Dei, quae est suum esse, et erit omnino simplex. Si vero non sit ipsum esse, oportet quod habeat esse aquisitionem ab alio, sicut est omnis quidditas creata. Et quia haec quidditas posita est non subsistere in materia, non aquiretur sibi esse in se; et ita ipsa quidditas erit «quod est». Et quia omne quod non habet aliquid a se, est possibile respectu illius; huiusmodi quidditas cum habeat esse ab alio, erit possibilis respectu illius esse, et respectu eius a quo esse habet, in quo nulla cadit potentia; et ita in tali quidditate invenietur potentia et actus, secundum quod ipsa quidditas est possibilis, et esse sum est actus eius. Et hoc modo intelligo in angelis compositionem potentiae et actus, et de «quod est» et «quod est», et similiter in anima. Unde Angelus vel anima potest dici quidditas vel natura vel forma simplex, in quantum eorum quidditas non componitur ex diversis; sed tamen advenit ibi compositio horum duorum, scilicet quidditatis et esse”. 3) Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles* II, 52. <<https://dhspriority.org/thomas/ContraGentiles2.htm#52>> [24.06.2019]: “Non est autem opinandum quod, quamvis substantiae intellectuales non sint corporeae, nec ex materia et forma compositae, nec in materia existentes sicut formae materiales, quod propter hoc divinae simplicitati adaequantur. Invenitur enim in eis aliqua compositio ex eo quod non est idem in eis esse et quod est”. 4) Ibidem: “Esse autem, in quantum est esse, non potest esse diversum: potest autem diversificari per aliquid quod est praeter esse; sicut esse lapidis est aliud ab esse hominis. Illud ergo quod est esse subsistens, non potest esse nisi unum tantum. Ostensum est autem quod Deus est suum esse subsistens. Nihil igitur aliud praeter ipsum potest esse suum esse. Oportet igitur in omni substantia quae est praeter ipsum, esse aliud ipsam substantiam et esse eius”. 5) Thomas Aquinas. *Quaestiones de quodlibet* III, q. 8. <<http://www.corpusthomicum.org/q03.html>> [24.06.2019]: “esse enim subsistens non potest esse nisi unum, sicut nec albedo subsistens non potest esse nisi unum. Oportet ergo quod quaelibet alia res sit ens participative, ita quod aliud sit in eo substantia participans esse, et aliud ipsum esse participatum. Omne autem participans se habet ad participatum, sicut potentia ad actum; unde substantia cuiuslibet rei creatae se habet ad suum esse, sicut potentia ad actum”. 6) Thomas Aquinas. *Expositio libri Boetii De Heptadecimadibus* 2. <<https://www.corpusthomicum.org/cbh.html>> [24.06.2019]: “Est tamen considerandum, quod cum simplex dicatur aliquid ex eo quod caret compositione, nihil prohibet aliquid esse secundum quid simplex, in quantum caret aliqua compositione, quod tamen non est omnino simplex. Unde ignis et aqua dicuntur simplicia corpora, in quantum carent compositione quae est ex contrariis, quae invenitur in mixtis; quorum tamen unumquodque est compositum tum ex partibus quantitatis, tum etiam ex forma et materia. Si ergo inveniantur aliquae formae non in materia, unaquaeque earum est quidem simplex quantum ad hoc quod caret materia, et per consequens quantitate, quae est dispositio materiae; quia tamen quaelibet forma est determinativa ipsius esse, nulla earum est ipsum esse, sed est habens esse. Puta, secundum opinionem Platonis, ponamus formam immaterialem subsistere, quae sit idea et ratio hominum materialium, et aliam formam quae sit idea et ratio equorum: manifestum erit quod ipsa forma immaterialis

discourse. At least two reasons for the changes taking place in philosophy can be indicated here. First, the influence of Descartes and then of Immanuel Kant on the history of philosophy turned out to be so overwhelming that philosophical problems began to be considered in the light of their teachings. Man has become the starting point as a cognitive subject, not a really existing independent being in existence from the one who cognocize. At that time, a problem arose between the transition from thought to reality, which could not be solved on the basis of the accepted paradigm of philosophizing. Not without significance was the critique of the theory of causality made by David Hume. Without the issue of existence and the causality associated with it, the theory of participation disappeared from the horizon of philosophical thought.

Secondly, during the development of modern philosophy, there has been parallel development of natural sciences not separated yet methodologically from philosophy. Modern natural science has thus had a huge impact on the interpretation of reality. However, the perspective has changed, because while in Thomas' metaphysics we ask "why?" the world exists, in the natural (specific) sciences it is basically about the answer to the question "how?" reality functions. Thus, in the first place was the method, instead of the existence of things. Based on the metaphysics of Thomas, Etienne Gilson claims that in realistic philosophy the method is always secondary to cognition. The lack of a methodological division into natural and general sciences caused that natural sciences began to enter into the competences of philosophy and theology, and vice versa. As a result, philosophy was subordinated to the natural sciences in accordance with the principles of positivism, and metaphysics ceased to count as a valuable science.

The change took place in the twentieth century, when within neotomism attempts were made to systematically develop Thomas' theory of participation within

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subsistens, cum sit quiddam determinatum ad speciem, non est ipsum esse commune, sed participat illud: et nihil differt quantum ad hoc, si ponamus illas formas immateriales altioris gradus quam sint rationes horum sensibilium, ut Aristoteles voluit: unaquaeque illarum, in quantum distinguitur ab alia, quaedam specialis forma est participans ipsum esse; et sic nulla earum erit vere simplex. Id autem erit solum vere simplex, quod non participat esse, non quidem inhaerens, sed subsistens. Hoc autem non potest esse nisi unum; quia si ipsum esse nihil aliud habet admixtum praeter id quod est esse, ut dictum est impossibile est id quod est ipsum esse, multiplicari per aliquid diversificans: et quia nihil aliud praeter se habet admixtum, consequens est quod nullius accidentis sit susceptivum. Hoc autem simplex unum et sublime est ipse Deus". 7) Thomas Aquinas. *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* q. 27, a. 1, ad 8. <<https://dhspriority.org/thomas/QDdeVer27.htm>> [24.06.2019]: "Ad octavum dicendum, quod omne quod est in genere substantiae, est compositum reali compositione; eo quod id quod est in praedicamento substantiae est in suo esse subsistens, et oportet quod esse suum sit aliud quam ipsum, alias non posset differre secundum esse ab illis cum quibus convenit in ratione suae quidditatis; quod requiritur in omnibus quae sunt directe in praedicamento: et ideo omne quod est directe in praedicamento substantiae, compositum est saltem ex esse et quod est". After Tomas, it is difficult to find similar texts so emphasizing the issue of essence and existence and the distinction between them.

the framework of the problem of existence. In particular, two authors – Louis B. Geiger and Cornelio Fabro – have special merits in interpreting the *de facto* forgotten theory of participation. The task they set for themselves is all the more important because this theory is – from the perspective of existential Thomism – the most general theory concerning the whole reality, encompassing with its “reach” both individual material beings as well as spiritual beings with God Himself. Such a broad spectrum makes the theory of participation actually relevant to any philosophical problem, which makes it one of the most important (if not the most important) philosophical theories.

The merit of Geiger and Fabro is that they have distinguished four types of participation in total. Geiger’s approach to the problem of participation was platonizing. He placed his views on participation according to Thomas’ in the book *La Participation dans la philosophie de s. Thomas d’Aquin*. According to Geiger, Thomas distinguished two types of participation: by composition and by similitude/formal hierarchy. The first type of participation characterizes Geiger as follows:

Participation is the reception and, consequently, the possession of an element fulfilling the role of form by the subject fulfilling the role of matter. This implies the necessary contingency. Since the subject is less perfect than what it accepts, it cannot take it without restriction. It only receives a part. What it possesses as part of its own total being is not part of what it<sup>5</sup> would receive more fully.

Whereas participation by similitude has been characterized in this way:

Participation expresses a reduced, detailed, and in this sense participative state, the essence of which is never realized in absolute fullness of its formal content every time<sup>6</sup>.

Participation by composition means, therefore, that one being accepts and possesses an element-form, whereas the form is given by the another being. Hence the composition. The receiving being is less perfect and therefore it is not able to constantly adopt a form that perfects it. However, the acceptance of form makes the participative being similar to the participating one in such a way that the participative being becomes a kind of diminished and more detailed in relation to the participant being. Confinement means that the participative being is limited

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<sup>5</sup> L.B. Geiger. *La Participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d’Aquin*. Paris 1942 s. 28: “la participation est la réception et conséquemment la possession d’un élément, jouant le rôle de forme, par un sujet jouant le rôle de matière. Elle implique donc nécessairement une composition. Lorsque le sujet est moins parfait que ce qu’il reçoit, il ne peut le recevoir sans le limiter. Il n’en reçoit qu’une partie. Ce qu’il possède comme une partie de son propre être total n’est lui-même qu’une partie de ce qu’il aurait pu recevoir plus pleinement”.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem p. 29: “La participation exprime l’état diminué, particularisé, et, en ce sens, participé, d’une essence, chaque fois qu’elle n’est pas réalisée dans la plénitude absolue de son contenu formel”.

in the possibilities of development, improvement and takes form in so far as it is able to. In a sense, both types of participation are two sides of the same coin. What draws the attention of existential Thomists is the lack of reference to existence. The relationship between participant and participative being is described in terms of the quality of existence, not existence as such, and not showing dependence in existence between beings.

When it comes to participation by similitude, Geiger describes it as the diffusion of the divine good itself, whose perfection is present in the beings in a limited way<sup>7</sup>. Participation by similitude does not indicate the act of the subject, but expresses the likeness of the real good that is being participated, and thus shows a certain finitude that we can know, or some deficiencies in the relation of similarity between a finite form and another similar, more perfect<sup>8</sup>.

Fabro also distinguished two types of participation in Thomas: predicamental and transcendental. The first concerns the relationship between finite beings and it is divided into formal-conceptual participation and real participation. According to the Italian philosopher, this type of participation is fundamental to Thomas. Generally speaking, predicamental participation shows dependence between logical order and abstraction, and thus this dependence requires

[...] that what is less general and detailed be contained in what is more general, what is determinate in what is indeterminate, but not vice versa<sup>9</sup>.

The problem with Fabro's interpretation of predicamental participation is related to distinction in two "existences" in a being:

Fabro distinguishes (and even opposes) in being: 1° existence as a historical, changeable «fact» of the actual reality of being, and 2° *esse ut actus essendi*, that is, participatory esse; internal intense act of being<sup>10</sup>.

Distinguishing in being existence and *esse ut actus essendi*, Fabro thinks that only substances have *esse*, not accidents, which may indicate that Fabro "treats *esse* as a separate, next to existence, element in being"<sup>11</sup>. Such a division into existence and *esse ut actus essendi* is inconsistent with Thomas's philosophy (in terms of

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem p. 239: "La participation est la diffusion même de la bonité divine, qualifiée à partir des des perfectiones limitées qu'elle constitue".

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem: "Elle ne désigne plus l'acte d'un sujet; elle exprime, ou bien la *réalité* elle-même qui est participée, la bonité fine, par exemple, ou la connaissance finie, ou bien la *relation de similitude déficiente* entre une forme fine et une autre de même série, plus parfait".

<sup>9</sup> C. Fabro. *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo s. Tommaso d'Aquino*. Torino 1963: "Questa dipendenza esige che il meno universale e il particolare sia compreso entro il più universale, il determinato entro l'indeterminato e non vice versa".

<sup>10</sup> Z.J. Zdybicka. *Partycypacja bytu. Próba wyjaśnienia relacji między światem a Bogiem*. Lublin 1972 p. 76.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem p. 78.

existencial metaphysics), because it testifies to the insurmountable – according to Zdybicka – Aristotelian essentialism, and thus real existing reality is limited to a certain part – substance, omitting accidents<sup>12</sup>.

We see, how important is the real distinction between essence and existence. Because Fabro went away from treating it strictly as the thomists used to do (especially those ones who tell about themselves as the existential thomists), he started to be seen as a someone who not exactly good had interpreted Thomas' metaphysics.

On transcendental participation, Fabro wrote:

Participation is not just a conceptual or conditional relationship, but a real relationship of threefold causation: exemplary, causative and purposeful – according to the total dependence of creation on the Creator<sup>13</sup>.

This kind of participation is as if summary of Thomas' metaphysics. It is worth emphasizing that Fabro combines participation with causality. Unlike Plato, who connected participation manly with imitation using the terms εἰκαστικός and μίμησις. Plato's assumption was that the world of ideas cannot be physically connected to the world of matter. In the existentialist paradigm, it began to be seen that the First Being somehow affects matter. The real distinction between essence and existence requires *creatio ex nihilo*, but in Greek philosophy, the concept of creationism was absent. Along with the change of the paradigm to the existential one, the theory of causality served to show the process of participation “from inside”. Participation itself has become a theory combining the efficient, patterned and final cause<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> C. Fabro. *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo s. Tomasso d'Aquino* p. 194.

<sup>14</sup> The theory of causality in modern thought was losing importance in comparson to the weight attached by Aquinas. This theory is related to existence, so along with the disappearance of this problem the theory of causality also began to disappear. David Hume (1711-1776) had the greatest influence on the issue of causality in modernity. He argues that starting from sensory perception, we cannot claim a cause-and-effect relationship, because senses only have a time sequence: *unum post-aliud*, not a cause-and-effect relationship: *unum per (propter) of the alias* – E. Coreth, H. Schöndorf. *Filozofia XVII i XVIII wieku*. Kęty 2006 p. 131. Hume explains this issue as follows: “When we experience something for the first time, we never can conjecture what effect will result from it. But if the power or energy of any cause were discoverable by the mind, we would be able to foresee the effect even if we had no previous experience of similar items, and would be able straight off to say with confidence what the effect would be, simply through thought and reasoning. In fact no material thing ever reveals through its sensible qualities any power or energy, or gives us a basis for thinking it will produce anything or be followed by any other item that we could call its effect. Solidity, extension, motion – these qualities are all complete in themselves, and never point to any other item that might result from them. The scenes of the universe are continually shifting, and one object follows another in an uninterrupted sequence; but the power or force that drives the whole machine is entirely concealed from us, and never shows itself in any of the sensible qualities of material things. We know that in fact heat constantly accompanies flame; but we have no basis on which to conjecture or imagine – let alone to know – what the connection is between flame and heat. So the idea of power can't be



We can see that the doctrine of real distinction between essence and existence after Thomas was connected with the theory of participation and both shared almost the same fate. The truth is that the theory of participation can deal with no reference to the doctrine of real distinction even so that the theory of participation has platonic roots and came into being long time before Aquinas, but after Thomas both – the theory of participation and the doctrine of real distinction – were sharing the same history being dependant on one another. For that reason when the problematic of existence disappeared after the middle ages, the theory of participation lost its importance too. Only in twentieth century the theory of participation and the problematic of existence started to be in the center of interest in the neo-thomistic philosophy, especially two authors contributed to our understanding of the theory and the doctrine of real distinction being its fundament.

#### SUMMARY

The four types of participation distinguished by Geiger and Fabra reflect what participation is. It is primarily a relationship of dependence between the being that receives and the one that gives. It is a matter of interpretation whether these four types are described in the works of Thomas or whether this is just the opinion of Geiger and Fabra. I think these two authors extracted this theory from the writings of Thomas, where it does not appear directly, explicitly, but follows from the whole system of Thomas's philosophy. It is the most general theory concerning all beings in two aspects: essence and existence. Participation theory has a great ability to combine all elements of reality, showing their origin from a common source and interdependence with each other. The revolution that Aquinas accomplished was that participation acquired an additional causal dimension: causative in terms of existence. Plato gave participation an exemplary and purposeful aspect, and Thomas added an existential aspect that combines exemplary and purposeful. The essential and existential side of being explained in the context of participation constitutes a comprehensive understanding of reality. The history of the development of the theory of participation shows that its history is related to the issue of ontic contingencies. The most fundamental contingency of essence and existence gives participation a completely new meaning that allows us to better understand also the essential side of being.

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derived from our experience of bodies in single instances of their operation; because no bodies ever reveal any power that could be the origin of this idea” – D. Hume. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* p. 31. <<https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hume1748.pdf>> [26.06.2019].

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## FILOZOFIA PARTYCYPACJI

**Streszczenie:** Teoria partycypacji bytu jest teorią najbardziej ogólną i można ją nazwać teorią wszystkiego. Z takiego ogólnego punktu widzenia można łączyć bardziej szczegółowe teorie w aspekcie istnienia. Podstawą tej teorii jest egzystencjalna strona bytu. Prawdziwe rozróżnienie między istotą a istnieniem zmieniło pierwotną teorię partycypacji Platona w zupełnie nowy, egzystencjalny sposób, który zmienia nasze spojrzenie na relacje między Bogiem a światem oraz relacje między filozofią a naukami ścisłymi. Teoria partycypacji w egzystencjalnej interpretacji Akwinaty nie została rozwinięta po Tomasz, ale została zinterpretowana w XX wieku przez Louisa B. Geigera i Cornelio Fabro. Ich podejścia do tomistycznej wersji teorii partycypacji różnią się od siebie. Podejście Geigera jest bardziej platońskie, a Fabra bardziej zgodne z egzystencjalnym tomizmem. Otwarte pozostaje jednak pytanie, która interpretacja jest prawdziwie „tomistyczna”.

**Słowa kluczowe:** uczestnictwo, istota, istnienie, Louis B. Geiger, Cornelio Fabro, tomizm.