

ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE REVISITED: AVICENNA, AQUINAS, AND THE ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDE BETWEEN EMANATION AND PARTICIPATION

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Abstract: *This article re-examines the relationship between the metaphysical systems of Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) and Thomas Aquinas by questioning the widespread assumption of ontological continuity grounded in their shared distinction between essence and existence. While Avicenna's māhiyyah-wujūd distinction is often treated as the conceptual foundation later appropriated by Aquinas, this study argues that such a reading obscures a decisive ontological divergence rather than illuminating a genuine metaphysical lineage. Employing the realist metaphysical framework developed by the Lublin School, particularly its emphasis on esse as the act that constitutes being as such, the article undertakes a conceptual and historical analysis of both systems to uncover their underlying ontological architectures. In Avicenna's metaphysics, existence is understood as a determination received by essence through causal dependence on the Necessary Being, yielding an emanative model of reality structured by hierarchical necessity. By contrast, Aquinas situates existence as actus essendi, the fundamental act through which beings participate in actuality itself, thereby grounding a participatory account of the God-creature relation. The article demonstrates that this difference is not merely semantic or theological but reflects two incompatible ontological models, emanation and participation, that entail divergent accounts of causality, contingency, and divine transcendence. By foregrounding this metaphysical fault line, the study contributes to comparative philosophy by moving beyond narratives of influence or terminological borrowing. It also shows how the Lublin School's realist criteria provide a rigorous methodological tool for evaluating metaphysical systems across traditions. Ultimately, the article argues that an explicitly ontological approach is indispensable for clarifying both inter-traditional dialogue between Islamic philosophy and Thomism and contemporary debates concerning the nature of existence itself.*

Keywords: *Avicenna, Emanation and Participation, Essence and Existence, Realist Metaphysics, Thomas Aquinas.*

Abstrak: Artikel ini meninjau kembali relasi antara sistem metafisika Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) dan Thomas Aquinas dengan mempertanyakan asumsi yang lazim diterima tentang kesinambungan

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ontologis berbasis distingsi esensi dan eksistensi. Distingsi *mābiyyah-wujūd* dalam filsafat Ibn Sīnā kerap diposisikan sebagai landasan konseptual yang kemudian “diadopsi” oleh Aquinas. Namun, artikel ini berargumen bahwa pembacaan tersebut justru menutupi perbedaan ontologis yang mendasar. Dengan menggunakan kerangka metafisika realis Sekolah Lublin, yang menekankan *esse* sebagai aktus yang mengonstitusikan keberadaan, kajian ini menggabungkan analisis konseptual dan konteks historis-filosofis untuk menyingkap arsitektur ontologis kedua sistem. Dalam metafisika Ibn Sīnā, eksistensi dipahami sebagai penentuan yang diterima esensi melalui ketergantungan kausal pada Yang Niscaya, sehingga melahirkan model realitas emanatif yang berstruktur hierarkis. Sebaliknya, Aquinas memahami eksistensi sebagai *actus essendi*, aktus fundamental yang membuat sesuatu sungguh ada dan memungkinkan partisipasi makhluk dalam keberadaan itu sendiri. Perbedaan ini bukan sekadar terminologis atau teologis, melainkan mencerminkan dua model ontologis yang tidak sepadan, emanasi dan partisipasi, dengan implikasi berbeda bagi kausalitas, kontingensi, dan relasi Allah–makhluk. Dengan menyoroti garis patahan ontologis tersebut, artikel ini berkontribusi pada filsafat perbandingan dengan melampaui narasi pengaruh atau peminjaman konsep. Selain itu, kajian ini menunjukkan bagaimana kriteria realisme Sekolah Lublin menyediakan perangkat metodologis yang ketat untuk menilai sistem metafisika lintas tradisi. Pendekatan ontologis yang eksplisit, demikian disimpulkan, merupakan prasyarat bagi dialog intertradisional yang jernih sekaligus relevan bagi perdebatan metafisika kontemporer tentang hakikat keberadaan.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Emanasi dan Partisipasi, Esensi dan Eksistensi, Ibn Sīnā, Metafisika Realis, Thomas Aquinas.*

Introduction

In comparative studies of Islamic philosophy and Latin scholasticism, the metaphysical relationship between Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and Thomas Aquinas is often interpreted through the lens of intellectual continuity (Vitković 2025, 101–25). The prevailing narrative suggests that Aquinas adopted and further developed Avicenna’s distinction between essence and existence (*mābiyyah-wujūd*) within a Christian theological framework. Yet this apparent conceptual similarity raises a deeper question: does shared terminology conceal a more fundamental ontological divergence? This problem invites a reconsideration of the assumptions underlying comparative metaphysics and the criteria required for genuine inter-traditional dialogue. To address this issue, the present study employs three comparative criteria: the ontological structure of each system, the role assigned to existence, and the nature of the God–world relationship. Through these criteria, the analysis seeks to clarify the extent to which Avicenna and Aquinas converge or diverge in their understanding of being. By examining this divergence, the study also raises a broader philosophical question: how does the Avicenna–Aquinas comparison illuminate contemporary debates concerning existence, causality, and the structure of reality itself?

This study does not attempt a neutral historical reconstruction of Avicenna’s and Aquinas’s thought. Instead, it adopts the realist metaphysical framework developed within the Lublin School as an explicit interpretive lens (Gudaniec 2021, 277–92; Krapiec and Maryniarczyk 2016, 391–427). Within this perspective, the metaphysical systems of Avicenna and Aquinas are evaluated according to criteria articulated in Lublin Thomism, particularly the primacy of *actus*

essendi and the judgment of existence as the foundational act of metaphysical cognition. Although this approach is therefore evaluative rather than purely descriptive, its methodological advantage lies in clarifying how the concepts of *wujūd* and *esse* fulfill fundamentally different ontological functions within their respective systems.

The central hypothesis of this study is that beneath the use of similar terminology lie two incompatible ontological structures concerning the nature of existence (*wujūd/esse*) (Kiankxah 2023, 145–68). A simple illustration helps clarify this difference. In Avicenna’s framework, a triangle may be considered in terms of its essence independently of its existence. The triangle’s existence is contingent upon the conditions that allow it to be instantiated, such as being drawn or realized in matter. In this sense, existence appears as a determination that is secondary to essence and dependent upon causal relations within an emanative metaphysical order (Swanstrom 2013, 78–92). By contrast, Aquinas, particularly as interpreted within the Lublin School, would illustrate the structure of being through an example such as an “existing stone.” In this case, existence is not something externally added to the essence of the stone but the very act that actualizes it as a being. Existence is therefore the constitutive act of the entity itself, the *actus essendi* through which a thing truly is. These contrasting models reflect two fundamentally different metaphysical frameworks governing the relation between God and the world: emanation in Avicenna and participation in Aquinas (Swanstrom 2013, 101–6).

The significance of this study emerges on three interconnected levels: methodological, historical, and contemporary. Methodologically, the study addresses a central question: what constitutes genuine ontological continuity in comparative philosophy? By focusing on underlying metaphysical commitments rather than merely on lexical similarities, the article seeks to move beyond approaches that equate conceptual similarity with philosophical agreement. Historically, by employing the realist metaphysical framework of the Lublin School, particularly the thought of Mieczysław A. Krąpiec and Andrzej Maryniarczyk, the study offers a more precise reinterpretation of the so-called “Avicennian legacy” in Aquinas’s metaphysics (Hasse and Bertolacci 2011, 135–57). From a contemporary perspective, clarifying these metaphysical differences contributes to ongoing discussions in interfaith dialogue, analytic theology concerning contingency and necessity, and philosophical investigations into the structure of reality.

The central argument advanced in this article is that the decisive break between Avicenna and Aquinas does not lie in the mere distinction between essence and existence, but in the ontological status assigned to existence itself (Vitković 2025, 101–25). Aquinas’s position represents more than conceptual refinement; it constitutes an ontological reorientation in which existence is understood as the primary act that actualizes essence. Rather than treating existence as an external determination, Aquinas conceives it as the *actus essendi*, the foundational act of being (Gudanec 2021, 277–92). This ontological transformation is expressed through three key features: the radical contingency of created existence, the

immediate presence of God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, and the reconfiguration of metaphysics as a framework of participation rather than emanation (Swanstrom 2013, 88–97). In light of recent developments in Lublin Thomism, contemporary Islamic philosophy, and broader scholarship on medieval metaphysics, this study aims to reinforce the thesis that Aquinas’s position represents a genuine ontological leap (Vitković 2025, 101–25). Recognizing this divergence, therefore, is not an obstacle but a necessary condition for rigorous philosophical dialogue between Islamic and Christian metaphysical traditions.

The article proceeds in several stages. First, it outlines the analytical framework of realist metaphysics developed by the Lublin School, including a critical examination of its methodological limits, which functions as the foundational lens for comparative analysis. Second, after addressing a possible Avicennian objection concerning the status of *wujūd*, the study presents a systematic analysis of Avicenna’s metaphysical system, focusing on his distinction between essence and existence and its implications for an emanative cosmology. Third, it examines Thomas Aquinas’s reconfiguration of the same distinction, showing how his doctrine of *actus essendi* and participation constitutes an alternative ontological model. Fourth, the analysis identifies the fundamental metaphysical divergence between emanation and participation as competing principles and then draws out the epistemological corollaries of this ontological fault line. Finally, the article considers the contemporary philosophical implications of this divergence, including its relevance for Indonesian Islamic philosophy, and suggests directions for further inquiry. The study concludes by reaffirming the importance of an explicitly ontological approach for rigorous comparative philosophy.

The preceding discussion suggested that the apparent continuity between Avicenna and Aquinas cannot be assessed merely by identifying shared terminology such as the distinction between essence and existence. What is required instead is a methodological perspective capable of examining the deeper ontological functions that these concepts perform within their respective metaphysical systems (Kiankhah 2023, 145–68). In other words, the comparison must move from lexical similarity to structural analysis. To accomplish this shift, the present study adopts the realist metaphysical framework developed by the Lublin School (Gudaniec 2021, 277–92). This framework provides a set of explicit criteria—grounded in the primacy of the judgment of existence and the constitutive role of *actus essendi* that allow for a systematic evaluation of how different philosophical traditions understand the act of being. By employing this analytical lens, the study can clarify whether Avicenna’s concept of *wujūd* and Aquinas’s notion of *esse* represent variations of the same metaphysical insight or fundamentally different ontological principles.

The Lublin School’s Realist Metaphysics as an Analytical Framework

To adequately assess the ontological divergence between Avicenna and Aquinas, a robust analytical framework is required. Such a framework must move beyond conceptual genealogy and address the question of being as such. The Realist Metaphysics of the Lublin School provides precisely this perspective. Emerging

from the Catholic University of Lublin in Poland, this twentieth-century philosophical movement—spearheaded by Mieczysław A. Krąpiec and further developed by Andrzej Maryniarczyk and Antoni B. Stępień—represents a rigorous retrieval of classical Thomistic realism centered on the primacy of existence (*actus essendi*) (Krąpiec and Maryniarczyk 2016, 391–427).

Krąpiec frequently illustrates this starting point through an ordinary human experience: awakening in the morning. As one gradually becomes aware of oneself, there arises a pre-reflective recognition of being present, being here and existing rather than not existing. This elementary awareness of presence expresses the fundamental datum that realist metaphysics seeks to articulate. Rather than beginning with abstract concepts, the Lublin School begins with the lived experience that something is.

This experiential starting point invites comparison with a well-known theme in Avicenna's philosophy. Avicenna maintains that the soul possesses an immediate awareness of its own existence before sensory experience, a view famously illustrated in the "floating man" thought experiment. In this scenario, a person suspended in a void—deprived of all sensory input—would nevertheless affirm their own existence (Adamson and Benevich 2018, 147–64). The comparison reveals an intriguing convergence: both traditions acknowledge a primary and immediate awareness of being. Yet they diverge significantly in how this awareness is philosophically interpreted and integrated into their respective ontological systems.

The foundational principle of Lublin Thomism is therefore methodological. Metaphysics must begin from the lived experience of existence (*doświadczenie istnienia*). Against tendencies toward essentialism, idealism, or purely semantic analysis, Krąpiec argues that philosophical inquiry should begin not with abstract definitions of essence but with the intellectual apprehension of the fact that something is (Krąpiec 2005, 301–4). This act of affirming existence—the "judgment of existence"—constitutes the primary starting point of metaphysical cognition (Wojtysiak et al. 2024, 611–33). As Maryniarczyk emphasizes, such experiential grounding directs philosophical reflection toward the real, existing thing (*ens*) rather than toward merely conceptual possibilities (Maryniarczyk 2018, 112–20).

From this starting point, the Lublin School interprets Aquinas's discovery of the real distinction between essence (*essentia*) and existence (*esse*) as the decisive breakthrough of classical metaphysics (LaZella 2010, 88–90). This distinction is not merely logical or conceptual but reflects an objective ontological structure present in every finite being. Essence indicates what a thing is—its specific intelligible content or potentiality—while *esse* denotes the act of being (*actus essendi*) that actualizes the entity as real. In this view, existence is neither a property nor an accidental attribute but the constitutive act of the being itself (*akt konstytutywny bytu*) (Krąpiec 2005, 251). A thing is therefore not an essence that subsequently receives existence; rather, it is an essence that exists by participating in the act of being (Predrag 2015, 414–35).

This interpretation generates a critical perspective toward metaphysical systems

that subordinate *esse* either to essence or to causal explanation. If existence is treated merely as a secondary determination—whether as an “accident” or as the necessary outcome of a causal sequence—then metaphysics risks overlooking the radical actuality of existence itself. Such approaches may successfully explain the order and derivation of beings within the cosmos, yet they remain confined to a cosmological horizon that does not adequately account for the existential act through which beings are real (Maryniarczyk 2018, 201).

From this standpoint, Avicenna’s metaphysical system becomes a particularly illuminating point of comparison. Defenders of Avicenna might argue that his framework maintains a coherent separation between essence and existence while simultaneously explaining their relation through the dynamics of causality. By grounding existence in the causal activity of the Necessary Existent, Avicenna offers a metaphysical system that preserves both logical clarity and cosmological coherence. From this perspective, the priority given to essence does not necessarily diminish the philosophical significance of existence but situates it within a structured order of emanation.

The theological implications of Lublin Thomism follow directly from its existential starting point. God is understood not simply as a “Necessary Existent” within a modal framework but as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*—subsistent being itself (Aquinas 1920, ST I.3.4). God does not possess existence; rather, God is existence itself. Consequently, the relationship between God and creatures is not primarily one of efficient causality within a chain of beings but one of ontological participation. Every finite being exists only by participating, in a limited and analogical manner, in the infinite act of being that is God. This participation is continuous, sustaining creatures in existence at every moment (Stępień 2012, 89; Davison 2019, 217–27).

Recent scholarships have highlighted the analytical value of this framework for comparative metaphysics. Vitković (Vitković 2025) demonstrates how the Lublin approach reveals the implicit ontological assumptions underlying different metaphysical systems, particularly how an essentialist starting point tends to favor emanationist models. Similarly, Polsky (2024) applies Lublin Thomist criteria to a comparison of Avicenna and Aquinas, concluding that Aquinas’s doctrine of *actus essendi* represents a genuine “metaphysical transposition” rather than a simple development of Avicennian ideas.

Parallel discussions have also emerged within Indonesian scholarship on Islamic philosophy. Building on the historiographical and synthetic work associated with Mulyadhi Kartanegara, recent studies increasingly treat *wujūd* not merely as a lexical equivalent of “existence” but as a structured ontological problem—for example, by distinguishing between *wujūd* as the act of existence and *mawjūd* as the existent. While these discussions are often developed within Islamic philosophical or Sufi frameworks, they open a productive point of dialogue with Thomistic existential metaphysics, where the *ens-esse* distinction clarifies why being as act cannot be reduced to a conceptual property of essences (Nasr 2023, 12–34). The appearance of Thomistic terminology, such as *actus essendi*, in Indonesian philosophical

writing further indicates that these conceptual tools are already present within the local academic discourse (Jegalus 2012, 68–87). Within this context, the Lublin School’s methodological emphasis on the judgment of existence provides a useful criterion for evaluating whether a doctrine of *wujūd* functions as an act, a concept, or a causal determination (Duma 2021, 611–33).

The Lublin School’s realist metaphysics therefore offers more than a historical interpretation of Aquinas. It provides a coherent set of ontological criteria—centered on the primacy of the judgment of existence, the constitutive role of *actus essendi*, and the metaphysical structure of participation—through which the internal architecture of any metaphysical system can be examined. This framework will guide the subsequent analysis, allowing the discussion to move beyond terminological comparison and to ask whether Avicenna’s *wujūd* and Aquinas’s *esse* perform the same foundational role within their respective ontologies. The answer to this question will ultimately reveal the deeper divergence between the metaphysical principles of emanation and participation.

Methodological Limits of the Lublin Ontological Criterion

While the realist metaphysics of the Lublin School provides a powerful analytical framework for distinguishing between Avicennian and Thomistic ontologies, its application is not without potential limitations. A critical examination of this methodology is therefore necessary to ensure that its use in comparative philosophy remains both rigorous and self-aware.

One potential concern arises from the explicitly evaluative nature of the Lublin framework. By privileging the primacy of *actus essendi* as the criterion for metaphysical adequacy, this approach risks imposing a specifically Thomistic standard on philosophical systems that emerge from different intellectual traditions. From a historiographical perspective, such an approach may be criticized as anachronistic, insofar as it evaluates Avicenna’s metaphysics according to criteria that were developed in a later and distinct philosophical context.

This concern has been raised, implicitly or explicitly, in contemporary scholarship on medieval philosophy. Historians such as Robert Wisnovsky and Dimitri Gutas have emphasized the importance of interpreting Avicenna within the conceptual and historical framework of Islamic Aristotelianism, rather than through the lens of later scholastic developments. From this standpoint, Avicenna’s treatment of *wujūd* should be understood not as an incomplete anticipation of *actus essendi*, but as a coherent and innovative response to the metaphysical problems of his own intellectual milieu.

A related critique concerns the risk of methodological reductionism. By focusing primarily on the ontological status of existence, the Lublin approach may underemphasize other dimensions of metaphysical systems, such as epistemology, logic, and theological context. For example, Avicenna’s distinction between essence and existence is closely tied to his modal logic and theory of necessity, which play a central role in his overall philosophical system (Taylor 2018, 102–35). Evaluating his metaphysics solely in terms of whether it affirms *actus essendi* may therefore

overlook important aspects of its internal coherence and explanatory power.

Nevertheless, these criticisms do not necessarily invalidate the use of the Lublin framework; rather, they highlight the need for methodological clarity. The present study does not claim to offer a neutral or purely historical reconstruction of Avicenna's and Aquinas's thought. Instead, it adopts a deliberately philosophical perspective that seeks to evaluate the ontological adequacy of different metaphysical systems. In this context, the criteria of the Lublin School are employed not as universally binding standards, but as analytically explicit tools that make it possible to articulate and compare competing conceptions of being.

Moreover, recent developments in comparative philosophy suggest that such evaluative approaches can be both legitimate and productive when used with appropriate caution. As Cai (2024) and Gui (2023) demonstrate, the comparison between Avicenna and Aquinas continues to yield new insights precisely when it engages with the structural differences between their respective ontologies. Similarly, Reising (2024, 242–62) argues that meaningful interfaith dialogue requires not the suspension of philosophical commitments, but their clear articulation and critical examination.

From this perspective, the strength of the Lublin approach lies in its ability to bring into focus a question that might otherwise remain implicit: what is the ontological status of existence itself? By framing the comparison in terms of this question, the analysis reveals that the divergence between emanation and participation is not merely a difference in explanatory models, but a fundamental disagreement about the nature of being.

In conclusion, while the Lublin School's realist metaphysics is not without its limitations, it remains a valuable and philosophically robust framework for comparative analysis. Its explicit criteria allow for a level of conceptual precision that is often lacking in studies that rely solely on historical or terminological comparison. When applied critically and reflexively, it provides a powerful tool for uncovering the deep structural differences that define the metaphysical systems of Avicenna and Aquinas. Having clarified both the strengths and the limitations of the Lublin framework, it is now necessary to address a potential objection that might be raised from an Avicennian perspective.

A Dialogue with a Possible Avicennian Response

Prior to applying the Lublin criteria to Avicenna's ontology, a potential objection from an Avicennian perspective must be considered. An advocate for Avicenna could argue, supported by substantial textual evidence, that interpreting *wujūd* as merely an "accidental determination" oversimplifies the complexity of his modal metaphysics. This objection maintains that Avicenna's distinction between essence (*māhiyyah*) and existence (*wujūd*) is intended not to subordinate existence to essence, but to preserve the radical contingency of the created order while affirming the absolute necessity of the First Principle. The claim that existence is "added" to essence should not be interpreted in a simplistic or temporal sense, as if a completed essence subsequently acquires an existential "stamp." Rather, it serves

as a logical and ontological clarification that no contingent being contains within its essence the sufficient reason for its own actuality. According to Avicenna, the *wujūd* that “affects” essence does not function as a categorical accident (*‘arad maqūlī*), such as whiteness or tallness, but as a metaphysical determination that is nonetheless real and causally dependent on the Necessary Existent (Mobaraki et al. 2023, 243–70).

Furthermore, an Avicennian apologist might invoke the doctrine of *‘ilm al-ḥudūrī* (knowledge by presence). Avicenna explicitly maintains that knowledge of one’s own existence is immediate and non-inferential, as demonstrated by the “floating man” argument (Kiankhah 2023, 145–68). If existence were merely an accidental property or a conceptual addition, accounting for such immediacy would be problematic. Thus, the objection contends that the Lublin School’s critique is based on a selective interpretation that overlooks Avicenna’s acknowledgment of the primacy of existential awareness within his emanative framework.

This objection is significant and warrants a thorough response. From the perspective of Lublin Thomism, the central disagreement does not concern whether Avicenna recognizes a real distinction between essence and existence or a form of existential awareness. Rather, the crucial divergence lies in the mode of existence’s reception. In Avicenna’s system, *wujūd* is received as a causal determination that necessarily follows from the First Cause. Even immediate awareness of one’s own existence is embedded within a causal sequence that ultimately originates from the Agent Intellect, which is independent and eternal. As a result, existence is consistently situated within a necessitarian structure, where to exist is to occupy a position within a hierarchical order of causal derivation. In contrast, the Lublin School interprets *esse* as a constitutive act that is not subordinated to any prior causal explanation. The judgment of existence is regarded as the first datum of metaphysical cognition, rather than the conclusion of a causal argument. The creature’s act of being is genuinely its own, even as it is continuously received from *Ipsium Esse Subsistens*. This difference in the mode of reception—causal determination versus constitutive participation—is precisely what the shared terminology of “essence and existence” obscures. Recognizing this distinction enables the comparison to move beyond terminological disputes and address the deeper ontological grammar of each system.

Avicenna and the Ontological Logic of Emanation

Recent scholarship on Avicenna has emphasized the complexity and originality of his ontology of *wujūd*. Earlier Neo-Thomistic interpretations often portrayed Avicenna primarily as an essentialist thinker whose distinction between essence and existence served merely as a conceptual precursor to Aquinas. Contemporary historians of philosophy, including Dimitri Gutas, Robert Wisnovsky, and Amos Bertolacci, have challenged this view by demonstrating that Avicenna’s treatment of *wujūd* represents a major philosophical innovation within the Islamic Aristotelian tradition. Their work highlights the sophisticated synthesis of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic elements that structures Avicenna’s metaphysical system.

While acknowledging these developments, the present study approaches Avicenna from the evaluative perspective of Lublin Thomism. From this standpoint, the decisive question is not simply whether Avicenna recognized the distinction between essence and existence, but how existence functions within the ontological architecture of his system. The central issue is therefore whether *wujūd* operates as the constitutive act of being or as a determination received by essence within a causal framework.

When examined through the analytical criteria of the Lublin School, Avicenna's metaphysics appears to rest upon what may be described as an essentialist and cosmological paradigm. Within this framework, existence (*wujūd*) is understood primarily as a determination received by essence. The resulting ontological logic can therefore be characterized as emanationist. Although Avicenna employs terminology that later appears in Thomistic metaphysics, the functional role of "existence" differs significantly: in Avicenna's system, existence is received by essence, whereas in Aquinas's framework it constitutes the act of being itself.

Avicenna's central achievement lies in his rigorous articulation of the distinction between essence (*mābiyyah*) and existence (*wujūd*). For any contingent being, its essence considered in itself (*bi-dhātihī*) is ontologically neutral with respect to existence. As he states in *al-Shifā'*, "the quiddity, insofar as it is that quiddity, does not necessitate existence" (Avicenna 2005, 58). Existence must therefore be conferred upon essence by an external cause. This framework enables Avicenna to distinguish between the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihī*), whose essence is identical with its existence and therefore requires no cause, and contingent beings (*mumkin al-wujūd*), whose existence is caused.

Recent scholarship has further clarified the ontological status of *wujūd* within this framework. Mukminin (2025, 89–112) argues that for Avicenna existence functions not as the primary act of being but as a "metaphysical accident" (*'arad ma'nawī*) relative to essence. Existence thus appears as a status that essence acquires. Davar (2024, 22–47) similarly interprets *wujūd* as a causally dependent principle whose explanatory role lies in linking essence to the causal order that actualizes it. Such interpretations correspond with Avicenna's own description of existence as *wujūd 'aradī*, an accidental form of existence at the metaphysical level.

From the perspective of Lublin Thomism, this conceptual framework carries significant metaphysical implications. By treating existence as a determination received by essence through causal mediation, Avicenna's system remains within what Krąpiec (2005, 484–90) described as the "cosmological horizon of being." The primary philosophical question is no longer the existential problem of why anything exists at all, but rather how a possible essence becomes actual within a necessary causal order. As Maryniarczyk (2018, 112) observes, when existence is not grasped as the *actus essendi*, the unity of the being itself becomes conceptually divided: a fully intelligible essence awaits an existential "addition," thereby obscuring the immediacy of the act of being.

This ontological framework naturally unfolds into an emanative cosmology. If existence is communicated from cause to effect, and if the First Cause exists

necessarily, then the procession of beings from the First must itself follow a necessary order. The well-known Avicennian scheme of the ten intellects emanating from the Necessary Existent thus represents not merely a Neoplatonic narrative but the systematic consequence of his metaphysical principles (Arif 2020, 332). Being unfolds as a hierarchical cascade of causation. As Hasse (Hasse 2014, 178–80) has shown, this model exerted a profound influence on medieval Latin philosophy by offering a philosophically rigorous account of creation grounded in causal necessity rather than temporal succession.

Avicenna's framework also provided conceptual resources for later philosophical and mystical developments. Illuminationist thinkers such as Suhrawardī and Sufi metaphysicians including Ibn 'Arabī developed sophisticated ontologies in which existence appears as a graded or intensified reality (López-Anguita 2021, 40). These developments should not be understood as inevitable consequences of Avicenna's philosophy but rather as creative reinterpretations of Avicennian concepts within new intellectual contexts.

From the standpoint of Thomistic participatory metaphysics, however, such developments risk blurring the ontological distinction between Creator and creature. It is therefore important to recognize that these later systems represent transformations of Avicenna's conceptual vocabulary rather than direct continuations of his original metaphysical program.

The tensions generated by such developments also provoked significant internal critiques within Islamic intellectual history. The forceful rejection of *wahḍah al-wujūd* by figures such as Ibn Taymiyyah was not merely theological but also ontological and epistemological. As Hakim et al. (2024, 211–35) argue, Ibn Taymiyyah perceived that an emanative metaphysics combined with a graded conception of existence could undermine the absolute distinction between Creator and creature. From the perspective of Lublin Thomism, the root of this difficulty lies in the failure to secure existence as the unique constitutive act of each being received through participation. When existence is not understood in this way, it can appear as a common and undifferentiated reality flowing from the First Principle.

In summary, Avicenna's metaphysics presents a powerful and internally coherent philosophical system in which the distinction between essence and existence safeguards divine necessity while explaining cosmic contingency through causal emanation. Yet when examined through the realist criteria of the Lublin School—particularly the primacy of *actus essendi*—the system reveals a structural limitation. By interpreting existence as a causally received determination of essence, Avicenna establishes a cosmological order of necessary derivation but does not fully articulate the underived act of existing that constitutes each being as real. This ontological orientation prepares the ground for the metaphysical transformation later introduced by Thomas Aquinas, whose reconfiguration of the same distinction will lead to a fundamentally different account of being grounded in participation rather than emanation.

Thomas Aquinas and Participation as the Ontological Structure of Being

The encounter with Avicennian metaphysics through the Arabic–Latin translation movement provided Thomas Aquinas with a sophisticated philosophical vocabulary, most notably the distinction between essence and existence. Aquinas’s engagement with this distinction, however, was neither passive nor merely corrective. Rather, it involved a profound metaphysical reorientation that placed the act of existence (*esse*) at the center of metaphysical inquiry. Through this shift, Aquinas moved beyond the cosmological paradigm of emanation and articulated a metaphysics of being grounded in participation.

Aquinas’s pivotal innovation lies in his identification of *esse* as “the actuality of all acts and the perfection of all perfections” (*actualitas omnium actuum et perfectio omnium perfectionum*) (Aquinas 1998, *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 9). In every created being, essence (*essentia*) functions as a principle of determination and potentiality—what a thing is—while *esse* constitutes the ultimate act that renders the thing real—that it is. As Aquinas argues in *De Ente et Essentia*, “Everything, however, has existence (*esse*) from another, or not from another. And if not from another, then it is the first being, the necessary being, whose essence is its very existence (*ipsum suum esse*). But if it has existence from another, we cannot go on to infinity...therefore, we must arrive at something which is being through its own essence” (Aquinas 1965, *De Ente*, chap. 4). This reasoning leads not merely to the identification of a first cause but to the recognition of *esse* itself as the foundational principle of metaphysical explanation (Poage and Center 2012, 231–43).

From the perspective of the Lublin School, this insight represents the crystallization of realist metaphysics (Krapiec and Maryniarczyk 2016, 391–427). Krapiec (2005, 251–55) interprets Aquinas’s *esse* not as a static state or attribute but as the “constitutive act of being” (*akt konstytutywny bytu*). Existence is therefore not something externally added to a pre-formed essence; rather, it is the primary actuality through which an essence is elevated from mere possibility to real being. Accordingly, the distinction between essence and *esse* in creatures is not primarily logical but ontological, rooted in the very structure of contingent beings.

This ontological framework fundamentally reconfigures the relationship between God and creation. God is not understood primarily as the “Necessary Existent” within a hierarchy of causal explanation but as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*—Subsistent Being Itself. As Stępień (2012, 131–35) emphasizes, this formulation removes God from the genus of beings altogether: God is not *a* being, even the highest, but the pure and unlimited act of being itself. Consequently, the relationship between God and creatures is not adequately described as a linear chain of causality but rather as a relation of ontological participation. Created beings exist only insofar as they participate, in a finite and receptive manner, in the infinite act of being that is God.

Within this framework, participation is not merely a Platonic metaphor but a precise ontological principle. As Maryniarczyk (2019, 76) explains, participation accounts simultaneously for the creature’s real autonomy and its ontological

dependence. The creature's *esse* is truly its own act of being, making it a genuine and distinct reality. Yet this act is received (*esse receptum*) from *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. The creature therefore possesses a real act of existence while remaining continuously dependent upon the divine source that sustains it. This ongoing dependence is expressed in the Thomistic doctrine of *conservatio in esse*, according to which God continually sustains creatures in existence (LaZella 2010, 105–22).

Recent scholarship has reinforced the originality and systematic importance of this metaphysical transformation. Polsky (2024, 345–70) argues that Aquinas's doctrine of *actus essendi* represents a genuine ontological divergence from Avicenna rather than a mere theological adaptation of Avicennian concepts. De Haan (2022, 367–95) strengthens this interpretation by showing how Aquinas's *actus essendi* directly counters the essentialist tendencies latent in Avicenna's framework, arguing that the Thomistic notion of existence as an act rather than a state is precisely what blocks the slide into a merely "additive" conception of being. Similarly, Wippel (2000, 212–20) demonstrates in his influential study of Aquinas's metaphysics of *esse* how the doctrine of participation resolves the problem of metaphysical composition in creatures in a manner that emanationist causality cannot. Within this framework, every creature appears as a unique composition of essence and *esse*, a unified being whose existence is continuously received and sustained.

This participatory ontology also provides a distinctive account of contingency. Whereas Avicenna's emanative cosmology tends toward a necessitarian structure, Aquinas's framework grounds contingency in existential dependence. Creatures do not merely possess possible essences that become actual within a causal order; rather, their very act of being is received from a transcendent source. This preserves a radical ontological distinction between the unparticipated act of being and the participated acts found in creatures, thereby avoiding the monistic or pantheistic tendencies sometimes associated with emanationist metaphysics.

In summary, Aquinas's reconfiguration of the essence–existence distinction culminates in a metaphysics centered on *actus essendi* and participation. By identifying *esse* as the primary ontological act, Aquinas shifts the focus of metaphysics from explaining the derivation of beings to understanding the intrinsic constitution of being itself. The resulting ontology portrays God as the transcendent source of all existence and creatures as authentic yet contingent participants in the act of being. As interpreted and further articulated by the Lublin School, this framework offers a coherent alternative to the Avicennian model and clarifies the fundamental metaphysical divergence between the principles of participation and emanation.

Emanation and Participation as a Metaphysical Fault Line

The preceding analyses of Avicenna and Aquinas reveal that their shared terminological framework, the distinction between essence and existence, conceals a fundamental divergence in ontological commitment. This divergence crystallizes into two distinct models for understanding the relationship between the necessary and the contingent: emanation and participation. These models are not merely

alternative metaphors or differences of emphasis; rather, they represent a decisive split in the understanding of being, causality, and metaphysical dependence.

At the core of this divergence lies the ontological status of existence. In Avicenna's system, existence (*wujūd*) functions as a causal determination bestowed upon an essence that is conceptually prior to it. The relation between God and the world therefore assumes a primarily explanatory structure: the Necessary Existent stands as the first principle within a chain of causal derivation. The connection between cause and effect follows a logic of metaphysical consequence articulated in Avicenna's emanative cosmology. By contrast, Aquinas understands existence (*esse*) as the constitutive act (*actus essendi*) in which an essence participates. The God–creature relation is therefore not primarily explanatory but ontological and sustaining. *Ipsium Esse Subsistens* is the transcendent source from which the act of being is continuously received. The relation between God and creatures is thus one of existential dependence rather than causal outflow.

This structural difference generates distinct accounts of necessity and contingency. Avicenna's framework, as Hasse (2014) and Marmura (2005) have shown, offers a powerful explanation of how a contingent universe proceeds from a necessary First Cause. A more recent comparative reassessment by LópezFarjeat (2021, 185–210) confirms that the divergence in their accounts of causality is not merely terminological but stems from two irreconcilable models of metaphysical dependence. While individual essences are neutral with respect to existence, their actualization follows necessarily from the causal order established by the Necessary Existent. The resulting structure has been described by Davison (2023, 180–82) as a form of “soft determinism” at the metaphysical level. Aquinas's model, by contrast, grounds contingency in existential dependence rather than causal necessity. As interpreted by the Lublin School, creatures exist only through the continuous reception of the act of being. There is no intrinsic necessity that God create; the existence of creatures remains radically contingent and sustained by a free act of divine conservation. This framework therefore preserves a stronger account of divine freedom and creaturely contingency, as emphasized by Kerr (2015) and Te Velde (2006).

The divergence between these models also extends into theological anthropology and mystical theology. The emanative model, with its hierarchical outflow of being, readily lends itself to conceptions of ontological continuity between God and creation. Historically, this tendency appears in the development of Illuminationist philosophy and later Sufi metaphysics, particularly in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī, where existence may be conceived as a graded reality. Such developments, however, also provoked critical responses. Ibn Taymiyyah, for example, rejected doctrines associated with *waḥdah al-wujūd*, arguing that they risk dissolving the ontological distinction between Creator and creature (Hakim et al. 2024, 211–35). The participatory framework articulated by Aquinas proceeds in a different direction. As Stępień (2012, 113) argues, participation presupposes a real distinction between the unparticipated source and the participated act. Divine transcendence is therefore preserved even as creatures genuinely share in the act of

being. Mystical union, within this framework, signifies a union of operation and love rather than an ontological fusion, a distinction highlighted by Louth (2007, 164–68) in comparative discussions of Thomistic and Sufi spirituality.

The implications of this divergence extend beyond historical theology to the methodology of comparative philosophy. A comparison based solely on shared terminology risks committing what Burrell (2012, 865–83) famously described as the “fallacy of misplaced synonymy.” Genuine philosophical comparison must instead examine the structural role played by concepts within their respective systems. The analytical criteria developed by the Lublin School are particularly useful in this regard, as they direct attention to the ontological function of existence itself. The decisive question becomes whether *wujūd* or *esse* functions as the ultimate actuality of the real. When posed in this way, the contrast can be described as the difference between metaphysics centered on essence and causal derivation and one grounded in the primacy of the act of existence.

The relevance of this metaphysical fault line remains significant in contemporary philosophical discussions. In analytic philosophy of religion, debates concerning divine necessity, modal possibility, and the grounding of existence frequently employ conceptual structures that resemble Avicennian modal frameworks (Leftow 2012, 135–74). Thomistic participation, however, offers an alternative approach by grounding contingency not in logical possibility but in existential dependence upon *Ipsium Esse*. Recent scholarship has begun to reexamine this perspective as a resource for contemporary metaphysical debates (Davison 2023, 178–204). Moreover, in the context of interfaith dialogue, recognizing this divergence helps prevent an artificial synthesis that obscures genuine philosophical differences. As Nasr (2023, 12–34) observes, acknowledging the structural distinction between Avicennian and Thomistic metaphysics is a necessary condition for meaningful engagement between Islamic and Christian philosophical traditions.

In conclusion, the relationship between Avicenna and Aquinas is best understood not as a linear development but as a metaphysical bifurcation. The distinction between essence and existence serves as a common point of departure from which two fundamentally different metaphysical trajectories emerge. One leads toward a necessitarian cosmology of emanation; the other toward an ontology of participation grounded in the act of being. This divergence is not merely of historical interest but continues to shape contemporary discussions in metaphysics, theology, and comparative philosophy. Recognizing this fault line therefore provides a more precise framework for understanding both traditions and for conducting rigorous dialogue between them.

The ontological divergence outlined above also carries significant epistemological consequences, which have rarely been thematized in comparative studies.

Epistemological Corollaries of the Ontological Divide

The metaphysical fault line between emanation and participation extends beyond the abstract domain of ontology and produces significant implications for epistemology. The manner in which a philosophical tradition conceptualizes

existence directly influences its account of human knowledge of reality.

Within Avicenna's emanative framework, existence (*wujūd*) is received by essence through a chain of necessary causation, rendering knowledge of any finite being's existence necessarily inferential. Direct intuition of a particular entity's existence is not possible; instead, its existence is inferred from its causal dependence, ultimately leading back to the Necessary Existent. Exceptions to this inferential structure include self-knowledge (the "floating man" awareness of the soul) and, for the philosophical elite, knowledge of the Necessary Existent (Zamboni 2023, 282–326). This epistemological structure aligns with Avicenna's ontology: if existence is always mediated by causal dependence, then human access to existence is similarly mediated and indirect. As Taylor (2018, 233–45) demonstrates, even intellectual abstraction in Avicenna's system relies on a separate Agent Intellect as an eternal cause, further supporting the view that knowledge, like existence, is transmitted through hierarchical mediation.

In contrast, Aquinas's participatory metaphysics posits that the structure of human knowledge reflects the structure of being. Because *esse* constitutes the act of a thing itself, and the Lublin School bases metaphysical inquiry on the immediate "judgment of existence" (the intellectual apprehension that something *is*), human beings possess direct, non-inferential access to existence (Lekka-Kowalik 2022, 595–616). This does not imply that all existential judgments are infallible or that the full nature of *esse* is entirely accessible to finite intellect. Rather, it affirms that the act of being is not concealed by causal inference; it is the primary object grasped by the intellect in existential judgment. As Serra Pérez (2022, 132–52) observes, this epistemological realism distinguishes the Thomistic understanding of *actus essendi* from both essentialist and purely conceptualist perspectives. It has practical consequences. In Avicenna's model, the average person's knowledge of created beings remains largely at the level of essence and accident; the existential dimension is accessible only through philosophical demonstration. In Aquinas's model, every act of existential judgment—even the most mundane perception that "this stone exists"—already participates, however obscurely, in the fundamental act of metaphysical cognition. The lived experience of existence is thus democratized, not reserved for the philosophical elite.

Contemporary Implications and Avenues for Future Research

The delineation of the metaphysical fault line between Avicennian emanation and Thomistic participation is not merely an exercise in historical scholarship. It also carries significant implications for contemporary philosophy, theology, and comparative intellectual history. By clarifying the ontological commitments underlying each system, this study opens new avenues for research at the intersection of medieval metaphysics and modern philosophical inquiry.

One immediate implication concerns the methodology of comparative philosophy and interfaith dialogue. Recognizing the structural divergence between emanation and participation challenges simplified narratives of philosophical "influence" or conceptual synthesis. As B. G. Weiss (2022, 213–35) argues in

Frameworks of Islamic Thought, the failure to distinguish between structural analogies and foundational metaphysical commitments risks conflating traditions whose conceptual vocabularies may appear similar but whose ontological assumptions differ profoundly (Varlik 2022, 19–36). A more rigorous comparative approach, such as that provided by the analytical criteria of the Lublin School, allows philosophical dialogue to proceed without collapsing these distinctions. In the context of Christian–Muslim engagement, this perspective clarifies how debates about creation, divine causality, and contingency are rooted in deeper metaphysical frameworks rather than merely doctrinal formulations. As Aydin (2023, 55–78) suggests, framing these discussions in terms of “participation” and “emanation” can move dialogue beyond surface-level theological comparison toward more substantive metaphysical engagement.

In contemporary analytic philosophy of religion, the Thomistic metaphysics of *actus essendi* also offers a significant alternative to dominant modal and essentialist approaches to existence and contingency. Much analytic metaphysics operates within frameworks that treat existence as a logical quantifier or as a property instantiated within possible worlds structurally connected to Avicennian modal reasoning and its later reception in figures such as Leibniz. By contrast, the Thomistic participatory framework reorients discussion toward existential act and real dependence (Kaukua 2010, 295–312). Recent scholarship has begun to explore how Aquinas’s account of *esse* can contribute to debates concerning metaphysical grounding, fundamentality, and the nature of contingent existence. Scholars such as T. J. Pawl (2024, 135–55) and C. F. J. Martin (2023, 699–722) have argued that the Thomistic understanding of existence provides conceptual resources for addressing persistent problems surrounding metaphysical dependence and divine causality. Similarly, discussions of divine simplicity and freedom continue to draw on Thomistic participation as a way of explaining how a simple God can serve as the source of composite creatures without compromising either divine unity or creaturely integrity (Pruss 2008, 150–67).

Within Islamic philosophy itself, the Avicennian–Thomistic comparison also illuminates subsequent internal developments. The tensions within Avicenna’s system—particularly the relation between a necessary First Cause and contingent beings whose existence is received—arguably stimulated later philosophical transformations. Illuminationist and post-Avicennian traditions sought to reinterpret Avicenna’s ontology of *wujūd* in increasingly dynamic ways. The metaphysics of Mullā Ṣadrā represents the most ambitious of these developments. By articulating the doctrine of the primacy and gradation of existence (*aṣālah al-wujūd wa tashkīkubu*), Ṣadrā attempted to synthesize Avicennian metaphysics with Illuminationist insights into the dynamic character of being (Moris 2014, 113–14). Recent scholarship has suggested that a dialogue between Ṣadrīan metaphysics and Thomistic participation may offer fruitful possibilities for comparative philosophy (Rizvi 2023; Kalın 2024). Such engagement could illuminate new ways of understanding the relationship between existence, causality, and metaphysical dependence while preserving the distinct conceptual frameworks of each tradition.

Finally, the broader philosophical significance of this comparative study should not be underestimated. In an academic environment often characterized by disciplinary specialization and historical fragmentation, reconstructing this metaphysical debate demonstrates the continuing relevance of systematic philosophy. The Avicenna–Aquinas comparison provides a compelling case study of how different traditions confront the same fundamental question: what does it mean for something to exist? As Gondek (2021, 813–28) has argued, the Lublin School’s emphasis on beginning with the “experience of existence” offers a methodological bridge between classical metaphysics and contemporary phenomenological approaches. This perspective suggests further possibilities for interdisciplinary research linking Thomistic realism, phenomenology, and comparative metaphysics.

In conclusion, the exploration of the Avicenna–Aquinas divergence remains an open and productive field of inquiry. By clarifying the ontological fault line between emanation and participation, this study not only illuminates a pivotal moment in the history of metaphysics but also provides conceptual tools for engaging contemporary philosophical debates. Future research may continue to explore how these classical metaphysical frameworks can contribute to ongoing discussions about existence, causality, and the ultimate structure of reality.

Reframing the Debate in Contemporary and Indonesian Contexts

While the metaphysical divergence between Avicenna and Aquinas has been extensively examined within the context of medieval philosophy, its implications extend significantly into contemporary philosophical discourse and regional intellectual traditions. In particular, the Indonesian reception of Islamic philosophy offers a compelling case study for evaluating how the distinction between emanation and participation continues to shape metaphysical interpretation.

Modern Indonesian scholarship on Islamic philosophy, especially as developed by figures such as Mulyadhi Kartanegara, has often emphasized the possibility of a synthetic framework that harmonizes classical Islamic metaphysics with other philosophical traditions. Within this approach, the concept of *wujūd* is frequently interpreted in a way that allows for conceptual comparison, if not equivalence, with the Thomistic notion of *esse*. Such readings tend to prioritize terminological convergence and thematic resonance, particularly in discussions of divine causality, contingency, and the gradation of being.

The synthetic approach found in much of contemporary Indonesian Islamic philosophy, particularly in the work of Mulyadhi Kartanegara, is both commendable and intellectually productive. Kartanegara’s effort to present Islamic philosophy as a “living tradition” relevant to contemporary challenges, especially the crisis of knowledge production in the modern Muslim world, is noteworthy. He identifies four main streams of Islamic philosophical heritage: Peripatetic (*mashsha’iyyah*), Illuminationist (*ishrāqī*), mystical-theosophical (*‘irfānī*), and transcendent theosophy (*ḥikmah muta‘āliyyah*) (Fauzi and Faqih 2023, 89–102). In this framework, the concept of *wujūd* is interpreted to highlight continuity

across these traditions, focusing on gradation, intensity, and, in some cases, the ultimate unity of existence.

However, from the perspective developed in this study, the synthetic approach, while valuable for tracing the history of Islamic thought, may overlook the structural differences highlighted by the Lublin School's realist criteria. The key issue is not whether *wujūd* appears in each tradition, but whether it serves the same ontological function. Acknowledging this distinction does not diminish Kartanegara's project; instead, it enhances it by adding an important methodological refinement.

However, when examined through the realist criteria of the Lublin School, this synthetic tendency raises important methodological concerns. As recent comparative studies have shown, the apparent similarity between *wujūd* and *esse* often conceals fundamentally different ontological functions (Cai 2024, 150; Gui 2023, 1407). In Avicenna's framework, *wujūd* operates within a structure of causal dependence, where existence is conferred upon essence as part of an emanative order. By contrast, in Aquinas's metaphysics, *esse* is not merely conferred but constitutes the act by which a being is actualized. The difference, therefore, is not merely conceptual but structural.

This distinction has important implications for how Islamic philosophy is interpreted and taught in contemporary contexts. In many Indonesian academic settings, the influence of later developments, particularly Illuminationist and Sufi metaphysics, has led to an emphasis on the gradation and unity of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*). While philosophically rich, this framework often reinforces an emanationist ontology in which existence appears as a shared and intensifiable reality. From the perspective of participatory metaphysics, however, such a view risks obscuring the radical distinction between the unparticipated source of being and the finite acts of existence that constitute created entities.

Recent scholarship in comparative philosophy has begun to address this tension by emphasizing the need for more rigorous methodological distinctions. Reising (2024, 242–62), for example, argues that interfaith philosophical dialogue must move beyond surface-level conceptual parallels and engage with the underlying ontological commitments that structure different traditions. Similarly, Mousavian (2025, 259–77) highlights how Avicennian metaphysics continues to influence contemporary discussions of causality and meaning, particularly in contexts where existence is treated as a derivative or relational property rather than a constitutive act.

Within this broader intellectual landscape, the Lublin School's emphasis on the primacy of the judgment of existence offers a distinctive contribution. By grounding metaphysical inquiry in the immediate apprehension of being, this framework provides a criterion for distinguishing between systems that treat existence as an act and those that treat it as a determination. Applied to the Indonesian context, this criterion allows for a more nuanced evaluation of how classical Islamic concepts are interpreted and integrated into contemporary philosophical discourse.

The significance of this approach lies not in rejecting synthetic or comparative efforts, but in clarifying the conditions under which such efforts can be

philosophically meaningful. Rather than assuming that conceptual overlap implies metaphysical continuity, a structurally oriented comparison reveals the depth of the divergence between emanation and participation. In doing so, it opens the possibility for a more critical and productive engagement between Islamic and Thomistic metaphysical traditions, one that respects both their similarities and their irreducible differences.

Conclusion

This study has argued that the frequent portrayal of Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas as participants in a shared metaphysical trajectory obscures a decisive ontological divergence. Although both thinkers employ the distinction between essence and existence, they integrate this distinction within fundamentally different metaphysical frameworks. In Avicenna's system, existence functions as a determination received by essence through causal dependence, giving rise to an emanative account of the relationship between God and the world. In Aquinas's metaphysics, particularly as interpreted within the realist framework of the Lublin School, existence is understood as *actus essendi*, the constitutive act through which beings are actualized. The resulting contrast is therefore not merely terminological but ontological, generating two incompatible accounts of contingency, causality, and metaphysical dependence. Recognizing this divergence clarifies why apparent similarities between the two systems often produce conceptual confusion when examined without an explicit ontological method.

The analysis developed in this article also suggests that comparative philosophy must move beyond narratives centered on influence or conceptual borrowing and instead adopt a more rigorously ontological approach. The realist metaphysics of the Lublin School provides particularly useful criteria for such inquiry, distinguishing between explanatory models of causality and the constitutive principles of being itself. By grounding metaphysical reflection in the judgment of existence, this framework avoids both superficial conceptual harmonization and forms of ontological relativism. At the same time, it offers a productive perspective for engaging internal debates within Islamic philosophy, especially those concerning emanation, gradation of being, and *waḥdah al-wujūd*, without reducing their metaphysical content to purely symbolic or mystical interpretation.

Several avenues for future research follow from this analysis. One promising direction would be to extend the comparison to other thinkers situated at the intersection of emanative and participatory metaphysics, such as Mullā Ṣadrā or late medieval Christian Platonists. Another concerns the dialogue between Thomistic realism and contemporary analytic metaphysics, particularly regarding metaphysical grounding, contingency, and divine simplicity. Exploring these connections may further demonstrate how classical metaphysical frameworks can contribute to ongoing philosophical debates about existence, causality, and the ultimate structure of reality. In this way, comparative philosophy can develop into a genuinely critical discipline, one that respects historical diversity while remaining grounded in a clear and defensible account of what it means for something to be.

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