

Ens reale, ens rationis, or Something In-Between?

The Scotist Angelo Volpe (d. 1647) on the Status of esse cognitum

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Abstract

The ontological status of *esse cognitum* was at the center of complex debates throughout the Scotist tradition (Alnwick vs. Aesculo, Mastri vs. Punch). This article investigates the Scotist Angelo Volpe's discussion of *esse cognitum* enjoyed by possible creatures in the divine intellect. Volpe responds to two religious warnings, one against assuming any eternal real being for merely possible creatures, and a second against depriving God's eternal knowledge of a corresponding object, since that would endanger this knowledge itself. Volpe opts for a solution that allows possible creatures the status of beings of reason (*entia rationis*) due to their own ontological merit, and the status of real beings (*entia realia*) due to God's knowing that they as possibles are not in opposition to real existence. He rejects the view that *esse cognitum* is a kind of being that holds a middle position between real being and being of reason. Volpe's historical significance is emphasized.

Keywords

history of metaphysics – Baroque scholasticism – Scotism – beings of reason – Angelo Volpe – Bartolomeo Mastri – Franciscan Order