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Thomas Aquinas and the Problem of Human Self-Knowledge

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By

Therese Scarpelli Cory

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# Thomas Aquinas and the Problem of Human Self-Knowledge

Therese Scarpelli Cory, Ph.D.

Director: John F. Wippel, Ph.D.

This dissertation presents a comprehensive analysis of Thomas Aquinas's theory of self-knowledge, examining each of the four kinds of self-knowledge he identifies: (1) actual perception of one's existence (actual self-awareness); (2) habitual self-awareness; (3) apprehension of the soul's nature; and (4) the judgment of this apprehension in light of divine truth. Broadly speaking, it contends that Thomas is attentive to experienced phenomena and provides precise and thoughtful analyses of phenomena such as bodily consciousness, implicit and explicit awareness of oneself as subject, unified perception of the self as a single subject, and scientific knowledge of the soul's nature. Moreover, his explanation of self-knowledge is consistent with the principles of his general theory of knowledge, while it also takes into account the unique characteristics of an act of knowledge wherein the knower is the known, and integrates both Augustinian and Aristotelian principles. Thus Thomas's comments on self-knowledge constitute a carefully nuanced doctrine with significant implications for both his theory of knowledge and his explanation of human subjectivity.

The first chapter examines the doctrine of two of his main sources, Augustine and Aristotle, while placing special emphasis on the way that difficulties of interpretation of texts in both these thinkers helped shape Thomas's own conception of self-knowledge. It then reviews chronologically his major texts on self-knowledge, while examining them for

possible doctrinal developments and highlighting significant systematic problems for consideration in the thematic discussions of the following chapters.

The second chapter analyzes in detail the first type of self-knowledge—the soul’s awareness of its individual existing self, focuses on the problem of its content and the mode in which it is achieved, and argues that according to at least one definition of “intuition,” Thomas is defending a theory of intuitive self-awareness.

The third chapter investigates the second type of self-knowledge—the soul’s habitual self-awareness through its own presence to itself—and argues for the existence of a Thomistic account of implicit actual self-awareness.

The fourth chapter examines the third and fourth kinds of self-knowledge and reviews F.-X. Putallaz’s argument that *reditio completa* constitutes a fifth type of self-knowledge.

Lastly, the fifth chapter studies the implications of Thomas’s theory of self-knowledge for his view of human nature. It returns to the commentaries on the *De anima* and *Liber de causis* to argue that habitual self-knowledge is essential to immaterial being, and that Thomas’s discussion of habitual and actual implicit self-knowledge constitutes a psychological approach to the nature of human personhood which complements his much better-known metaphysical definition of personhood.

This dissertation by Therese Scarpelli Cory fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in philosophy approved by John F. Wippel, Ph.D., as Director, and by Kevin White, Ph.D., and Gregory Doolan, Ph.D., as Readers.

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John F. Wippel, Ph.D., Director

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Kevin White, Ph.D., Reader

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Gregory Doolan, Ph.D., Reader

To David

ἐδιζήσάμην ἐμεωυτόν

—Heraclitus, fr. 101

. . . nec ego ipse capio totum, quod sum.

Ergo animus ad habendum se ipsum angustus est:

ut ubi sit quod sui non capit?

Numquid extra ipsum ac non in ipso?

Quomodo ergo non capit?

Multa mihi super hoc oboritur admiratio, stupor apprehendit.

Et eunt homines mirari alta montium,

et ingentes fluctus maris,

et latissimos lapsus fluminum,

et Oceani ambitum,

et gyros siderum,

et relinquunt se ipsos . . .

—St. Augustine, *Confessiones*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### *Primary Texts*

Subdivisions such as books, distinctions, questions, and articles, or lectiones or chapters, are listed in their proper order in Arabic numerals without preceding designations unless these are necessary for clarity (exceptions being made for book numbers of commentaries and the parts of the *Summa theologiae*, which are given in Roman numerals according to standard practice). All items are separated by periods. Example: *In Sent.* I.3.4.5.

<i>CT</i>	<i>Compendium theologiae</i>
<i>De Trin.</i>	<i>De Trinitate</i> (Augustine)
<i>De virt.</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de virtutibus in communi</i>
<i>DEE</i>	<i>De ente et essentia</i>
<i>DM</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de malo</i>
<i>DP</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de potentia</i>
<i>De spirit. creat.</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis</i>
<i>De unit. int.</i>	<i>De unitate intellectus</i>
<i>DV</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de veritate</i>
<i>In I Cor.</i>	<i>Super primam epistolam ad Corinthios lectura</i>
<i>In De an.</i>	<i>Sententia libri De anima</i>
<i>In De div. nom.</i>	<i>In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio</i>
<i>In De mem.</i>	<i>Sententia libri De memoria et reminiscencia</i>
<i>In De sensu</i>	<i>Sententia libri De sensu et sensato</i>
<i>In Eph.</i>	<i>Super epistolam ad Ephesios lectura</i>
<i>In Ethic.</i>	<i>Sententia libri Ethicorum</i>
<i>In Ioan.</i>	<i>Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura</i>
<i>In Met.</i>	<i>In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio</i>
<i>In Meteor.</i>	<i>Expositio in libros Meteorologicorum</i>
<i>In Perierm.</i>	<i>Expositio libri Peryermenias</i>
<i>In Phys.</i>	<i>In VIII libros Physicorum</i>
<i>In Ps.</i>	<i>In Psalmos</i>
<i>In Post. an.</i>	<i>Expositio libri Posteriorum</i>
<i>In Sent.</i>	<i>Scriptum super libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi</i>
<i>QDDA</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de anima</i>
<i>Quodl.</i>	<i>Quodlibeta</i>
<i>SCG</i>	<i>Summa contra gentiles</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i>
<i>Sup. Boet. De ebd.</i>	<i>Super Boetii De ebdomadibus</i>
<i>Sup. Boet. De Trin.</i>	<i>Super Boetii De Trinitate</i>
<i>Sup. Lib. de caus.</i>	<i>Super Librum de causis expositio</i>

### ***Editions***

- CCSL *Corpus Christianorum series latina*. Turnholt: Brepols, 1953–.
- CSEL *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*. Prague: Tempsky, 1864–.
- Leon. *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Doctoris Angelici, opera omnia, iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P.M. edita*. Rome: S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 1882–.
- Mand. *Scriptum super libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*. 4 vols. 1–2, ed. R.P. Mandonnet; 3–4, ed. R.P. Maria Fabianus Moos. Paris: Lethielleux, 1929–47.
- Marietti *Opera omnia*. Turin/Rome: Marietti (dates vary).
- Parma *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Doctoris Angelici, Ordinis Praedicatorum Opera omnia*. Parma: Typis Petri Fiaccadori, 1852–1873.

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# INTRODUCTION

## A. Why Study Aquinas's Theory of Self-Knowledge?

Thomas Aquinas's theory of knowledge can constitute something of an embarrassment even to the most ardent of Thomists. It can seem unwieldy and hyper-mechanistic, relying on a bewildering multiplicity of factors such as interior and exterior senses, phantasms, intelligible species, active and possible intellects with their twofold operations, intellectual memory, *conversio*, *reflexio*, etc. One might therefore be inclined to record it merely as a historical relic isolated from the issues raised by later epistemologies, demonstrating the coherence of his principles with each other, but ignoring the need to show their coherence with reality and their relation to other acceptable epistemological solutions. Or, one might be inclined to abandon it altogether. Either way, it is tempting to treat Thomas's theory of knowledge as irrelevant to contemporary inquiry into knowledge.

This attitude is especially manifest when we turn to the question of self-knowledge, an issue which rose to prominence with the Cartesian shift. A number of problems complicate any attempt to ascertain the Angelic Doctor's views on knowledge of self. First, on the textual level, Thomas's comments on the topic of self-knowledge are limited in number and sometimes cryptic. It is hard to piece together a complete theory of self-knowledge from the scanty textual evidence, even with the help of texts on divine or angelic self-knowledge. Consequently, one of the goals of the present study is to conduct a careful analysis of all Thomas's texts on self-knowledge, in order to trace the precise outline of his theory of self-knowledge and establish its internal coherence, as well as its relationship to his broader theory of knowledge.

A second problem is that it is not always clear how Thomas's discussions of self-knowledge relate to human experience. Ordinary speech refers to self-knowledge by a plethora of terms such as "consciousness," "self-consciousness," "self-awareness," "awareness," "self-image," and, of course, "self-knowledge." These terms are used inconsistently to refer to a variety of psychological phenomena, ranging from the state of sensory consciousness which disappears under anaesthesia or during sleep, to the unitary perception of the self as the subject of all one's actions (as distinct from the objects of these actions), to the conscious consideration of one's own actions, to the knowledge of one's own self as distinct from other selves, to the ability to define what kind of being one is in relation to other beings. A second goal of the present study, then, is to determine the specific nature of the kinds of self-knowledge that Thomas recognizes and the degree to which it is successful in accounting for human experience.

In addition to these two systematic problems, a host of conceptual issues rear their ugly heads once one begins to start probing the finer points of Thomas's theory, especially with respect to the soul's awareness of its own individual existence. For one thing, the positing of this awareness appears to be in conflict with the general Thomistic theory of knowledge, in which knowledge of essence logically precedes knowledge of existence. Again, Thomas persists in using the language of intuition when discussing knowledge of the soul as an individual, even though it seems fairly clear that Thomas does not hold a theory of intuitive cognition. Yet again, Thomas's discussion of one's habitual individual knowledge of oneself is puzzling, and its obscurities hamper efforts to determine whether Thomas has a viable theory of implicit self-awareness. Misinterpretations of Thomas's

views on the soul's awareness of itself as an individual existent are primarily responsible, I believe, for the general contemporary neglect of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge. But other aspects of his theory raise significant questions too. To what degree can the soul know its own nature? What is the mysterious judgment of the soul's nature, which appears only in two texts? What is the role of self-knowledge in everyday judgment? And does Thomas have anything to contribute to the modern discussion of the psychological subjecthood of the human person? Thus a third goal of this dissertation is to examine these and other problems in detail, in the hope of finding satisfactory solutions.

## **B. *Status quaestionis* and Structure of the Present Work**

Faced with such problems, or even unaware of their existence, Thomistic scholarship has tended to neglect Aquinas's theory of self-knowledge, assuming that he could have little of interest to say about what is generally considered a modern problem. In many cases, commentators on Thomas's theory of knowledge who have paused for a closer look at self-knowledge have tended to be overly rigorous in applying to Thomistic self-knowledge the Aristotelian dictum, "The intellect knows itself just as it knows other things (*sicut alia*)"<sup>1</sup> and the Scholastic maxim that nothing comes to the human intellect except through the senses.<sup>2</sup> This approach is insensitive to the flexibility by which the Thomistic principles of

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.217:109–110]: "[I]ntellectus possibilis habet aliquid quod facit ipsum intelligibilem sicut et alia"; referenced also in *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3; *DV* 1.6, ad 2, and 10.8; *SCG* 3.46; and *QDDA* 16, ad 8.

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the only articulation of this maxim comes in *DV* 2.3, ad 19, where Thomas clearly applies it to our cognition of material things: "[G]radatim enim res a sua materialitate ad immaterialitatem intellectus deducitur, scilicet mediante immaterialitate sensus; et ideo oportet ut quod est in intellectu nostro, prius in sensu fuerit; quod in intellectu divino locum non habet." Everywhere else, he merely posits a dependence of the human intellect on sensation without specifying the exact nature of this dependency. See for instance *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 6.2 [Leon. 50.164:71–72]: "Principium igitur cuiuslibet nostrae cognitionis est



knowledge apply to different types of known objects, and it results in treating the human self as simply one more matter-form composite known by the human intellect.

Consequently, these authors tend to conclude that there is no direct or immediate knowledge of self in Aquinas (usually without any clear definition of “direct” or “immediate”). Some have even gone so far as to hold that for Thomas, self-knowledge is abstracted from sensory experience, or that the soul infers its own existence from its acts.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, there have been some thorough and insightful investigations of Thomas’s theory of self-knowledge. The earliest such treatments date from approximately 1923–33, when interest in this topic briefly sparked among French Thomists. The often vitriolic debate was occasioned by the work of Blaise Romeyer and Ambroise Gardeil, who began investigating Aquinas’s theory of self-knowledge in order to defend certain controversial conclusions concerning whether the human intellect enjoys innate knowledge of God or proper knowledge of immaterial being. Authors such as Simonne Leuret, E. Peillaube, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, and M.-D. Roland-Gosselin registered fierce opposition, and the battle raged on for a decade.<sup>4</sup> It appears that for the most part, both sides agreed on the outlines of Thomas’s theory of self-knowledge, but were divided as to the

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in sensu,” a formulation that is repeated almost verbatim in, for example *DV* 12.3, ad 2 [Leon. 22/2.378:379–82]; *DV* 18.2, ad 7 [Leon. 22/2.537:160–3]; and *ST* Ia, 84.6 [Leon. 5.323–24].

<sup>3</sup> The most notable examples are Marie-Dominique Roland-Gosselin, “Peut-on parler d’intuition intellectuelle dans la philosophie thomiste?” in *Philosophia Perennis*, ed. F.-J. von Rintelen, vol. 2 (Regensburg: Habel, 1930), 729–30: “. . . à partir de ces expériences multiples [des actes], [il s’agit] de se former une idée de leur principe réel. . . . L’habitude aidant, la ‘perception’ du moi substantiel dans ses actes, devient si familière et si rapide qu’elle prend les apparences d’une ‘intuition’ véritable”; and Martin Grabmann, *Thomas Aquinas: His Personality and Thought*, trans. Virgil Michel (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1928), 148, who argues that the soul knows itself “by means of its acts, by way of logical conclusion.” John D. McKian also uses language that lends itself to this interpretation in, “The Metaphysics of Introspection According to St. Thomas,” *New Scholasticism* 15 (1941): 103: “When a man *considers* the operations which his soul is performing and *comes to know* that he has a soul which is thus displaying itself in act, he may be said to have actual knowledge of what is proper to his own soul [emphasis mine].”

<sup>4</sup> For the texts involved in this discussion, and an overview of the positions outlined, see Chapter II, §B.2, notes 78, 79, and 81.

vocabulary that should be used to describe this theory and the conclusions that could be drawn therefrom. While the debate seems to have ended without clear resolution, it has been cast as definitively dispelling any shadow of intuitionism in Thomas's theory of self-knowledge,<sup>5</sup> and its often awkward handling of the issues involved have not been adequately reexamined.

After this rousing but ultimately inconclusive interlude, Thomas's theory of self-knowledge was only revisited occasionally in a handful of articles aimed at specific aspects of the theory.<sup>6</sup> Most recently, however, two noteworthy attempts have been made by François-Xavier Putallaz (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 1991) and Richard T. Lambert (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 2007) to rehabilitate Thomas's theory of self-knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Their work has been indispensable in reestablishing the framework of Thomas's theory of

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<sup>5</sup> See for instance, Carl N. Still, "Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge" (doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), 8; and Mark Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Of particular note, one might mention Jourdain Wébert, "'Reflexio': Études sur les opérations réflexives dans la psychologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin," in *Mélanges Mandonnet*, vol. 1 (Paris: Vrin, 1930), 286–325; McKian, "The Metaphysics of Introspection," 89–117; Joseph de Finance, "Cogito cartésien et réflexion thomiste," *Archives de philosophie* 16 (1946): 137–321; John Ruane, "Self-Knowledge and the Spirituality of the Soul in St. Thomas," *The New Scholasticism* 32 (1958): 425–42; James Reichmann, "The 'Cogito' in St. Thomas: Truth in Aquinas and Descartes," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 26 (1986): 341–52; the three articles by Richard T. Lambert cited in footnote 7 below; Jan Szaif, "Selbsterkenntnis: Thomas contra Augustinum," *Theologie und Philosophie: Vierteljahresschrift* 74 (1999): 321–37; Johannes Brachtendorf, "Selbsterkenntnis: Thomas von Aquin als Kritiker Augustins?" *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 109.2 (2002): 255–70. In addition, the following works that deal with self-knowledge tangentially are of note: Estanislao Arroyabe, *Das Reflektierende Subjekt: zur Erkenntnistheorie des Thomas von Aquin* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988); R. Fetz, *Ontologie der Innerlichkeit. Reditio completa und processio interior bei Thomas d'Aquin* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1975). W. Klünker's short treatise *Selbsterkenntnis der Seele: zur Anthropologie des Thomas von Aquin*, *Beiträge zur Bewusstseinsgeschichte* 7 (Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben, 1990), despite its title, focuses more on the development of the notion of the "I" in the writings of Thomas and the immortality of the soul.

<sup>7</sup> François-Xavier Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion en Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1991); Richard T. Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas: The Angelic Doctor on the Soul's Knowledge of Itself* (Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2007). Lambert's book incorporates his three previous articles on self-knowledge: "A Textual Study of Aquinas' Comparison of the Intellect to Prime Matter," *The New Scholasticism* 56 (1982): 80–99; "Habitual Knowledge of the Soul in Thomas Aquinas," *The Modern Schoolman* 60 (1982): 1–19; and "Nonintentional Experience of Oneself in Thomas Aquinas," *New Scholasticism* 59 (1985): 253–75.

self-knowledge and offering a more nuanced analysis of his theory. Yet considerable work remains to be done.

In Putallaz's case, his analysis is sometimes distorted by his emphasis on reflexion or the "complete return," which leads him to minimize the significance of actual and habitual perception of the soul's existence. Consequently, Putallaz ignores a whole set of important problems relating to these two types of perception. For instance, he fails to note the significance of certain peculiarities in Thomas's vocabulary of self-knowledge; the psychological structure whereby the human soul can perceive a singular immaterial existent; the obscure distinction between implicit and explicit self-perception in Thomas's texts, which depends on his seldom-studied theory of attention; and the problem of what it would mean for the human intellect to intuit itself, a problem which must be settled before one can examine whether the soul has an intuition of its own existence. As a result, he misinterprets certain key distinctions in the soul's perception of its existing self. In the present dissertation, I seek to fill these lacunae. I will also argue that Putallaz's interpretation of the "complete return" is insufficiently textually grounded and contrary to Thomas's intention.

Lambert does address some of the problems that Putallaz neglects. But his treatment is hampered by a failure to contextualize self-knowledge adequately within Thomas's general theory of knowledge, as well as a tendency to dismiss certain key Thomistic metaphysical and epistemological principles without adequately considering their implications. As a result, he takes Thomas's theory of self-knowledge to be much less coherent (both internally and in the context of Thomistic metaphysics and epistemology) than it actually is. Moreover, Lambert's interpretation contains certain systemic flaws in its

treatment of the way in which the soul is revealed to itself in its acts and the role of intelligible species in self-knowledge, which leads him to some puzzling conclusions concerning the intentionality of self-knowledge.

There has therefore yet been no treatment of Thomas's complete theory of self-knowledge and the full panoply of problems that it raises, contextualized in his broader theory of knowledge. The present dissertation aims to provide precisely such a treatment. Its structure is as follows:

The first chapter briefly examines the Augustinian and Aristotelian theories from which Thomas draws his doctrine on self-knowledge. It then reviews all the Thomistic texts on self-knowledge, focusing especially on the major treatments in his Commentary on the *Sentences*, *De veritate* 10.8, *Summa contra gentiles* 3.46, *Summa theologiae* Ia, 87.1, as well as his Commentaries on *De anima* and *Liber de causis*.

The next three chapters investigate in depth each of Thomas's four types of self-knowledge, outlined most famously in *DV* 10.8. Chapter II studies the first type of self-knowledge, which has garnered the most interest and discussion: actual perception of one's own existence. It focuses on two key areas that have been insufficiently studied. First, what does it mean for the soul to know itself, an immaterial, existing singular? Second, what is the significance for Thomas of terms such as *percipere*, *intueri*, *experiri* and their implications for the possibility of human intuition? Much disagreement over this type of self-knowledge stems from a failure to define what "intuition" would be for Thomas. I argue, against much of the secondary literature, that according to at least one very precise sense of "intuition," Thomas would hold that the soul perceives its own existence intuitively,

but not innately: the soul knows itself directly and immediately, without needing to form a species of itself, though it must be actualized by knowing an external object in order to know itself.

The third chapter examines Thomas's second type of self-knowledge: the soul's habitual knowledge of its singular self by its own presence to itself. An exploration of Thomas's teaching on habits and intellectual "presence" will help to pinpoint the exact coordinates of habitual self-knowledge between potency and actuality, as well as its relation to the essence of the soul. The last part of the chapter explores a question that has been surprisingly neglected: Does Thomas provide an account of the soul's implicit awareness of itself as subject of all its acts, so as to explain the unity of consciousness and human subjectivity? And if so, should such an implicit self-awareness be identified with habitual self-awareness?

The fourth chapter examines the third and fourth types of self-knowledge: apprehension of the soul's nature and judgment of the truth of this knowledge in light of divine truth. My main goals in this chapter are, first, to examine the process by which one comes to know the soul's nature; second, to articulate the relationship between perceiving one's singular existing soul and knowing its nature; and third, to suggest an account of the mysterious judgment of the soul's nature. In the final part of the chapter, I offer a critique of Putallaz's interpretation of *reditio completa* as a fifth type of self-knowledge and suggest an alternative interpretation.

The fifth chapter takes a wider perspective on the role of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge in his theory of human personhood. Here I seek to show that self-knowledge is

an ineliminable component both of his cognitive theory and his theory of human nature, and that Thomas's discussion of self-knowledge also provides the resources to define the human person in a psychological way as a self-aware subject. This psychological account complements his much better-known metaphysical definition of personhood and earns Thomas's theory of personhood the right to be taken seriously in contemporary discussions.

### **C. Thomas's General Theory of Knowledge**

Before plunging into Thomas's treatment of self-knowledge, we should take a moment to sketch the general theory of knowledge that serves as its context. On the one hand, the principles of Thomas's theory of knowledge apply just as much to self-knowledge as to knowledge of any object. Yet since certain special conditions obtain when the soul knows itself (for instance, the soul is immaterial, singular, and already identical with itself as knowing subject), these principles will produce some unexpected results in the realm of self-knowledge. A summary of the relevant principles of Thomas's theory of knowledge will therefore set the stage for this dissertation's investigation of self-knowledge. I will refer to these principles occasionally and return to them in the conclusion in order to illuminate the way in which Thomas's theory of self-knowledge is consistent with his general theory of knowledge.

#### ***1. Knowledge of Material Objects***

Thomas's theory of knowledge hinges on the fact that man is not a pilot-soul governing a body with which it is inconveniently associated (Plato), nor an animal body

with a special connection to a separate Intellect (Averroës).<sup>8</sup> Rather, man is a hylomorphic body-soul unity, a single substance with a single *esse*,<sup>9</sup> with the soul as the form or act of the body.<sup>10</sup> The body fulfils and perfects the soul, enabling the soul to accomplish its proper operations.<sup>11</sup>

The substantial unity between body and soul is reflected in the type of knowledge of which the human being is capable. For Thomas, the fact that the human intellective soul is the form of a material body means that the body is *for the good of the soul*: the human intellect is such that it is perfected by union with a body. “[T]he human intellect is inherently ordered toward body and the sensible world. That is its proper environment.”<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the knowledge proper to man requires the cooperation of the body. Whereas the general function of intellects is to know universal being,<sup>13</sup> the human intellect is specially designed to know, in a universal way, quiddities as they exist *in material things*, so

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<sup>8</sup> See his treatment of both views in *ST* Ia, 76.1 [Leon. 5.209].

<sup>9</sup> For helpful discussions of the relationship between body and soul in Thomas, see Gilles Émery, “L’unité de l’homme, âme et corps, chez S. Thomas d’Aquin,” *Nova et Vetera* 75, no. 2 (2000): 53–76; B. Carlos Bazán, “The Human Soul: Form and Substance? Thomas Aquinas’ Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism,” *Archives d’histoire doctrine et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 64 (1997): 95–126; and Gyula Klima, “Man = Body + Soul: Aquinas’s Arithmetic of Human Nature,” in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), esp. 263. For texts, see *ST* Ia–IIae, 17.4, where Aquinas identifies the human body-soul unity as an example of something which is substantially one, with two really distinct principles. See also *De unit. int.* 1 [Leon. 43.298:648–9], which states that the *esse* of the immortal soul is shared by the whole composite: “[C]ompositum est per esse [animae].” Klima emphasizes that the one *esse* indicates an absolute oneness of substance: “But body and soul, as distinguished in the exclusive senses of these terms, have the same unique act of substantial existence, namely, the life of a living body; therefore, body and soul are one being, one entity, absolutely speaking, not two entities” (264).

<sup>10</sup> *ST* Ia, 76.8, ad 2 [Leon. 5.233]: “Anima est actus corporis organici, sicut primi et proportionati perfectibilis.” See also *CT* 1.85 [Leon. 42.110:160–61]: “[I]n diffinitione anime cadit corpus.”

<sup>11</sup> *In Eph.* 1:23, c. 1, lect. 8 [Marietti, 18]: “Nam corpus est factum propter animam, et non e converso. Unde secundum hoc corpus naturale est quaedam plenitudo animae. Nisi enim essent membra cum corpore completa, non posset anima suas operationes plene exercere.” See Émery, “L’unité de l’homme,” 66–7.

<sup>12</sup> Reichmann, “The ‘Cogito’ in Thomas and Descartes,” 342. See *ST* Ia, 89.1 [Leon. 5.371]: “Ad hoc ergo quod perfectam et propriam cognitionem de rebus habere possent, sic naturaliter sunt institutae ut corporibus uniantur, et sic ab ipsis rebus sensibilibus propriam de eis cognitionem accipiant . . . Sic ergo patet quod propter melius animae est ut corpori uniatur, et intelligat per conversionem ad phantasmata.”

<sup>13</sup> *ST* Ia, 79.2 [Leon. 5.259]: “Intellectus . . . habet operationem circa ens in universali.”

that it must depend on bodily senses and phantasms for access to its proper objects.<sup>14</sup>

This reason is one of the sources for Aquinas's famous insistence that all knowledge begins in the senses.<sup>15</sup>

An intellect, however, can only know insofar as it takes on the form of the thing known,<sup>16</sup> and an immaterial being cannot be informed by a material being: intelligibility is in proportion to immateriality.<sup>17</sup> In order for the quiddity of a material thing to be known by the immaterial intellect, therefore, a process of dematerialization must occur. The process begins when the sense organs belonging to the external senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell) receive the form (color, sound, etc.) proper to each sense.<sup>18</sup> These forms are then relayed to the brain, the organ of the internal senses. The most important internal sense, common sense, has the task of connecting these disparate forms with each other, so that we can recognize, for instance, that the sounds we hear belong to the same object that we are now seeing.<sup>19</sup> The common sense unifies the forms into a single whole containing all the

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<sup>14</sup> See *ST Ia*, 85.1 [Leon. 5.331]: "Intellectus autem humanus medio modo se habet: non enim est actus alicuius organi, sed tamen est quaedam virtus animae, quae est forma corporis . . . Et ideo proprium eius est cognoscere formam in materia quidem corporali individualiter existentem, non tamen prout est in tali materia;" and *ST Ia*, 75.6, ad 3 [Leon. 5.204]: "[I]ntelligere cum phantasmate est propria operatio animae secundum quod corpori est unita."

<sup>15</sup> See the texts cited above in note 2.

<sup>16</sup> See *ST Ia*, 75.5 [Leon. 5.202]: "Sic autem cognoscitur unumquodque, sicut forma eius est in cognoscente"; *ST Ia*, 14.1, ad 3 [Leon. 4.167]: "[S]citur enim est in sciente secundum modum scientis." The classic medieval definition of knowledge is *assimilatio intellectus ad rem*: see the exhaustive list of references to this phrase in Thomas's writings, in *De la vérité: Q. 2, La science en Dieu, Thomas d'Aquin*, trans. and comm. Serge-Thomas Bonino (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1996), 380–1, n. 7.

<sup>17</sup> *ST Ia*, 85.1, s.c. [Leon. 5.330]: "Sed contra est quod dicitur in III *de Anima*, quod *sicut res sunt separabiles a materia, sic circa intellectum sunt*. Ergo oportet quod materialia intelligantur in quantum a materia abstrahuntur, et a similitudinibus materialibus, quae sunt phantasmata" (see Aristotle, *De an.* 3.4). Also *ST Ia*, 84.6 [Leon. 5.323]: "[I]ncorporeum non potest immutari a corporeo."

<sup>18</sup> See *In De sensu* 1 [Leon. 45/2.12:52–8]: "Virtus autem sensitiva, quae inest animalibus, est quidem capax extrinsecorum, set in singulari tantum; unde et quandam immaterialitatem habet in quantum est susceptiva specierum sensibilium sine materia, infimam tamen in ordine cognoscendum in quantum huiusmodi species recipere non potest nisi in organo corporali."

<sup>19</sup> The common sense is the "communis radix et principium exteriorum sensuum" (*ST Ia*, 78.4, ad 1 [Leon. 5.256]). Closely related to this function is common sense's role as the center of sense-consciousness;



particular sensible characteristics reported by the senses. The common sense is able to unify all the sense impressions because it “senses” them all: “it is the sense by which man senses that he senses, giving him his first awareness of his own sensitive activity, uniting and binding the various activities of the senses by consciousness in the one sentient subject.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the common sense is the principle of sense consciousness, the state of communication between senses and brain, which depends on the proper functioning of the brain (organ of the common sense).<sup>21</sup>

From the unified whole produced by the common sense, the imagination produces and stores a phantasm that it can dismantle and recombine with other phantasms creatively.<sup>22</sup> Memory adds the intention of past occurrence to what is preserved in a phantasm and stores it in a remembered time-sequence.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the estimative sense (corresponding to what we know as instinct in animals, and called the “cogitative sense” in man) perceives intentions of harmfulness or benefit, which are not perceptible by the

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see note 20 below, as well as Edmund Joseph Ryan, *The Role of the “Sensus Communis” in the Psychology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Carthagen, Oh.: Messenger Press, 1951).

<sup>20</sup> Michael Stock, “Sense Consciousness According to St. Thomas,” *The Thomist* 21 (1958): 419. See *ST Ia*, 78.4, ad 2 [Leon. 5.256]: “Unde oportet ad sensum communem pertinere discretionis iudicium, ad quem referantur, sicut ad communem terminum, omnes apprehensiones sensuum; a quo etiam percipiuntur intentiones sensuum, sicut cum aliquis videt se videre.”

<sup>21</sup> This explains why one loses consciousness in suffering a severe concussion. We might consequently be tempted to see in the common sense some sort of self-awareness, but although it constitutes the most basic form of consciousness, one which we share with animals, the common sense is only a sensible power of a material organ (the brain). Therefore, lacking immateriality, it cannot bend back upon itself to be conscious of itself, which is what is properly required for self-awareness (See Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 53–4). Only an immaterial substance, the intellectual soul, has the ability to bend back in order to be conscious of itself. Consequently, we leave common sense aside since it could constitute an entire topic for discussion in its own right.

<sup>22</sup> *ST Ia*, 84.6, ad 2 [Leon. 5.324]. Whereas Avicenna holds that a separate faculty, phantasy, recombines phantasms, Thomas holds that in man, imagination performs this function; see *ST Ia*, 78.4 [Leon. 5.256].

<sup>23</sup> *ST Ia*, 78.4 [Leon. 5.256]; *In De mem.* 1 [Leon. 45/2.103:1–106:198].

exterior or other interior senses, moving sensible beings towards the good or away from the harmful.<sup>24</sup> These intentions too are stored in memory.

All the stages of knowledge described so far take place on the level of sense-knowledge, which is shared with animals. But in man, a further step occurs, that of intellection. The human intellect has two powers, which Thomas calls the “possible intellect” and the “active intellect.” The human intellect is fundamentally a passive power in the order of operation, since passivity is its normal state of existence: as the lowest of the intellects, it exists by default in potency to its act of understanding until it is actualized by the form of the thing known.<sup>25</sup> But the phantasm cannot actualize the intellect, since it is still a material image produced by a material organ: the object remains potentially intelligible even when sensed. Some agent must intervene in order to actualize both the object’s potential intelligibility and the intellect’s potency-for-knowing in the one act of knowing. Thus Thomas postulates an active power in the intellect, the “agent intellect,” which strips away all matter from the phantasm, thus abstracting the immaterial form.<sup>26</sup> Because matter is the individuating principle of material objects, this abstraction results in

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<sup>24</sup> See *ST* Ia, 78.4 [Leon. 5.256]; *ST* Ia, 79.2, ad 2 [Leon. 5.260].

<sup>25</sup> See *ST* Ia, 79.2 [Leon. 5.259–60]: “Intellectus autem humanus, qui est infimus in ordine intellectuum, et maxime remotus a perfectione divini intellectus, est in potentia respectu intelligibilium, et in principio est *sicut tabula rasa in qua nihil est scriptum*, ut Philosophus dicit in III *de Anima*. . . . Sic igitur patet quod intelligere nostrum est *quoddam pati*, secundum tertium modum passionis. Et per consequens intellectus est potentia passiva.”

<sup>26</sup> *ST* Ia, 79.3 [Leon. 5.264]: “Nihil autem reducitur de potentia in actum, nisi per aliquod ens actu . . . . Oportebat igitur ponere aliquam virtutem ex parte intellectus, quae faceret intelligibilia in act, per abstractionem specierum a conditionibus materialibus. Et haec est necessitas ponendi intellectum agentem.” See also *ST* Ia, 84.2 [Leon. 5.315]: “Non autem cognoscitur aliquid secundum quod est in potentia, sed solum secundum quod est actu . . . unde nec ipsa potentia cognoscitur nisi per actum.” The existence of the agent intellect allows Thomas to hold that although the senses are the origin of all our knowledge, the intellect enters actively into knowing as a cause: “[S]ensitiva cognitio non est tota causa intellectualis cognitionis.” (*ST* Ia, 84.6, ad 3 [Leon. 5.324]). See also *DV* 10.6 [Leon. 22/2.311:96–313:223], on the mind’s active role.

an intelligible species with only universal qualities.<sup>27</sup> At the instant of abstraction by the agent intellect, the form of the object becomes intellectually accessible, or present, via what Thomas refers to as the intelligible species. At the instant that the agent intellect abstracts all materiality from the phantasm, the conditions for knowing are fulfilled: an object is made present to the possible intellect in an immaterial way, informing and actualizing the possible intellect. As soon as the possible intellect becomes one with the object known, informed with its very form by means of the intelligible species, intellectual knowledge occurs.<sup>28</sup>

Since the Thomistic theory of species could be the subject of an entire discussion in its own right, I shall simply highlight one point that is important for our understanding of the Thomistic theory of self-knowledge. The intelligible species is not the *object* of the intellect, but the *means* whereby understanding occurs. Through the species, we understand the object.<sup>29</sup> Thomas likens the intellect to prime matter, with the species as its actualizing form, making it conformed to the thing which is known.<sup>30</sup> The species makes knowledge possible by bringing both the intellect and the known object to a point of actualization

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<sup>27</sup> See for instance *ST* Ia, 85.2, ad 2 [Leon. 5.334]: “[Q]uod humanitas apprehendatur sine individualibus conditionibus, quod est ipsam abstrahi, ad quod sequitur intentio universalitatis, accidit humanitati secundum quod percipitur ab intellectu, in quo est similitudo naturae speciei, et non individualium principiorum”; and *ST* Ia, 85.1 [Leon. 5.331].

<sup>28</sup> See *ST* Ia, 75.5 [Leon. 5.202]: “Sic autem cognoscitur unumquodque, sicut forma eius est in cognoscente.” By actualizing the intellect with its own form and act, the species perfects it: “per hoc quod [intellectus] est in potentia, differt ab intelligibili, et assimilatur ei per speciem intelligibilem, quae est similitudo rei intellectae; et perficitur per ipsam, sicut potentia per actum” (*ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 2 [Leon. 4.169]). See also *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.356]: “[I]ntellectus in actu est intellectum in actu, propter similitudinem rei intellectae, quae est forma intellectus in actu”; and *DV* 10.4, ad 5 [Leon. 22/2.308:176–80]. Reichmann, “The ‘Cogito’ in Thomas and Descartes,” 342, aptly summarizes: “[A]ctual knowing only takes place when the receptive intellect receives an intelligibility. This occurs through the agent intellect’s illumining the sensory experience.”

<sup>29</sup> *SCG* 1.53 [Leon. 13.150]: “[C]onsiderandum est quod res exterior intellecta a nobis in intellectu nostro non existit secundum propriam naturam, sed oportet quod species eius sit in intellectu nostro, per quam fit intellectus in actu. Existens autem in actu per huiusmodi speciem sicut per propriam formam, intelligit rem ipsam”; see also *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.334]: “Et ideo dicendum est quod species intelligibilis se habet ad intellectum ut quo intelligit intellectus.”

<sup>30</sup> See for instance *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 3 [Leon. 4.169] and 79.2 [Leon. 5.259].

wherein they can become one in the act of knowledge: “the *species intelligibilis* [is] at the *origin*, in the one who understands, of understanding.”<sup>31</sup> Knowledge occurs in the identity between intellect and object, an identity which the species makes possible by rendering the object intelligible (immaterially present) to the intellect. (For more on species, see Chapter II, §C.2.b below.)

The intellection process does not necessarily end when the intelligible species informs the intellect. If intellectual knowledge of a singular is to occur, the intellect must turn back towards the phantasm (*conversio ad phantasmata*), so as to connect the universal with the individual thing apprehended by the senses.<sup>32</sup> The *conversio* guarantees a unified experience of the world, explaining why, if intellect grasps only universals, I can “think” about this individual tree or person.<sup>33</sup> Our ability to think about particulars should not be surprising unless we mistakenly reduce “thinking” to intellective acts, as though the external senses conveyed a raw stream of data straight to the intellect for sorting and analysis. Rather, between sense data and intellection there is sense knowledge,<sup>34</sup> the foundation of intellectual knowledge, and to which the intellect must turn back, unifying human knowledge in a manner appropriate to the hylomorphic unity of body and soul which is man.<sup>35</sup> All

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<sup>31</sup> Lawrence Dewan, “Saint Thomas, Ideas, and Immediate Knowledge,” *Dialogue* 18 (1979): 396–400, here 400.

<sup>32</sup> See *ST* Ia, 84.7 [Leon. 5.325]: “[N]ecesse est ad hoc quod intellectus actu intelligat suum obiectum proprium, quod convertat se ad phantasmata, ut speculetur naturam universalem in particulari existentem.”

<sup>33</sup> See *DV* 10.5 [Leon. 22/2.308–10:1–135], where Thomas describes the *conversio* as the mind knowing singulars “per quandam reflexionem” [lines 74–75].

<sup>34</sup> Thomas actually uses the term “sense knowledge” (*sensitiva cognitio*). See for instance *ST* Ia, 84.6, ad 3 [Leon. 5.324]. See also Bonino, *La science en Dieu*, 391, n. 42.

<sup>35</sup> See John F. Wippel, “Thomas Aquinas on the Separated Soul’s Natural Knowledge,” in *Thomas Aquinas: Approaches to Truth*, ed. James McEvoy and Michael Dunne (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 119: “[T]he human soul is the form of the body. As such, its operation must be the operation of the entire human being. Therefore the body shares in this operation, not as an instrument by means of which the soul acts, but rather by presenting an object to the intellect in a phantasm.” In postulating the *conversio*, Thomas recognizes the co-knowing that takes place on the level of the body: knowledge is an operation of the whole man.

animals, including humans, perceive individuals through the senses.<sup>36</sup> For humans, however, the sense-experience of *this* individual tree is enhanced by the added intellection of its tree-nature, shared in common with all other trees.<sup>37</sup> The *conversio ad phantasmata* completes the interrelationship of sense and intellect in human knowledge: in turning back towards the phantasm, the intellect adds the dimension of quiddity to the experience already taking place on the sense level, to produce a single, complete experience of the tree,<sup>38</sup> an experience in which “the universal is known according to reason; but the singular, according to sense.”<sup>39</sup> The unity of this sensual-intellectual experience befits the being whose substance is a unity of soul and body.<sup>40</sup> (More on *conversio* in Chapter IV, §B.1.a below.)

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<sup>36</sup> See *In De sensu* 1 [Leon. 45/2.12:44–54]: “Attingit enim animal ad infimum gradum cognoscencium. Que quidem aliis rebus cognitione carentibus preminent in hoc quod plura encia in se continere possunt et ita virtus eorum ostenditur esse capacior et ad plura se extendens; et quanto quidem aliquod cognoscens universalior habet rerum comprehensionem, tanto virtus eius est absolutior et immaterialior et perfectior. Virtus autem sensitiva, que inest animalibus, est quidem capax extrinsecorum, set in singulari tantum.” A misunderstanding of this principle leads to the notion that animals have only impressions of colour and sound; but any dog-owner knows that animals perceive individuals as individuals. Human beings achieve the same level of knowledge in terms of the senses—what is unique about us is that we are able to understand the *nature* of the particular.

<sup>37</sup> See *ST* Ia, 78.1 [Leon. 5.251]: “Uno modo, secundum quod nata est animae coniungi et in anima esse per suam similitudinem. Et quantum ad hoc, sunt duo genera potentialium: scilicet *sensitivum*, respectu obiecti minus communis, quod est corpus sensibile; et *intellectivum*, respectu obiecti communissimi, quod est ens universale.”

<sup>38</sup> In *DV* 10.6 [Leon. 22/2.312:130–32], Thomas criticizes a false view of human intellection, “quia secundum hoc non esset necessaria dependentia inter cognitionem mentis humane et virtutes sensitivas.” See also *ST* IIa–IIae, 173.2 [Leon. 10.386]: “Repraesentantur autem menti humane res aliquae secundum aliquas species: et secundum naturae ordinem, primo oportet quod species praesententur sensui; secundo, imaginationi; tertio, intellectui possibili, qui immutatur a speciebus phantasmatum secundum illustrationem intellectus agentem.” This statement, indicating the successive dematerialization of the species beginning in sensation and then passing on to the interior senses and to the intellect, implies that these three stages are three increasingly penetrating modes in which something is “represented to the mind.” Some kind of knowledge takes place at each stage, of which intellectual knowledge is the last.

<sup>39</sup> *ST* Ia, 86.1, s.c. [Leon. 5.347]: “[U]niversale secundum rationem est notum, singulare autem secundum sensum,” quoting Aristotle, *Physics* 1.5; compare the almost identical statement in *DV* 10.5, s.c. [Leon. 22/2.308:38–9].

<sup>40</sup> See Gerard Verbeke, “A Crisis of Individual Consciousness: Aquinas’ View,” *The Modern Schoolman* 69/3–4 (1992): 393: “Aquinas emphasizes this unity by showing that there is no break, no chasm between corporeal and spiritual activities in man, they are closely linked together. Among human activities there is not a single one that is merely spiritual, not even self-consciousness. . . . In this perspective each individual is a unitary being in which the corporeal and the spiritual work together and are combined to a single substance.” In a similar vein, Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 63, notes that the senses are transformed

## 2. *Knowledge of Immaterial Substances*

So far, we have discussed knowledge of material objects. One might wonder, however, whether there is some sort of different way in which the human intellect can know immaterial substances (especially since the soul itself is an immaterial individual). A first glance might suggest that Thomas's theory cannot account for knowledge of immaterial individuals, since the proper object of the human intellect is the universal in matter. But in fact, singularity is not a problem: "The singular is not incompatible with intelligibility insofar as it is a singular, but insofar as it is material, because nothing is known except immaterially. And therefore if there is some immaterial singular, such as the intellect, it is not incompatible with intelligibility."<sup>41</sup> The knowledge of immaterial singulars, then, would not require abstraction from a phantasm.<sup>42</sup>

Still, knowledge of immaterial individuals in this life can be achieved only in two ways. In the first way, the intellect can gain indirect natural knowledge of separate substances by discursively reasoning to their existence as the causes of sensibles or as exceeding them entirely.<sup>43</sup> This reasoning yields only a very restricted type of knowledge in

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and elevated by their proximity to the intellect. Sense operation is never isolated from intellection, but the two acts of the single soul, the form of a single body, combine in a single experience of an object.

<sup>41</sup> *ST Ia*, 86.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.347]: "[S]ingulare non repugnat intelligibilitati inquantum est singulare, sed inquantum est materiale, quia nihil intelligitur nisi immaterialiter. Et ideo si sit aliquod singulare immateriale, sicut est intellectus, hoc non repugnat intelligibilitati"; cf. *De unit. int.* 5 [Leon. 43.312:238–42]: "Non enim singularitas repugnat intelligibilitati, sed materialitas: unde, cum sint aliqua singularia immaterialia, sicut de substantiis separatis supra dictum est, nichil prohibet huiusmodi singularia intelligi." Failure to note this point produces the false problem that worries Anthony Kenny with respect to Thomistic self-knowledge: "Problem: we require reflection on phantasms to know individuals, and mind is an individual. But we are given no account of how reflection on phantasms helps the mind to knowledge of that individual which is itself" (*Aquinas on Mind* [New York: Routledge, 1993], 122).

<sup>42</sup> *ST Ia*, 88.1, ad 5 [Leon. 5.366]: "[N]on autem eodem modo intelliguntur a nobis substantiae materiales, quae intelliguntur per modum abstractionis; et substantiae immateriales, quae non possunt sic a nobis intelligi, quia non sunt earum aliqua phantasmata."

<sup>43</sup> *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 6.2 [Leon. 50.165:123–30]: "Set tamen ex his que sensu vel ymaginatione apprehenduntur in horum cognitionem devenimus, vel per viam causalitatis, sicut ex effectu causa perpenditur

which separate substances are known, not properly in themselves, but only by comparison to material things.<sup>44</sup> Thus we can only know that there are separate substances, but not what they are.<sup>45</sup> In a second way, which occurs only rarely, the human soul supernaturally receives divinely infused species in prophecy whereby it is enabled to know the things of God.<sup>46</sup>

Neither indirect reasoning nor supernatural infusion of species, however, seem like very helpful models for at least some of the phenomena involved in self-knowledge. Thus one might be inclined to turn to the knowledge of the separated soul for a more promising model of knowledge of immaterial individuals. In fact, once separated from the body, the soul knows some immaterial individuals (angels) directly, “through the infusion of species by God,”<sup>47</sup> in the manner of separate substances. This infusion of species is natural:

[The separated soul knows] through species participated from the infusion of divine light, of which [species] the soul partakes just as the other separate substances do, although in an inferior way. Thus as soon as it has ceased turning toward the body, it turns towards higher things. Nevertheless, [this] cognition is not unnatural for the following reason, that God is the author not only of the infusion of the light of grace but also of [the infusion of] natural light.<sup>48</sup>

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que non est effectui commensurate set excellens, vel per excessum, vel per remotionem, quando omnia que sensus vel ymaginatio appreendit a rebus huiusmodi separamus; quos modos cognoscendi divina ex sensibilibus ponit Dionysius in libro De divinis nominibus.” See also *ST* Ia, 88.1–3.

<sup>44</sup> *ST* Ia, 84.7, ad 3 [Leon. 5.326]: “[I]ncorporea, quorum non sunt phantasmata, cognoscuntur a nobis per comparationem ad corpora sensibilia . . . necesse habemus converti ad phantasmata corporum, licet ipsorum non sint phantasmata;” see also Ia, 88.2.

<sup>45</sup> See for instance *SCG* 3.45–46; *QDDA* 16.

<sup>46</sup> *ST* IIa–IIae, 173.2 [Leon. 10.386–87], where Thomas describes one of the ways in which revelations are given to prophets: “Per donum autem prophetiae confertur aliquid humanae menti supra id quod pertinet ad naturalem facultatem. . . . Repraesentantur autem divinitus menti prophetae . . . imprimendo species intelligibiles ipsi menti: sicut patet de his qui accipiunt scientiam vel sapientiam infusam, sicut Salomon et Apostoli.” See also *ST* IIIa, 10.3 [Leon. 11.151–3] and the entirety of q. 11 [Leon. 11.157–65], where Thomas describes the infused knowledge accorded to Christ, which also seems to be supernaturally given because it is not fitting that Christ’s human nature should be in potentiality to any knowledge.

<sup>47</sup> *ST* Ia, 89.4 [Leon. 5.378]: “. . . per influentiam specierum a Deo: et per istum modum intellectus potest singularia cognoscere”; see also *ST* Ia, 89.2, ad 2 [Leon. 5.375]: “[A]nima separata intelligit angelos per similitudines divinitus impressas. Quae tamen deficiunt a perfecta repraesentatione eorum, propter hoc quod animae natura est inferior quam angeli.”

<sup>48</sup> *ST* Ia, 89.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.371]: “[A]nima separata intelligit per species ex influentia divini luminis participatas, quarum anima fit particeps sicut et aliae substantiae separatae, quamvis inferiori modo. Unde tam

In the state of separation from the body, too, the soul is naturally able to know itself and other separated souls through itself, without the need for actualization from without.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, one cannot use the model of knowledge of the separated soul to justify any conclusions about our knowledge of immaterial individuals in this life since such knowledge, though natural to the soul in the afterlife, would be supernatural in this life.<sup>50</sup>

As Thomas repeatedly states, the human soul *in this life* cannot know without the body. The reason for this principle is both metaphysical and cognitive. Metaphysically, since the soul is the form of the body, it must act naturally in union with the body; thus its intellectual operation is jointly achieved by soul and body. The metaphysical status of the soul, however, changes when it is separated from the body: it exists no longer as an act informing a body, but as an inferior kind of separate substance.<sup>51</sup> Since operation follows essence, the

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cito cessante conversione ad corpus, ad superiora convertitur. Nec tamen propter hoc cognitio non est naturalis: quia Deus est auctor non solum influentiae gratuiti luminis, sed etiam naturalis"; Ia, 89.2, ad 2 [Leon. 5.375]: "[A]nima separata intelligit Angelos per similitudines divinitus impressas"; and Ia 75.6, ad 3 [Leon. 5.204]: "[I]ntelligere cum phantasmate est propria operatio animae secundum quod corpori est unita. Separata autem a corpore habebit alium modum intelligendi, similem aliis substantiis a corpore separatis."

<sup>49</sup> ST Ia, 89.2 [Leon. 5.375]: "Sed cum fuerit a corpore separata, intelliget non convertendo se ad phantasmata, sed ad ea quae sunt secundum se intelligibilia: unde seipsam per seipsam intelliget.--Est autem commune omni substantiae separatae quod *intelligat id quod est supra se, et id quod est infra se, per modum suae substantiae*, sic enim intelligitur aliquid secundum quod est in intelligente; est autem aliquid in altero per modum eius in quo est. Modus autem substantiae animae separatae est infra modum substantiae angelicae, sed est conformis modo aliarum animarum separatarum."

<sup>50</sup> The problem is aptly enunciated by Carl N. Still, "Do We Know All after Death? Thomas Aquinas on the Disembodied Soul's Knowledge," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 75 (2001): 112: "[I]f disembodiment will be the occasion of the soul's perfect self-knowledge, does this not suggest the preposterous notion that embodiment is a hindrance to perfect self-knowledge?" For a summary of the various arguments on this point, see Wippel, "On the Separated Soul's Natural Knowledge," 115–17. Most notably, Anton Pégis suggests that Thomas changed his position from an earlier belief that the separated soul's knowledge is superior because it follows the higher mode of knowing appropriate to separate substances, to the later claim in the *Summa* that the infusion of species is unnatural and therefore a lesser form of knowing ( "The Separated Soul and Its Nature in St. Thomas," in *St. Thomas Aquinas 1274–1974: Commemorative Studies*, ed. A. Maurer, vol. 1 [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974], 131–58). Wippel argues convincingly that the texts show no such change (Wippel, 116–17).

<sup>51</sup> This new metaphysical status, in fact, places the separated soul altogether outside the jurisdiction of natural philosophy: see *De unit. int.* 1 [Leon. 43.299:681–97], where Thomas says that it does not pertain to the natural philosopher to solve the question of how the soul understands when separated from the body. See also



soul now knows according to the mode of separate substances, i.e., through infused species.<sup>52</sup> Thus Thomas is right to say that infused species would be supernatural during this life, but natural to the soul apart from the body.

Similarly, on the cognitive level, the human soul needs a body in order to know because it gets a much clearer picture of individuals if its grasp of the species is conjoined with sense-knowledge of the object. God did not create the human soul as a separate substance because its intellectual weakness would allow it only a confused knowledge of the individuals within a species. Due to their superior position in the hierarchy of intellects, separate substances have a superior power of intellection by which they perceive all the singulars contained in every species they know. But although the separated human soul gains the metaphysical status of a separate substance, enjoying the more perfect *kind* of knowledge proper to separate substances, its cognitive capacities do not change. Its knowledge is not as humanly perfect as abstracted knowledge would be, since the human intellect is ill suited to perceiving individuals in species.<sup>53</sup> In its natural (and therefore optimal) embodied state, the human intellect knows material individuals through phantasms, and immaterial individuals by inference as the causes of material objects (or via infused species as a divine gift). Only when it is separated from the body and required to take on

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*QDDA* 17 [Leon. 24/1.150:132–36]: “Sua autem essentia pertinet ad genus substantiarum separatarum intellectualium et eundem modum subsistendi habet licet sit infima in hoc genere; omnes enim sunt forme subsistentes”; Ambroise Gardeil, “Examen de conscience,” *Revue thomiste* 33 (1928): 167.

<sup>52</sup> *ST* Ia, 89.1 [Leon. 5.370]: “[M]odus operandi uniuscuiusque rei sequitur modum essendi ipsius.” See Gardeil, “Examen de conscience,” 166: “À son mode d’être nouveau correspond un mode nouveau de saisir les intelligibles.”

<sup>53</sup> See *ST* Ia, 89.4 [Leon. 5.378]: “In hoc tamen est differentia inter angelos et animas separatas, quia angeli per huiusmodi species habent perfectam et propriam cognitionem de rebus, animae vero separatae confusam. Unde angeli, propter efficaciam sui intellectus, per huiusmodi species non solum naturas rerum in speciali cognoscere possunt, sed etiam singularia sub speciebus contenta. Animae vero separatae non possunt cognoscere per huiusmodi species nisi solum singularia illa ad quae quodammodo determinantur, vel per praecedentem cognitionem, vel per aliquam affectionem, vel per naturalem habitudinem, vel per divinam ordinationem: quia omne quod recipitur in aliquo, determinatur in eo secundum modum recipientis.”

another form of knowledge does the soul receive infused species naturally and thus know immaterial individuals without inferring their existence, via the species of these individuals. But as a result, in this state the human intellect is less perfected by its knowledge than it is by the knowledge it gains in its embodied state; its knowledge is less appropriate to its nature and therefore more confused, like a beginning piano student struggling to play a Mozart concerto.<sup>54</sup>

Consequently, despite the fact that in his doctrine of the separated soul Thomas demonstrates the soul's capacity for knowing angels via infused species and other separated souls through its own self without recourse to bodily images, one cannot appeal to this doctrine to show that the *embodied* soul can naturally take advantage of this capacity.<sup>55</sup> Since the natural knowledge of the separated soul follows its new mode of being, we cannot infer anything regarding self-knowledge in this life from Thomas's statements about the way the soul knows itself in the afterlife.

It is therefore evident that self-knowledge poses special difficulties in the context of Thomas's general theory of knowledge. The general principles governing knowledge do not seem to allow the human being to enjoy non-inferential natural knowledge of immaterial individuals in this life. The problem that Thomas's doctrine of human self-knowledge must solve, then, is as follows. Although a thing cannot be intelligible unless it is immaterial (or

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<sup>54</sup> See *ST* Ia, 89.1 [Leon. 5.371]: “Si igitur animae humanae sic essent institutae a Deo ut intelligerent per modum qui competit substantiis separatis, non haberent cognitionem perfectam, sed confusam in communi.”

<sup>55</sup> Still, “Do We Know All After Death?” 112: “[In *QDDA* 17] Aquinas seems to endorse for the separated soul a position he rejected as impossible for the embodied knower: that the soul should know itself through itself, or (in other words) through its own essence.” The passage in question: “Et sic se ipsam cognoscet directe, suam essentiam intuendo, et non a posteriori sicut nunc accidit. Sua autem essentia pertinet ad genus substantiarum separatarum intellectualium, et eundem modum subsistendi habet, licet sit infima in hoc genere” [Leon. 24/1.150:130–35]; see also *ST* Ia, 89.2.

in some way rendered immaterial), and immaterial beings are intelligible in themselves, it does not necessarily follow that anything immaterial is therefore intelligible *to the human intellect*.<sup>56</sup> Otherwise we would automatically know all immaterial substances, which is obviously not the case. Unlike sensibles and the sense organs, immaterial substances cannot spatially touch each other: some additional criterion must be met in order for one immaterial substance (intellect) to know another. But how are immaterial substances manifested to each other? One might suggest that they are made present to each other through some sort of species. But when the individual immaterial existent is one's own self, it seems absurd to require that the soul be made present to itself through a species. Is it not already ontologically present to itself, insofar as it *is* itself? And is this presence not amply adequate for self-knowledge?

The problem of whether immaterial individuals can be known at all, *in themselves* (*non-inferentially*), *naturally*, and *in this life*, and if so, whether they are known *with or without a species*, therefore, is precisely the central question of Thomas's position on human self-knowledge. We will see that Thomas's solution is quite ingenious.

#### **D. Procedural Observations**

A few procedural matters need to be addressed before continuing on to the major texts on self-knowledge. First, I will use "soul," "intellect," and "mind" interchangeably to

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<sup>56</sup> Blaise Romeyer, "Notre science de l'esprit humain, d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Archives de philosophie* 1 (1923): 36, notes that the human intellect's dependence on the senses may actually diminish a substance's intelligibility *for us*: "Une substance, en soi très intelligible, nous l'est, à nous, d'autant moins qu'elle surpasse davantage ces formes abstraites de l'expérience sensible qui constituent le moyen connaturel de notre intellection." See also Gardeil, "Examen de conscience," 160; and Deborah L. Black, "Consciousness and Self-Knowledge in Aquinas's Critique of Averroes's Psychology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31 (1993): 361.

describe the object of an act of self-knowledge, as Thomas himself does.<sup>57</sup> One might protest that the soul's knowledge of itself must be different from the intellect's knowledge of itself. Indeed we will see that this usage poses certain problems in navigating certain elements of Thomas's doctrine of self-knowledge (see Chapter IV, §A.1).<sup>58</sup>

It must be emphasized, nevertheless, that the changing terminology does not signal a multiplicity of kinds of self-knowledge, since the terms can be used interchangeably.<sup>59</sup> In *DV* 10.1, Thomas justifies the indifferent use of "soul," "intellect," and "mind," to refer to the soul: "But since the essences of things are unknown to us, yet their powers are made known to us through their acts, we frequently use the names of the powers and potencies to designate the essences."<sup>60</sup> The name of a power, such as "intellect," then, can stand in for the intellectual soul<sup>61</sup>; hence Aquinas freely uses *intellectus* and *mens* as equivalent terms to

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<sup>57</sup> A few examples from the *responsio* of *ST* Ia, 87.1 serve to make the point: whereas Thomas begins by asking about the self-knowledge of the intellectual soul ("Utrum anima intellectiva seipsam cognoscat . . .") [Leon. 5.355], he proceeds to use the terms *anima*, *intellectus*, and *mens* interchangeably: "seipsum intelligat intellectus noster" [Leon. 5.355]; "Socrates vel Plato percipit se habere animam intellectivam;" "naturam animae cognoscimus;" "[cognitio] de mente. . ." [Leon. 5.356]. Similarly, *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.318–26:1–570] alternates between the terms *anima*, *intellectus*, and *mens*—though whereas the first objector seems to prefer the term *mens*, Thomas himself most often uses *anima*.

<sup>58</sup> Putallaz is one of the few commentators who recognizes the problems created by Thomas's inconsistency in terminology (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 37, 75–92 and 294). Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 119, notes the difficulty in navigating Thomas's language, but holds that only the formulation "the human individual [knows] himself" is consistent with Thomas's anthropology in which the whole human being is the subject of each individual act. Black, "Aquinas's Critique of Averroes's Psychology," 358, suggests the solution that "Aquinas's general tendency to speak of the *soul's* or the *mind's* knowledge of itself, rather than the intellect's self-knowledge, seems to reflect [the indeterminacy of self-knowledge]." While she is right to note that *anima* or *mens* most often seems to be the object of self-knowledge, we cannot ignore the cases in which Aquinas mentions the intellect's knowledge of itself; and I do not think that the indeterminacy of self-knowledge is an adequate solution to the problem.

<sup>59</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 203–4, concurs.

<sup>60</sup> *DV* 10.1 [Leon. 22/2.296–7:112–16]: "Quia vero rerum essentiae sunt nobis ignotae, virtutes autem earum innotescunt nobis per actus, utimur frequenter nominibus virtutum vel potentiarum ad essentias designandas." The reason that the soul can be named by its powers is that it is a potential whole, as stated in *ST* Ia, 77.1, ad 1 [Leon. 5.237]: "Totum vero potentiale adest singulis partibus secundum totam suam essentiam, sed non secundum totam virtutem. Et ideo quodammodo potest praedicari de qualibet parte; sed non ita proprie sicut totum universale."

<sup>61</sup> See also *ST* Ia, 79.1, ad 1 [Leon. 5.258]: ". . . anima intellectiva quandoque nominatur nomine *intellectus*, quasi a principali sua virtute." This is the point that Kenny seems to miss when he argues that

refer to the soul itself.<sup>62</sup> As a result, I will use all these terms interchangeably throughout the rest of the thesis, always keeping in mind that what is meant is the soul *qua* intellective.<sup>63</sup>

Second, all the Latin texts of Thomas are taken from the Leonine edition, except where otherwise indicated. All translations of texts from primary and secondary literature are my own. Note that to translate *reflexio*, a term borrowed from the *Liber de causis*, I use the spelling “reflexion” rather than “reflection” to designate the intellect’s being bent back upon itself, so that it can be more easily distinguished from meditation or consideration.

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Aquinas’s use in q. 87 of the formulation “how does the human intellect know himself?” is “perhaps surprising in view of his correct insistence elsewhere that it is a human being who thinks and understands, just as it is a human being (and not, say, an eye) which sees” (*Aquinas on Mind*, 119).

<sup>62</sup> Of course, calling the soul “intellect” or “mind” does not imply that intellect is the substance of the soul, as in the case of God; See *ST Ia*, 79.1 [Leon. 5.258]: “In solo Deo autem idem est intelligere quod suum esse. Unde in solo Deo intellectus est eius essentia; in aliis autem creaturis intellectualibus intellectus est quaedam potentia intelligentis.” Rather, Thomas simply uses these terms, which refer to the highest power of the soul, as a shorthand to denominate the soul.

<sup>63</sup> *DV* 10.1 [Leon. 22/2.297:148]: “. . . vel si [mens] nominat essentiam, hoc non est nisi in quantum ab ea fluit talis potentia.” Gardeil, however, argues that Thomas’s interchangeable use of *anima*, *mens*, and *intellectus* in *ST Ia*, 87.1 is meant to identify the possible intellect with the essence of the soul (“Examen de conscience,” 163). There is, in fact, some scholarly disagreement over the relationship of the soul and its powers. E.-H. Wéber asserts that there is development in Thomas’s thinking in this area, and that for the later Thomas, the soul is identical with its powers (see for instance *La controverse de 1270 à l’Université de Paris et son retentissement sur la pensée de S. Thomas d’Aquin* [Paris: Vrin, 1970]; “Les discussions de 1270 à l’Université de Paris et leur influence sur la pensée philosophique de S. Thomas d’Aquin,” in *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, vol. 10 [Berlin: Zimmerman, 1976], 285–316). Others have argued against this interpretation, however; see B. Carlos Bazán, “Le dialogue philosophique entre Siger de Brabant et Thomas d’Aquin: à propos d’un ouvrage récent de E. H. Wéber,” *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 72 (1974): 55–155; John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000], 275–94). Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 82–90, seems tentatively to follow Wéber. But we can set this problem aside, since we merely need to know that Thomas *does* use the terms *intellectus*, *mens*, and *anima* interchangeably. The reason *why* he does so is outside the purview of the present study.

# **CHAPTER I**

## **HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL SOURCES**

### **FOR THOMAS’S THEORY OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

We begin our inquiry into Thomas’s theory of self-knowledge with a twofold historical treatment. In order to underscore the ingenuity with which Thomas both draws on and ultimately goes beyond his sources, it is necessary to understand his intellectual heritage. In the first section of the chapter, therefore, I will summarize the main principles of Augustine’s and Aristotle’s theories of self-knowledge, focusing on the aspects of their thought which most influenced the Latin medieval conversation on self-knowledge. Then in the second section I will outline Thomas’s appropriation of these sources and his own unique solution to the problem of self-knowledge by analyzing in detail the major texts on self-knowledge in the Thomistic corpus. This textual study will sketch the outlines of his theory, examine possible evolutions of doctrine, and lay the groundwork for the thematic examination in succeeding chapters of specific difficulties concerning Thomas’s four types of self-knowledge.

#### **A. Historical Sources for Thomas’s Doctrine**

##### ***1. Augustine***

For Augustine, self-knowledge carries not only philosophical but also theological significance, since it constitutes the means by which the soul ascends to God.<sup>1</sup> From its

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<sup>1</sup> For the soul’s ascent from outer to inner knowledge to God, see Augustine, *De Trin.* 10.5–12. Although complete self-knowledge is impeded by attachment to the body, self-knowledge offers a way of overcoming this attachment and discovering the proper relation of soul and body; see John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 146–47. For an excellent analysis of how self-knowledge leads to knowledge of God, see Gerard Verbeke, “Connaissance de soi et connaissance

dispersion among external things, the soul must return by introspection to its inmost being, where it discovers God, who is more intimate to the soul than the soul is to itself.<sup>2</sup> At the root of its being, the soul encounters the image of the Trinity in its own structure, insofar as it is the sole author of its self-knowledge and self-love, which are therefore equal to itself and form one and the same substance with itself.<sup>3</sup> Invested with such theological import, then, self-knowledge finds its place in the final books of Augustine's *De Trinitate*.<sup>4</sup>

While waxing eloquent on the role of self-knowledge and self-love in directing the soul back to its Creator, however, Augustine is characteristically unclear on the details of the underlying psychology. His immense importance within the ensuing medieval discussion of self-knowledge thus stems not only from the fact that his writings provide two central themes for discussion, but also from the fact that in precisely these two areas, his teaching remains tantalizingly open to multiple interpretations which polarized the debate. These two themes that Augustine hands down to the medievals are, first, the medium of self-

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de Dieu chez saint Augustin," *Augustiniana* 4 (1954): 495–515; and Edward Booth, "St. Augustine's 'notitia sui' Related to Aristotle and the Early Neo-Platonists," pt. 3, *Augustiniana* 28 (1978): 206.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* 3.6.11 [CCSL 27.33:57–58]: "Tu autem eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo"; see Rist, *Augustine*, 89.

<sup>3</sup> *De Trin.* 9.2.2 [CCSL 50.295]: "Ubi ergo trinitas? Attendamus quantum possumus et inuocemus lucem sempiternam ut inluminet tenebras nostras et uideamus in nobis quantum sinimur *imaginem Dei*." The ultimate goal of self-knowledge, in fact, is to establish a relationship with God, as Augustine emphasizes in *De Trin.* 14.12.15 [CCSL 50A.442–43]: "Haec igitur trinitas mentis non propterea Dei est imago quia sui meminit mens et intellegit ac diligit se, sed quia potest etiam meminisse et intellegere et amare a quo facta est. Quod cum facit sapiens ipsa fit. Si autem non facit, etiam cum sui meminit seque intellegit ac diligit, stulta est. Meminerit itaque Dei sui *ad* cuius imaginem facta est eumque intellegat atque diligit." It is important to note the distinction between various terms that Augustine uses in discussions of self-knowledge. *Anima* refers to "the animating principle of bodies considered in the vital function it exercises in them." *Animus*, which is sometimes synonymous with *anima*, can also refer specifically to the human soul, "a vital principle that is at the same time a rational substance . . . the *summus gradus animae*. *Mens* refers to "the higher part of the rational soul . . . the part that clings to things intelligible and to God" (see Étienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, trans. L.E.M. Lynch [New York: Vintage, 1967], 269–70, n. 1).

<sup>4</sup> Self-knowledge is also discussed briefly in other texts, such as *Contra academicos*, *De libero arbitrio*, and *Confessiones*, but I here focus on the magisterial treatment in *De Trinitate*.

knowledge, and second, the set of distinctions according to which various types of self-knowledge are classified.

First, Augustine famously insists that whereas the eye can only see itself reflected in a visible object, the mind does not need to glean self-knowledge from its knowledge of other minds. In a frequently quoted text, he concludes: “Therefore just as the mind itself gathers knowledge (*notitias*) of corporeal things through the senses of the body, so [it gathers knowledge] of incorporeals through its own self. Therefore it also knows (*nouit*) itself through itself because it is incorporeal.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, self-knowledge is mediated by nothing else than the self itself. As we shall see in our review of the Thomistic texts, this passage becomes the rallying cry for the view that self-knowledge arises solely from the soul itself, independently of any other mental act, against the view that self-knowledge depends on the intellect’s actualization by a phantasm originating in the senses. Still, it is not entirely clear that Augustine would defend either of these alternatives without qualification.

In fact, there are two distinct issues at stake in the claim that self-knowledge is independent from the senses. The first is the question of what mediates self-knowledge. In the text cited above, Augustine clearly states that that which makes self-knowledge possible is simply the soul itself. The soul does not need to search outside itself in order to know itself; in fact, self-knowledge completes the human person precisely because it draws the soul *away* from outside things so that it can return to its intimate self. Augustine argues that

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<sup>5</sup> *De Trin.* 9.3.3 [CCSL 50.296]: “Mens ergo ipsa sicut corporearum rerum notitias per sensus corporis colligit sic incorporearum per semetipsam. Ergo et se ipsam per se ipsam nouit quoniam est incorporea. Nam si non se nouit, non se amat”; cf. Marguerite Witmer Kehr, “The Doctrine of the Self in St. Augustine and Descartes,” *The Philosophical Review* 25 (1916): 590.



since the soul is both known and knower, it already possesses within itself everything it needs for self-knowledge: it is the sole “parent” or “generator” of its own knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

The second issue involved in the claim that self-knowledge is independent of sensation is the question of whether we have self-knowledge at all times.<sup>7</sup> Here Augustine’s position is just ambiguous enough to allow him to be called upon as a witness by those who argue for perpetual self-knowledge and those who argue that self-knowledge must be triggered by sensation in some way. It is indubitable that for Augustine, “at its center the self is always and has always been self-remembering, self-thinking and self-loving, whether it has adverted to the fact or not.”<sup>8</sup> He repeatedly insists that the command “know thyself” makes no sense unless we already always have some grasp of ourselves.<sup>9</sup> He contrasts this pre-conscious self-familiarity (referred to as *se nosse*) to an explicit attention to oneself and one’s acts (referred to as *se cogitare*).<sup>10</sup> I know myself in the sense that I am familiar with

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<sup>6</sup> *De Trin.* 9.12.18 [CCSL 50.309]: “Vnde liquido tenendum est quod omnis res quamcumque cognoscimus congenerat in nobis notitiam sui; ab utroque enim notitia paritur, a cognoscente et cognito. Itaque mens cum se ipsa cognoscit sola parens est notitiae suae; et cognitum enim et cognitor ipsa est.”

<sup>7</sup> Note that this issue is distinct from the problem of what mediates the soul’s self-knowledge. In fact, if the soul permanently knows itself without advertent to the senses, it must be true that the soul knows itself through itself. But if the soul knows itself through itself, it does not therefore follow that the soul permanently knows itself without advertent to the senses. The senses could be the *occasion* of the soul’s self-knowledge, without thereby *mediating* it. I will discuss this problem in Chapter II.

<sup>8</sup> Booth, “Augustine’s *notitia sui*,” 221; see *De Trin.* 10.12.19 [CCSL 50.332]: “Mentem quippe ipsam in memoria et intellegentia et uoluntate suimetipsius talem reperiēbamus ut quoniam semper *se nosse* semperque se ipsam uelle comprehendebatur, simul etiam semper sui meminisse semperque se ipsam intellegere et amare comprehenderetur, quamuis non semper se cogitare discretam ab eis quae non sunt quod ipsa est”; and *De Trin.* 14.8.9 (CCSL 50A.432).

<sup>9</sup> *De Trin.* 10.3.6 [CCSL 50.318]: “Quapropter eo ipso quo se quaerit magis se sibi notam quam ignotam esse conuincitur. Nouit enim se quaerentem atque nescientem dum se quaerit ut nouerit.” See also 10.9.12 and the comments on this point by Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996), 266ff., and Booth, “Augustine’s *notitia sui*,” 203.

<sup>10</sup> *De Trin.* 10.5.7 [CCSL 50.321]: “Ita cum aliud sit non se nosse, aliud non se cogitare (neque enim multarum doctrinarum peritum ignorare grammaticam dicimus cum eam non cogitat quia de medicinae arte tunc cogitat), cum ergo aliud sit non se nosse, aliud non se cogitare, tanta uis est amoris ut ea quae cum amore diu cogitauerit eisque curae glutino inhaeserit attrahat secum etiam cum ad se cogitandam quodam modo redit”; see also an almost identical passage in 14.5.7 [CCSL 50A.430]. Verbeke notes that *se cogitare*

myself (*se nosse*) when I am not actively thinking about myself (*se cogitare*). In an important analogy, Augustine describes a doctor who, since he is thinking (*cogitare*) about medicine, cannot also be actively thinking about grammar. Yet it would be incorrect to say that the doctor does not know grammar; it is permanently available to him in the way in which it is *not* available to the child who has not yet learned to speak. Therefore in some sense the doctor does know grammar (*nosse*), a “knowing” which Augustine also describes as memory.<sup>11</sup> In the same way, the soul always knows itself (*se nosse*) without noticing itself: thus “when the mind does come to notice itself, it is not said to know itself, but to recognize itself.”<sup>12</sup>

One could, of course, interpret Augustine’s *se nosse* in two ways, either as a permanent unconscious intuitive self-vision (actual self-knowledge), or as a mere disposition for self-knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately this amounts to a disagreement as to whether implicit knowledge is distinct from habitual knowledge, and whether sheer intellectual presence should be identified with one or the other. Divergences in interpretation on this point thus

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“indicates an actual, explicit knowledge, while [*se nosse*] designates an implicit and latent knowledge, which is the indispensable condition for explicit knowledge” (“Connaissance de soi,” 505). Note that *nosse* is decayed from *novisse*, the perfect tense of *noscere*, and signifies “to be familiar with something.”

<sup>11</sup> *De Trin.* 14.6.8 [CCSL 50A.432]: “Nec ita sane gignit istam notitiam suam mens quando cogitando intellectam se conspicit tamquam sibi ante incognita fuerit, sed ita sibi nota erat quemadmodum notae sunt res quae memoria continentur etiamsi non cogitentur (quoniam dicimus hominem nosse litteras etiam cum de aliis rebus, non de litteris cogitat).” He goes on immediately to define memory in the same terms as he had used for expressing the mind’s permanent self-knowledge: “[N]otitia uero cuiusque rei quae inest menti etiam quando non de ipsa cogitatur ad solam dicatur memoriam pertinere” (n. 9). It is, I think, significant that Augustine likewise frequently characterizes the mind’s presence to itself as memory, as indicated by the fact that he sometimes describes his “human trinity” as mind, its knowledge, and its love (9.12.18); and sometimes as remembering, knowing, and loving oneself (14.12.15).

<sup>12</sup> Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, 221; see *De Trin.* 14.6.8 [CCSL 50A.432]: “Mens igitur quando cogitatione se conspicit, intelligit se et recognoscit: gignit ergo hunc intellectum et cognitionem suam.”

<sup>13</sup> Gerard O’Daly, discussing the treatment of *memoria* in *Confessions* X and *De Trin.* 10.15 and XIV.14, suggests that although Augustine clearly maintains that understanding and desire are already “latent in the memory,” Augustine offers no precise explanation as to how this is the case (*Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: [University of California Press, 1987], 202–4).

allow for two entirely distinct doctrinal traditions to claim Augustine as an authority on their side.

Augustine's second main contribution to the medieval discussion of self-knowledge is a set of overlapping distinctions between types of self-knowledge. One such distinction is the distinction between sensing that one is oneself and knowing what the mind is. For the latter a primitive self-awareness is required, but is only attained through further study of oneself.<sup>14</sup> In the *locus classicus* from Book IX of *De Trinitate*, Augustine distinguishes descriptions of one's own particular mind as one "sees" it in all its changeable particularity (expressed in statements such as, "Now I understand this math problem!"), and articulations of what the human mind ought to be according to the light of the divine ideas ("The mind is an image of the Trinity").<sup>15</sup> I alone *know* that I understand this math problem; my tutor can

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<sup>14</sup> See *De Trin.* 8.6.9 [CCSL 50.279–80]: "Et animus quidem quid sit non incongrue nos dicimus ideo nosse quia et nos habemus animum; neque enim umquam oculis uidimus et ex similitudine uisorum plurium notionem generalem specialemue percepimus, sed potius, ut dixi, quia et nos habemus. . . . Animum igitur cuiuslibet ex nostro nouimus, et motibus corporis idque statim et facillime quadam conspiratione naturali. Animum igitur cuiuslibet ex nostro nouimus, et ex nostro credimus quem non nouimus. Non enim tantum sentimus animum, sed etiam scire possumus quid sit animus consideratione nostri; habemus enim animum." Cf. Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 256. On the difficulty of attaining knowledge of one's essence, see *De Trin.* 9.12.19 [CCSL 50.332]: "Ac per hoc difficile in ea dinoscitur memoria sui et intelligentia sui. Quasi enim non sint haec duo sed unum duobus uocabulis appelletur, sic apparet in ea re ubi ualde ista coniuncta sunt et aliud alio nullo praeceditur tempore." Gilson, however, argues that "because knowing is the very essence of mind, the mind grasps its substance at the very instant it knows its existence. The mind knows what it is the moment it knows that it is" (see *Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, 46–47 and 270–71, n. 2). In support of this thesis, he cites *De Trin.* 10.10.15 [CCSL 50.328]: "Nullo modo autem recte dicitur sciri aliqua res dum eius ignoratur substantia. Quapropter dum se mens nouit substantiam suam nouit, et cum de se certa est de substantia sua certa est." Note, however, that this text should be taken in the context of the others mentioned above; it does not necessarily mean that *an sit* and *quid sit*, strictly taken, are apprehended in the same act. It might mean that the mind knows *something* about itself in perceiving its existence, but it cannot mean that it has thorough definitive knowledge *quid sit* in the strict sense.

<sup>15</sup> *De Trin.* 9.6.9 [CCSL 50.301]: "Aliterque unusquisque homo loquendo enuntiat mentem suam quid in se ipso agatur attendens; aliter autem humanam mentem speciali aut generali cognitione definit. Itaque cum mihi de sua propria loquitur, utrum intellegat hoc aut illud an non intellegat, et utrum uelit an nolit hoc aut illud, credo; cum uero de humana specialiter aut generaliter uerum dicit, agnosco et approbo. Vnde manifestum est aliud unumquemque uidere in se quod sibi alius dicenti credat, non tamen uideat; aliud autem in ipsa ueritate quod alius quoque possit intueri, quorum alterum mutari per tempora, alterum incommutabili aeternitate consistere. Neque enim oculis corporeis multas mentes uidendo per similitudinem colligimus generalem uel specialem mentis humanae notitiam, sed intuemur inuiolabilem ueritatem ex qua perfecte

only believe that I do, since he cannot experience my own mental acts.<sup>16</sup> But when I describe the human mind apart from the constant flux of particular circumstances, I am describing it, not as it *is* in all the changeability of its particular existence, but as it *ought to be*, illuminated in the light of the divine ideas.<sup>17</sup> In this way I and my interlocutors share the same understanding of the permanent truth of the mind.

A second distinction, which is probably reducible to the first, is Augustine's distinction between knowing oneself as a whole vs. knowing all of oneself. Booth explains that this distinction "corresponds approximately to the difference in English between 'all' and 'whole'; one can give one's attention to the whole of an object without taking all of it in."<sup>18</sup> This distinction is nowhere made in *De Trin.* in so many words, but it can be gleaned by comparing various texts. Thus while examining the problem of how the mind can seek to know itself unless it already knows itself, Augustine suggests that the mind always knows itself as a whole.<sup>19</sup> At this level, the mind grasps certain facts about itself (I know, I remember, I will, I live) with absolute certitude, but has not succeeded in seeing knowledge,

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quantum possumus definiamus non qualis sit uniuscuiusque hominis mens, sed qualis esse sempiternis rationibus debeat."

<sup>16</sup> Commenting on this point, Putallaz explains: "... la connaissance que l'âme prend d'elle-même . . . [est] un savoir qui porte sur une réalité changeante, un 'je' psychologique soumis à toutes les vicissitudes d'une réalité spirituelle en même temps que contingente. . . . il s'agit là d'un savoir particulier, qui ne pourra donc jamais prétendre à l'universalité d'une connaissance parfaite" (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 19).

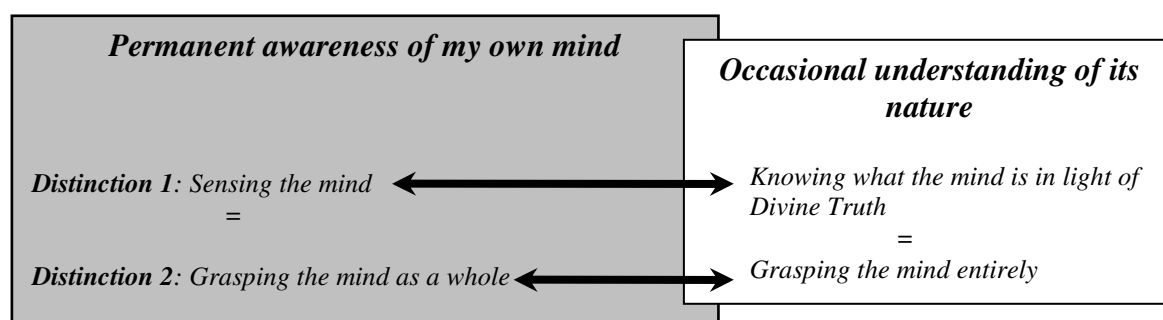
<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note that for Augustine, knowing the nature of the human mind does not involve knowing the common characteristics of all minds, abstracted from one's experience of individual minds. Rather, it involves seeing a particular human mind under the divine light, in such a way as to perceive the *truth* of the mind. Every individual mind in some sense falls short of the nature of mind, since the nature of mind (like any other natures) for Augustine is perfect, immutable, eternal. Thus one can only understand the nature of the mind by considering an individual mind in the light shed by the divine Ideas, though without seeing the divine essence. Thus for Augustine *what-mind-is* turns out to be the same as *what-mind-ought-to-be*. Thomas's interpretation of this point in *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 87.1, to be discussed at length in Chapter IV, §B, is a matter of special interest. For more on Augustine's illumination theory, see O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind*, 199–207.

<sup>18</sup> Booth, "Augustine's *notitia sui*," 191.

<sup>19</sup> *De Trin.* 10.4.6 [CCSL 50.319]: "Sicut ergo mens tota mens est, sic tota uiuit. Nouit autem uiuere se; totam se igitur nouit. Postremo cum *se nosse* mens quaerit, mentem se esse iam nouit."

life, and love as they really are, namely, one and the same substance of the mind.<sup>20</sup> When it finally attains this recognition, the mind knows itself *perfectly as a whole* (viz., all of itself), by knowing its unity with itself.<sup>21</sup>

This second distinction resonates strongly with the first. Together they sketch the broad outlines of a self-knowledge that unfolds in two stages:



In the first stage, the mind is permanently and fundamentally aware of its own individual existence and its individual acts, perceiving itself as an individual whole.<sup>22</sup> It therefore knows itself as “the source of permanence that we know to exist apart from the transitory

<sup>20</sup> *De Trin.* 10.11.18 [CCSL 50.330]: “Haec igitur tria, memoria, intelligentia, uoluntas, quoniam non sunt tres uitae sed una uita, nec tres mentes sed una mens, consequenter utique nec tres substantiae sunt sed una substantia.”

<sup>21</sup> *De Trin.* 9.4.7 [CCSL 50.299]: “Mens uero cum totam nouit, hoc est perfecte nouit, per totum eius est notitia eius.” See Booth, “Augustine’s *notitia sui*,” 191–92. Also, note that the distinction Augustine makes here is not a case of knowing first a part (one’s acts) and then the whole (one’s substance). Rather, what is already known in the first stage is the whole (one’s existing, knowing, willing self). In the second stage, the substance of the whole is known (i.e., the substantial unity and identity of being, knowing, and willing). Thus the distinction is between two different ways of knowing the self-whole. See Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 268; and O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, 208.

<sup>22</sup> This type of knowledge is also that to which Augustine’s famous *Cogito* (“si fallor, sum,” *De civitate Dei* 11.26 [CCSL 48.345:18]) pertains: “Vivere se tamen et meminisse et intellegere et uelle et cogitare et scire et iudicare quis dubitet?” (*De Trin.* 10.10.14 [CCSL 50.327]). For an analysis of this argument, which Augustine reworks in numerous texts, and a comparison with Descartes, see Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, 41–43; Gareth B. Matthews, *Thought’s Ego in Augustine and Descartes*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 29–38; Kehr, “The Self in St. Augustine and Descartes,” 587–615; Wayne J. Hankey, “Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes: More Than a Source of the Self,” *Augustinian Studies* 32 (2001): 65–88; and Stephen Menn, *Augustine and Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 247–54.

constituents of our understanding,”<sup>23</sup> but remains confused about the nature of its being.

In the second stage, the mind, obeying the command to “know thyself,” seeks to understand its own nature by withdrawing into itself from the senses, whereupon it discovers the equality of its living or remembering, its knowing, and its loving, and realizes that these constitute only one mind, one essence, one single incorporeal substance.<sup>24</sup> At this point the mind knows itself as it ought to be, in the divine light. This illuminated recognition of the Trinitarian essence of the mind leads the mind upwards to contemplation of the Trinity, completing the cycle by which the mind, dispersed among the objects of sense, returns home to what is most intimate to itself: its own self, and even more intimate, God.

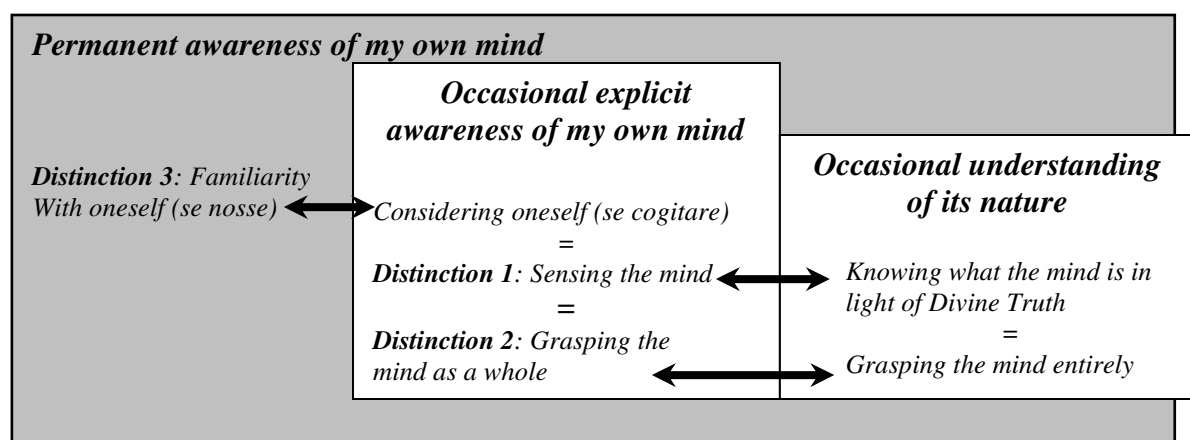
A whole new level of complexity appears when we turn to Augustine’s third distinction, namely, the previously-mentioned distinction between familiarity with the mind (i.e., knowing the mind as we know grammar—*se nosse*) and attending to the mind (*se cogitare*). This distinction cannot be easily reduced to the previous two, since it distinguishes between two qualities of self-knowledge (familiarity vs. explicit attention), rather than between two objects of self-knowledge (the singular self and the nature of the mind). On the other hand, the word *cogitare* seems to carry the connotation of singular self-knowing as well as that of explicit consideration. Thus I suggest that *se cogitare* is most

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<sup>23</sup> Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 260.

<sup>24</sup> *De Trin.* 10.11.18 [CCSL 50.330–31]: “Memoria quippe quod uita et mens et substantia dicitur ad se ipsam dicitur; quod uero memoria dicitur ad aliquid relatiue dicitur. Hoc de intellegentia quoque et de uoluntate dixerim, et intellegentia quippe et uoluntas ad aliquid dicitur. Vita est autem unaquaeque ad se ipsam et mens et essentia. Quocirca *tria haec* eo *sunt unum* quo una uita, una mens, una essentia; et quidquid aliud ad se ipsa singula dicuntur etiam simul, non pluraliter sed singulariter dicuntur. . . . Quapropter quando inuicem a singulis et tota et omnia capiuntur, aequalia sunt tota singula totis singulis et tota singula simul omnibus totis, et *haec tria unum*, una uita, una mens, una essentia.”

likely identical with sensing that one exists / knowing oneself as a whole.<sup>25</sup> This results in three stages of self-knowledge: 1) I am always already familiar with myself (*se nosse*); 2) I explicitly notice that I exist, think, will (*se cogitare*—sensing that I exist and knowing myself as a whole); 3) By pondering my existing, thinking, willing, I come to know that all three constitute a single substance, and know the mind in the light of divine truth (*se scire*—knowing my essence and knowing myself entirely). The diagram below depicts this schema:



Thus distinction 3 (*se nosse* vs. *se cogitare*) succeeds in distinguishing out the element of permanence that was somewhat loosely attributed to the first element in distinctions 1 and 2 (sensing the mind / grasping it as a whole). This ongoing awareness of my own mind is the permanent subliminal matrix in the context of which I occasionally achieve explicit consideration of my own mind (equivalent to sensing my mind / grasping it as a whole).

But here we run into the difficulty that, I believe, spawned the medieval controversy about innate self-knowledge. Augustine does not specify exactly how we are to take the

<sup>25</sup> According to Rist, Augustine uses *cogitare* exclusively to indicate a less perfect “knowing about” which has not yet penetrated into the realm of quidditative knowledge; he signifies true and full understanding rather by *scire* or *intellegere*. See Rist, *Augustine*, 87; as well as Verbeke’s assessment of the same term above in note 10.

notion of familiarity with oneself (*se nosse*): is it a sort of actual knowing, or merely an intellectual habit disposing the mind to think about itself at will? Because Augustine appears to consider familiarity with oneself to be a permanent ongoing state that precedes all attentive self-cognition,<sup>26</sup> this familiarity, if interpreted as an actual knowing, would constitute a permanent innate intuition of self. Augustine would thus be defending a primitive state of continuous (and perhaps unconscious) self-knowing, interrupted by moments of attention in which the soul shifts to an explicit consideration of itself. Conversely, if familiarity with oneself were merely a habit for knowledge and not an actual knowing, it would have no actuality, and Augustine could be interpreted as rejecting an innate intuition of self. Interestingly, as I shall argue in Chapter III, §C.4, Aquinas interprets this ongoing self-familiarity alternately as actual or as habitual, yet he insists upon a modification that saves him from acquiescing to the notion of innate self-knowledge.

The medieval discussion, therefore, inherits from Augustine the following legacy: 1) An argument that the mind knows itself through itself (*per seipsam*), which accounts for the continuity of self-experience and guarantees the fittingness of the analogy to the Trinitarian processions; 2) An argument for the impossibility of denying one's own existence; 3) The overlapping distinctions between knowledge of oneself as a whole vs. knowledge of all of oneself, and knowledge of one's individual mind vs. knowledge of what the mind is; 4) An ambiguous distinction between familiarity with oneself (*se nosse*), and attention to oneself (*se cogitare*). The ambiguity surrounding the mind's familiarity with oneself, together with

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<sup>26</sup> See for instance *De Trin.* 10.9.11 [CCSL 50.325]: "Nec se quasi non norit cognoscat, sed ab eo quod alterum nouit dinoscat. Ipsum enim quod audit: *Cognosce te ipsam*, quomodo agere curabit si nescit aut quid sit *cognosce* aut quid sit *te ipsam*?"



Augustine's insistence that the mind knows itself through itself, leads to the notion that the mind permanently and unconsciously beholds itself.

As will become evident in later chapters, Aquinas follows Augustine much more closely than has often been recognized.<sup>27</sup> Far from simply quoting snippets of Augustinian proof-text that must be tweaked so as to reconcile them with Aristotle, Aquinas's view of self-knowledge draws heavily on Augustine's terminology and insights. Most importantly, he borrows from Augustine his key distinction between perceiving one's individual acts and pondering the nature of the soul,<sup>28</sup> and the notion that the soul has some sort of ongoing familiarity with itself similar to one's familiarity with grammar. But despite Aquinas's obvious effort to uphold the Augustinian tradition, he is adamant in his refusal to interpret

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<sup>27</sup> For the Augustinian character of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge, see Brachtendorf, "Selbsterkenntnis," 255–70; and Ambroise Gardeil, "La perception expérimentale de l'âme par elle-même d'après Saint Thomas," in *Mélanges Thomistes* (Le Saulchoir: Kain, 1923), 219. There is a surprisingly widespread view that Aquinas is predominantly "Aristotelian" on the point of self-knowledge, and that he cites Augustine only in concession to the latter's authoritative status in medieval discussion, recklessly fitting Augustinian proof-texts to Aristotelian principles in a Procrustean fashion. For just a few instances, see Lambert: "Aquinas often seems uneasy in assimilating the foreign language of Augustine's interiority into his philosophical discussions, and manufactures tenuous agreements between Augustine and Aristotle" ("Nonintentional Experience of Oneself," 261, n. 33; *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 21–24); Szaif, "Selbsterkenntnis," 321–37; Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "Utrum mens seipsam per essentiam cognoscat, an per aliquam speciem," *Angelicum* 5 (1928): 43; Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom*, 124–35; and Christopher J. Martin, "Self-Knowledge and Cognitive Ascent: Thomas Aquinas and Peter Olivi on the KK-Thesis," in *Forming the Mind: Essays on the Internal Senses and the Mind/Body Problem from Avicenna to the Medical Enlightenment*, ed. H. Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 97. Putallaz, *Le sens de la reflexion*; and Bernd Goehring, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness," *Cithara* 42 (2003): 3–14, are some of the few that recognize that Aquinas is creating a whole new position by fusing Augustinian and Aristotelian insights.

<sup>28</sup> Jordan posits that "the division of the mind's knowledge of itself into two sorts, the particular and the general, is un-Augustinian" and a destruction of "the main weapon in the Augustinian armory" (*Ordering Wisdom*, 127, 129). But compare for instance *De Trin.* 8.6.9 [CCSL 50.280]: "Non enim tantum sentimus animum, sed etiam scire possumus quid sit animus consideratione nostri"; and *ST Ia*, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: "Uno quidem modo, particulariter, secundum quod Socrates vel Plato percipit se habere animam intellectivam, ex hoc quod percipit se intelligere. Alio modo, in universali, secundum quod naturam humanae mentis ex actu intellectus consideramus." Note the parallel terminology: *sentire/percipere* contrasted with *considerare*, an Augustinian term indicating quidditative knowledge. It is possible, in fact, that the distinction between individual and common self-knowledge could not be made on purely Aristotelian grounds, since, Aristotle (at least as interpreted by the medievals) provides no support for the position that the intellect can know individuals; for an analysis of the medieval interpretation of Aristotle's dictum, "Intellect is of universals; sense is of particulars," see Camille Bérubé, *La connaissance de l'individuel au moyen âge* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964), 1–12.

Augustine's self-knowledge *per seipsam* as postulating that the human soul is self-sufficient for its own self-knowledge without any external actualization.

## 2. Aristotle

Although Aristotle accords only a brief treatment to self-knowledge, he is much more concerned than Augustine to parse the relevant psychological structures. Aristotle presents two parallel types of self-awareness: sensory self-perception, to which he devotes the rather long *De anima* III.1, and intellectual self-knowledge, highlighted only in a few highly condensed and somewhat cryptic passages. Aristotle's theory of sensory self-perception is a matter of considerable interest, especially as it relates to the definition of the common sense. As it strays too far from the present topic of inquiry, I shall not explore it here, focusing rather on his theory of intellectual self-knowledge.<sup>29</sup>

Aristotle addresses the issue of self-knowledge in *De anima* III.4 and *Metaphysics* IX.7 and 9. In *De an.* III.4, his discussion of self-knowledge arises from an aporia regarding the mind's universal potentiality to form. Early in this chapter, Aristotle had determined that mind is able to receive all forms because it itself has "no nature of its own, other than that of having a certain capacity"; thus the mind "is, before it thinks, not actually any real thing."<sup>30</sup> But then he asks, if mind is "simple and impassible and has nothing in common

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<sup>29</sup> A number of helpful articles have been written on the topic of sensory self-perception, which seems to command more attention among Aristotle's commentators than does self-knowledge. Most significant are the following: Charles H. Kahn, "Sensation and Consciousness in Aristotle," in *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. 4, *Psychology and Aesthetics*, ed. Jonathan Barnes et al., 1–31 (London: Duckworth, 1978); W.F.R. Hardie, "Concepts of Consciousness in Aristotle," *Mind*, n.s. 85 (1976): 388–411; and Deborah Modrak, *Aristotle: The Power of Perception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Modrak's book is noteworthy for its tentative suggestion that *De anima* III.4 merely means that "the second actuality state of the noetic faculty is the actualization of an intelligible object," and that for Aristotle, human reflexive awareness is governed *solely* by the common sense.

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle *De anima* [hereafter, *De an.*] III.4.429a21–29, trans. J.A. Smith, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, (New York: Random House, 1941), 590 [hereafter, McKeon].

with anything else,” how can it think? Moreover, how can it think itself? “For if mind be thinkable *per se* and what is thinkable is in kind one and the same, then either (a) mind will belong to everything, or (b) mind will contain some element common to it with all other realities which makes them all thinkable.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, the mind’s very potentiality to every form seems to hinder its own self-knowledge. Aristotle has already precluded mind from having a form of its own (otherwise it would not be able to know other forms, being already determined to its own form), so mind cannot know itself by receiving its own form, as it knows a tree by receiving the form of the tree. Thus knowability cannot be equated with having a form: knowability must be a property of things in its own right. If the mind knows itself, it must do so simply because it is a knowable thing. But here we are faced with a dilemma. What would this property “knowability” be? Is it a characteristic belonging to mind, as color belongs to body? In that case, everything knowable would be knowable insofar as it partakes in mind. Alternatively, perhaps knowability characterizes a larger genus to which mind and other knowable things belong. In this case, the mind and the known tree share a common property, knowability. Either way, the thesis that mind can receive all forms because it has nothing in common with any single form seems to be threatened.

Aristotle begins his solution to this problem with the famous pronouncement that would polarize the medieval debate on self-knowledge:<sup>32</sup> “Mind is itself thinkable in exactly

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<sup>31</sup> *De an.* III.4.429b23–29 [McKeon, 591].

<sup>32</sup> In fact, it constitutes Thomas’s standard Aristotelian quote on this topic, appearing in nearly every major text on self-knowledge; see for instance *In Sent.* III.23.1.2; *SCG* 2.98; *ST* Ia, 14.2, 87.1; *DV* 10.8; *QDDA* 3 and 16; and of course his commentary on this passage in *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.215:34–35; and 216:65–68].

the same way as its objects are.”<sup>33</sup> He continues on to distinguish immaterial and material objects of thought. Mind is already identical with its immaterial objects; but with regard to material objects, “each of the objects of thought is only potentially present. It follows that while *they* will not have mind in them (for mind is a potentiality of them only in so far as they are capable of being disengaged from matter) mind may yet be thinkable.”<sup>34</sup>

The gist of this solution seems to be that mind can think itself *only* whenever it is knowing some object of thought. The reason is that mind has no form of its own and is in potentiality to all forms. Thus on the one hand, this essential potentiality prevents it from knowing itself, since it has of itself no proper form whereby it could know itself. Yet on the other hand, this essential potentiality is also what allows the mind to adopt the form of its known object completely, so that in the act of knowing, the knower and the known are one.<sup>35</sup> And it is in becoming one with its object that the mind gains a form of its own. In the act of knowing, the form of the object *is* the form of the mind, and it is by this form (its own act of thinking its object, its identity with its object) that the mind knows itself. These observations are, in fact, confirmed by an earlier passage in *De anima* III.4:

Once the mind has become each set of its possible objects, as a man of science has, when this phrase is used of one who is actually a man of science (this happens when he is now able to exercise the power of his own initiative), its condition is still one of potentiality, but in a different sense from the potentiality which preceded the acquisition of knowledge by learning or discovery: the mind too is then able to think *itself*.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *De an.* III.4.430a2–3. In the Latin translation which Thomas would have likely had before him, according to Gauthier’s reconstruction, this passage reads, “Et ipse autem intelligibilis est sicut intelligibilia” [430a2, in Leon. 45/1.214].

<sup>34</sup> *De an.* III.4.430a6–9. Note that this distinction sets up the background for the distinction between the passive and active intellects that immediately follows in *De an.* III.5.

<sup>35</sup> *De an.* III.4.430a3–4; see also III.5, 430a19–20, where thought is said to be identical with its object.

<sup>36</sup> *De an.* III.4.429b5–10 [McKeon, 590]; in Bekker, the Greek is “καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ αὐτὸν τότε δύναται νοεῖν.” The last phrase, 429b9–10, is a matter of some controversy, as it seems not to fit with the context, though this point has been disputed (for arguments that this phrase does belong here, see Joseph Owens, “A Note on Aristotle, ‘De Anima’ 3.4, 429b9,” *Phoenix* 30, no. 2 [1976]: 107–118; and Charles Kahn, “Aristotle on Thinking,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s “De anima,”* ed. M.C. Nussbaum and A.O. Rorty [Oxford:

The mind is actualized in knowing an object; its act of knowing that object necessarily entails self-knowledge, since in thinking, the mind becomes its object.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, the habit which disposes it to know an object of thought similarly disposes the mind to “think itself.”<sup>38</sup>

Aristotle’s teaching on self-knowledge in *De anima* III, therefore, seems to be that the mind knows itself in the act of knowing its objects, because in receiving the form of its object, it receives also its own form, which is the form of the object known. This claim solves the aporia regarding whether the mind has anything in common with its objects, because the mind’s intelligibility turns out not to precede its act of knowing an external intelligible. Rather, the mind’s intelligibility is concomitant with its act of knowing the external intelligible. Thus the mind’s intelligibility cannot constitute an impediment to knowing the other.

Aristotle again raises the issue of self-knowledge in describing divine thought in *Met.* XII.9. The goal in ch. 9 is to identify the object of the divine thought as thought itself, and to elucidate a theory of self-knowledge whereby eternal self-thinking thought is

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Clarendon, 1992], 373). The phrase δὲ αὐτὸν is also controversial, as it is sometimes read as δι’ αὐτοῦ so that the text then states “The mind too is then able to think through itself” (see *De anima Books II and III*, translated with notes by D.W. Hamlyn [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 58; and *Aristotelis De anima*, ed. W.D. Ross [Oxford: Oxford University Press, n.d.], 70). According to this reading, the closing remark at 429b9–10 describes the facility of exercise that pertains to habitual knowledge, and has nothing to do with self-knowledge. I cannot argue for either reading here; but since the text of *De anima* followed by Thomas’s commentary reads “Et ipse autem se ipsum tunc potest intelligere” (*In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.208, at 429b9]), it seems best for the present purposes to accept δὲ αὐτὸν in accordance with Bekker and Barnes (*On the Soul*, trans. J.A. Smith, ed. Jonathan Barnes, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1 [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984], 683, n. 33).

<sup>37</sup> See also *Metaphysics* XII.7, where Aristotle makes the same connection between self-knowledge and the mind’s identity with the object of thought: “And thought thinks on itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and the object of thought are the same” (Aristotle *Metaphysics* [hereafter, *Met.*] XII.71072b19–21 [McKeon, 880]).

<sup>38</sup> See Kahn, “Aristotle on Thinking,” 373.

possible.<sup>39</sup> The self-thinking of divine thought, in fact, could be problematic, given that, as we saw in *De an.* III.4, the mind is intelligible insofar as it is actualized by the form of its known object. But if the mind eternally *is* its own (and its only) object, one wonders how it is made intelligible to itself, if it is not thinking about anything other than itself.

To clarify these issues, Aristotle offers two new insights regarding self-knowledge. First, he introduces the distinction between two types of self-knowledge that are reminiscent of implicit and explicit self-knowledge (compare Augustine's *se nosse* and *se cogitare*).<sup>40</sup> In some acts of knowing, Aristotle points out, "knowledge and perception and opinion and understanding have always something else as their object, and themselves only by the way"; in these cases, "to *be* an act of thinking and to *be* an object of thought are not the same thing." In other acts, "the knowledge is the object."<sup>41</sup>

Aristotle adds that knowledge itself can be the object of thought *specifically in the theoretical sciences*, where the objects of the science are immaterial.<sup>42</sup> In the theoretical

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<sup>39</sup> *Met.* XII.9.1074b33–35 [McKeon, 885]: "Therefore it must be of itself that the divine thought thinks (since it is the most excellent of things), and its thinking is a thinking on thinking."

<sup>40</sup> Booth attempts to draw a parallel between Augustine and *De an.* III.4 on this point, arguing: "To a remarkable degree the conscious, deliberate self-thinking [*viz.*, *se cogitare*] corresponds to the kind of self-knowledge in Aristotle's *De Anima* III when the mind deliberately turns its attention to itself; the deep continuity of *se nosse* is a counterpart to the timeless self-thinking of pure thought" ("Augustine's *notita sui*," 217). In Aristotle's distinction between the way immaterial and material objects are known (430a3–9), Booth sees Augustine's distinction between *se cogitare* and *se nosse*. In my opinion, this claim is not supported by any textual evidence: to the contrary, the context of 430a3–9 indicates that Aristotle is here discussing the difference in the ways in which immaterial and material objects are made present to the intellect. If the distinction between *se nosse* and *se cogitare* is present anywhere in Aristotle, it is in *Met.* XII.9.1074b35–1075a5 [McKeon, 885].

<sup>41</sup> *Met.* XII.9.1074b35–1075a5 [McKeon, 885]. Interestingly, Thomas does not interpret this text in the sense of *se nosse*. Rather, he uses it to make a distinction between the self-knowledge of the First, in which the knower is in every way the known (knowledge *is* self-knowledge), and human self-knowledge, in which self-knowledge is other than the knowledge of the known (see *In Met.* XII.11, no. 2617–20 [Marietti, 608], cited below in Chapter III, note 181).

<sup>42</sup> Here, then, as in *De an.* III.4, Aristotle distinguishes between knowledge of immaterial objects, in which thought and its object are the same, and knowledge of the essence of material objects, in which thought and its object are the same only *after* a process of dematerialization has taken place. This may be what Aristotle means by saying that "in the case of [objects] which contain matter . . . mind is a potentiality of them

sciences, thought is identical to its objects (presumably because there is no need to dematerialize them, and thus the form of the object in the mind is continuous with its extramental existence).<sup>43</sup> Thus “the divine thought and its object will be the same, i.e., the thinking will be one with the object of its thought.”<sup>44</sup> Presumably, therefore, the divine thought is able to think itself, without being actualized by the thought of another, because “thinking” is already what it *is*. Divine thought is not just a mind, but an actualized mind.

The second insight into self-knowledge that Aristotle offers in *Met.* XII.9 is the contrast he sketches between the episodic and passive character of human thinking, and the eternal actuality of divine self-thinking thought: human thought “is in a certain period of time” whereas “throughout eternity is the thought which has *itself* for its object.”<sup>45</sup> Although each human thought is indivisible, the human mind cannot know itself eternally, because it cannot rest in itself, since it finds its good in thinking about something higher than

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only insofar as they are capable of being disengaged from matter” (*De an.* III.4.430a6–9 [McKeon, 591]). It seems odd to say that mind is a potentiality of a tree, rather than that mind has a potentiality for knowing a tree. But if the tree-actually-known and the mind-knowing-tree are the same thing, then the mind and the tree both have complementary potentialities for the same act. Commenting on *Met.* XII.9, Kahn suggests a fascinating interpretation: “. . . in the contemplative knowledge of object without matter, such as essences, the act of intellection (*noesis*) is identical with the object cognized (1075a1–5). The implications of this solution for the objective content of divine *noesis* seem to me obvious, though they are not generally recognized. For our purposes in understanding the self-awareness of the human intellect we can say this: *nous* in us knows itself *in knowing the intelligible forms*, in comprehending the essences and the formal structure of the natural world, of mathematics, and of any other object of noetic contemplation. For it has no other structure of its own. Hence the self-awareness [p. 375] of *nous* just is the formal structure of the universe *become aware of itself*” (“Aristotle on Thinking,” 374–75). If both mind and the forms of material objects are in potentiality to the same act of knowing in which they are identified, mind turns out to be the arena for the self-knowledge of all forms. This insight is, I believe, extremely helpful in illuminating how Aristotle views the identity of thought and its object. I am more hesitant, however, to accept Kahn’s further conclusion that for Aristotle, neither the intellect nor its acts can be objects of human knowledge, and that therefore humans are only aware of their mental activities by an “enriched sentience” (375).

<sup>43</sup> Note that Thomas explains this passage as applying solely to the divine mind, in which science is identical with its object; see *DV* 10.8, ad 3 s.c.

<sup>44</sup> *Met.* XII.9.1075a4–5 [McKeon, 885].

<sup>45</sup> *Met.* XII.9.1075a6–10 [McKeon, 885]. Cf. *De an.* III.5.430a20–21 [McKeon, 592], where Aristotle notes that individual minds are in potentiality to their objects, but that in mind as such, potentiality does not precede actuality.

itself (i.e., divine things) and must therefore traverse an intellectual distance through time in order to reach this goal. The divine mind, however, knows itself through eternity, for it already eternally has itself, the highest good, and rests in itself (see XII.7). Consequently, there is a twofold potentiality in human knowing. First, being a composite being, the human mind knows the essences of material beings, which are only potentially intelligible. Second, the human mind cannot attain the intellectual good all at once in a single indivisible thought, for it is not already identical with its own good. Rather, it achieves its own good gradually in time, in a series of indivisible thoughts, over a whole lifetime.<sup>46</sup>

As Putallaz notes, the medievals use these texts to argue for the two following basic “Aristotelian” theses: “That the intellect primarily knows the other, and that it cannot grasp itself except in relation to this first act: the soul’s ability to become aware of itself depends on a prior condition: the existence of cognitive acts bearing on extramental realities.”<sup>47</sup> Although this is perhaps true of the medieval reception of Aristotle, it is still important to highlight the fact that for Aristotle himself, self-awareness arises in conjunction with knowledge of an *object*, not necessarily an extramental *other*. As *Met.* XII.9 (which Putallaz does not cite) makes clear, the divine mind can be its own object. Most importantly, nowhere does Aristotle claim that self-knowledge *as such* must originate in sense-knowledge. His theory of self-knowledge must accommodate the conditions of mind as it is found in humans and in divine thought. Thus we should keep in mind when investigating

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas will draw repeatedly on this insight in order to argue that the human intellect, due to its low place in the hierarchy of intellects, requires actualization in order to know itself.

<sup>47</sup> Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 35: “Mais ce qui est fermement assuré par l’autorité d’Aristote, c’est que l’intellect connaît l’autre d’abord, et qu’il ne peut se saisir lui-même que par rapport à ce premier acte; la connaissance que l’âme peut prendre d’elle-même dépend d’une condition antérieure: l’existence d’actes cognitifs portant sur des réalités extramentales.”



Thomas that some distortion of Aristotle's teaching on self-knowledge may have occurred in medieval interpretations. We should also guard against reading Thomas's own teaching through the stylized lens of what is frequently and inaccurately dubbed "the Aristotelian theory of self-knowledge," but which neither Aristotle, nor perhaps even Thomas, would embrace wholeheartedly.

It seems that the main thrust of Aristotle's theory of self-knowledge, therefore, is that every act of knowing an object necessarily includes self-awareness, and that conversely every act of self-knowledge is necessarily an act of knowing an object (which may simply be the mind itself). Unlike Augustine, Aristotle does not identify different types of content for the act of self-knowledge. In fact, he makes no attempt to explain how the mind knows itself as a *mind*, and not as, say, a tree, though he does note the difference in *Met.* XII.9.<sup>48</sup> What is extremely evident from his consistent teaching, however, is that some sort of self-knowledge accompanies every act of knowing,<sup>49</sup> and that moreover, self-knowledge is a function of the intellect's actualization.

This latter point, in fact, is the one that looms largest in Thomas's interpretation of Aristotle on self-knowledge. When Thomas introduces the Philosopher into the debate, it is nearly always in order to make the point that self-knowledge is only possible to an

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<sup>48</sup> See *Met.* XII.9.1074b35–1075a5 [McKeon, 885]: "But evidently knowledge and perception and opinion and understanding have always something else as their object, and themselves only by the way. Further, if thinking and being thought of are different, in respect of which does goodness belong to thought? For to *be* an act of thinking and to *be* an object of thought are not the same thing. We answer that in some cases the knowledge is the object. In the productive sciences it is the substance or essence of the object, matter omitted, and in the theoretical sciences the definition or the act of thinking is the object. Since, then, thought and the object of thought are not different in the case of things that have not matter, the divine thought and its object will be the same, i.e. the thinking will be one with the object of its thought."

<sup>49</sup> Owens notes that this was the interpretation offered by Alexander of Aphrodisius, with which Owens himself concurs: "In orthodox Aristotelian fashion Alexander accounted for the self-knowledge in terms of the cognitional identity of knower with what is known, for in this identity the one could not be grasped without awareness of the other" ("A Note on *De Anima* 3.4," 107).

actualized intellect.<sup>50</sup> It is interesting, however, to note that Thomas interprets the oft-quoted 430a3 (“Mind is itself thinkable in exactly the same way as its objects are”) as requiring that mind be known by a species, just as its objects are made immaterially present to itself through a species.<sup>51</sup> At first glance, this might seem to be a radical departure from Aristotle, who seems to hold that the actualized intellect enjoys an unmediated self-knowledge inseparable from its knowledge of the thing. But as I shall argue in Chapter II, §C.2.b, despite this somewhat misleading insistence upon the species, Thomas achieves a genuinely Aristotelian insight by assigning to the species the role, not of mediating, but merely of actualizing the intellect. In fact, the Aristotelian dimension of Thomas’s position consists, not in the view that species are involved in the generation of self-knowledge, but in the view that self-knowledge is only possible to an actualized intellect. Thomas is both more Augustinian *and* more Aristotelian than he has been given credit for being.

## B. The Texts

Thomas visits the topic of self-knowledge with surprising frequency. Self-knowledge appears not only in a number of *ex professo* discussions, but also in questions on the knowledge of singulars, divine and angelic modes of knowing, reflexive knowledge of

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<sup>50</sup> I shall argue this point in analyzing texts such as *ST* Ia, 87.1, *DV* 10.8, and *QDDA* 16, ad 8, where Thomas explicitly links both *De an.* III.4 and *Met.* XII.9 to the notion that the possible intellect, being essentially in potency to its object, cannot know itself without being actualized by a species.

<sup>51</sup> See for instance *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1:216:65–86]: “Dicit ergo primo quod intellectus possibilis est intelligibilis non per essenciam suam, set per aliquam speciem intelligibilem, *sicut* et alia intelligibilia. . . . Species igitur rei intellecte in actu est species ipsius intellectus, et sic per eam se ipsum intelligere potest”; and *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3; *DV* 10.8; *SCG* 2.98 and 3.46; *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 3, and 87.1, s.c.; *QDDA* 3, ad 4, and 16, ad 8. The single notable exception is found in *In Sent.* I.3.4.5. Here Thomas cites the same principle, attributing it merely to “the philosophers,” that the soul knows itself “in the same way as everything that is known”—namely, by the light of the agent intellect [Mand. 1:122]. To my knowledge, this Thomistic text is the only place in which Aristotle’s principle from *De an.* III.4 is interpreted as indicating that the light of the agent intellect rather than the species is the means of self-knowledge. I will discuss this text below in §B.1 and again in Chapter III, §C.2.b.

second intentions, knowledge of the state of one's soul, the nature of an immaterial power, the numerical multiplication of human intellects, and the judgment of intellectual truth, as well as in theological questions on Trinitarian processions. The texts, in fact, are too numerous to discuss here individually.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, in this chapter I focus only on those texts that make a distinctive contribution to Thomas's theory of self-knowledge and that shed light on the development of his thought: namely, the *ex professo* discussions in *De veritate* 10.8, *Summa contra gentiles* 3.46, and *Summa theologiae* Ia, 87.1, as well as Thomas's extended commentaries on the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic doctrines of self-knowledge in *In De anima* III, ch. 3 and *Super librum De causis*, props. 7 and 15.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, I will examine the Commentary on the *Sentences* (I. 3.4.5 and III. 23.1.2, ad 3) for its surprisingly clear treatment of certain problems that are only mentioned in passing in other texts, and for the glimpse it affords into the earliest development of Thomas's thought

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<sup>52</sup> There are at least 75 texts in 22 works that discuss self-knowledge obliquely or directly, without counting mere passing references.

<sup>53</sup> Typically only the first three of these texts are listed as *ex professo* texts on self-knowledge (see Still, "Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge," 17; and Gidone Gabriel Pedrazzini, *Anima in conscientia sui secundum S. Thomam: excerpta ex dissertatione ad Lauream in Facultate Philosophica Pontificiae Universitatis Gregoriana* [Gallarate: Dominico Ferrario, 1948], 5), but I see no reason that the relevant texts from the two commentaries should be excluded from the *ex professo* texts, since they too address the problem of self-knowledge in its own right. As we shall see, even though they appear in the context of commentaries, they yield genuine insights into Thomas's own position on self-knowledge. For one thing, he relies heavily on *De an.* III.4 and *Liber de causis*, prop. 15, in elucidating his own position in the independent texts on the subject. For another thing, in commenting on these texts, he repeatedly qualifies his statements in reference to his teaching in other texts, careful not to allow his portrayal of Aristotle's and Proclus's doctrine of self-knowledge to conflict with his own views expressed elsewhere—which would in fact be most inconsistent, given that he uses these very texts in support of his own position elsewhere! I thus argue that although these texts (especially his commentary on *De an.* III.4) are usually overlooked in discussions of Thomas's teaching of self-knowledge, they actually constitute important sources of his doctrine and ought to be considered seriously.

Lambert, conversely, takes the notion of "*ex professo*" texts much more broadly to include any text "dealing with human self knowledge issues," in which category he places also the questions of whether the soul can know that it has charity and whether it can know its own habits). This leads him to include *Quodl.* 2.2 and a few additional texts from the *Sentences* among the *ex professo* texts (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 34). While these texts, especially those from the *Sentences*, are indeed important to understanding the full scope of Thomas's theory—and I will mention them as the occasion arises—"human self knowledge issues," when interpreted this broadly, results in an unmanageably large number of so-called *ex professo* texts and leaves open the question of what selection criteria are to be used in discussing them.

on self-knowledge.<sup>54</sup> I will examine these texts in chronological order, making reference to parallel texts where appropriate. The disputed question *Utrum anima coniuncta cognoscat seipsam per essentiam*, discovered by F. Pelster in Bodleian ms. Laud Misc. 480 and subsequently published by L.A. Kennedy, will not be included, since I concur with Putallaz's judgment that it is not an authentic work of Thomas.<sup>55</sup>

### ***1. A Preliminary Set of Distinctions: Thomas's Commentary on the Sentences***

In Thomas's Commentary on the *Sentences*, the outlines of his full-fledged theory of self-knowledge are already visible, with nearly every theme from later texts making an appearance. In this early work, however,<sup>56</sup> Thomas has not yet systematized his position on self-knowledge with the thoroughness and clarity characterizing later texts. His treatment here is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it is here that he most clearly hints at a doctrine of implicit vs. explicit self-knowledge. Second, he has not yet formulated the problem of self-knowledge in terms of the tension that defines his later discussions—namely, between Augustine's permanently intuitive self-knowledge and Aristotle's sense-dependent self-

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<sup>54</sup> There are numerous other texts offering interesting perspectives on the corollaries of Thomas's doctrine; in particular, texts dealing with the mutual reflexivity of the powers of the soul and the reflexivity of the will (such as *ST* Ia, 16.4, ad 1; *Ia-IIae* 25.2; *Ia-IIae*, 112.5; *DV* 22.12); texts dealing with the perception of interior events and the presence of God (such as *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 1.3 and *Quodl.* 2.2); and discussions of prelapsarian self-knowledge (such as *ST* Ia, 94.2 and *DV* 18.5, ad 9). Nevertheless, none of these topics, while rounding out the details of Thomas's doctrine, furthers the immediate goals of this dissertation

<sup>55</sup> See F. Pelster, "Eine ungedruckte Quaestio des hl. Thomas von Aquin über die Erkenntnis der Wesenheit der Seele," *Gregorianum* 36 (1955): 618–25; L.A. Kennedy, "The Soul's Knowledge of Itself: An Unpublished Work Attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas," *Vivarium* 15 (1977): 31–45. Pelster's arguments for its authenticity were accepted by James A. Weisheipl (*Friar Thomas d'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1983], 367). The first dissenter was A.M. Kenzeler, "Une prétendue dispute de saint Thomas," *Angelicum* 33 (1956): 172–81; Kenzeler suggests that a more likely author is Bernard of Trilia. More recently, Putallaz has offered what I believe to be unassailable arguments for the inauthenticity of the question (see *Le sens de la réflexion*, Annexe, 305–310). Jean-Pierre Torrell endorses Putallaz's judgment: "Given the author's competence, we must take this reservation as an invitation to the greatest caution about its authenticity as a work by Thomas" (*Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, rev. ed., trans. Robert Royal [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005], 430).

<sup>56</sup> Torrell dates the *Commentary on the Sentences* to sometime around 1252–54, noting however that its written version was still incomplete in 1256 (*Saint Thomas Aquinas* 1:332).

knowledge—and he even grants that the human soul “always” beholds itself and God.

This claim is of special interest since it seems strikingly opposed to assertions made only a few years later in *DV* 10.8.

*a. An early division of self-knowledge*

The Commentary on the *Sentences* outlines three distinctions with respect to self-knowledge: first, the distinction between *se cogitare*, *se discernere*, and *se intelligere*; second, the distinction between knowing or loving one’s act *in ratione medii* and *in ratione obiecti*; and third, the nascent form of the standard Thomistic distinction within self-knowledge, between knowing what is proper to one’s individual self and knowing the nature of the human soul.

The first and second of these distinctions are outlined in *In Sent.* I.3.4.5. In q. 4, Thomas is investigating the nature of the Trinitarian *imago* in man, which he locates, following Augustine, in the three powers of memory, intellect, and will.<sup>57</sup> In q. 4, a. 4, he had noted that the *imago* is properly manifested in the operations of these powers only when the object of memory, intellect, and will is either the self or God. Setting aside the interesting process by which Thomas argues this thesis, I mention here just one of his arguments: that the operation of the mind preserves the correct order of the Trinitarian processions, according to which memory generates intellection, and intellection generates love, only when the mind knows or loves itself or God. With respect to all other objects, memory does not precede knowledge; rather knowledge gives birth to an acquired habit by which the object is remembered. Because the soul is already “naturally present to itself,” and God is “in the soul through [its] essence,” however, one possesses a sort of natural

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<sup>57</sup> *In Sent.* I.3.4.1 [Mand. 1.111–14]; cf. *De Trin.* 14.12.15 [CCSL 50A.442–43].

“memory” of self and God which generates one’s knowledge of these objects.<sup>58</sup> Thomas here clearly has Augustine’s *se nosse* in mind.

This faithfully Augustinian account leads to the conclusion proposed in q. 4, a. 5: if I am already naturally present to myself and to God, and this presence or “memory” generates self-knowledge (or knowledge of God), then I must always be knowing myself and God. Given Aquinas’s strenuous denial of permanent and continuous self-knowledge in later texts, it is surprising to find him here affirming that the soul always knows itself. But he is careful to qualify this claim by distinguishing between the terms *cogitare*<sup>59</sup> (“to consider a thing according to its parts and properties”), *discernere* (“to know a thing by its difference from others”), and *intelligere* (“the intellect’s simple vision (*intuitus*) of the intelligible thing which is present to it”).<sup>60</sup> Having clarified these terms, Thomas concludes:

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<sup>58</sup> *In Sent.* I.3.4.1 [Mand. 1.120]: “In illis enim quae per habitum acquisitum discuntur, non servatur ordo, ut dictum est supra, quia intelligendi actus praecedit actum memorandi. . . . Si autem considerentur istae potentiae respectu huius objecti quod est anima, sic salvatur ordo, cum ipsa anima naturaliter sit sibi praesens; unde ex notitia procedit intelligere, et non e converso. . . . Si autem considerentur respectu huius objecti quod est Deus, tunc servatur ibi actualis imitatio. Maxime autem servatur ordo, quia ex memoria procedit intelligentia, eo quod ipse est per essentiam in anima, et tenetur ab ipsa non per acquisitionem.” Following Augustine, Thomas here uses *notitia* (the noun derived from *nosse*) and *memoria* equivalently. The claim that God is always in the soul *per essentiam* probably refers to the Augustinian doctrine that the most perfect *imago Dei* is the trinity in the human soul of memory, intellect, and will, which constitute “una vita, una mens, una essentia” (*De Trin.* 10.11.18 [CCSL 50.330–31]).

<sup>59</sup> According to Rist, Augustine uses *cogitare* exclusively to indicate a less distinct “knowing about” which has not yet penetrated into the realm of quidditative knowledge; he signifies true and full understanding rather by *scire* or *intellegere* (*Augustine*, 87). Thomas’s definition seems to be in the same spirit: he here defines *cogitare* as a descriptive essential knowledge in which the nature of an object is known, not according to its specific difference, but according to its parts and properties. Thus by cogitation, we *describe* man as a smiling, family-oriented, artistic, living being; by discernment, we *define* man quidditatively as a rational animal. This usage is consonant with Thomas’s later use of Augustine’s contrasting term *discernere* to signify quidditative knowledge in *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “Anima, cum sui notitiam quaerit, non velut absentem se quaerit cernere, sed praesentem se curat discernere: non ut cognoscat se, quasi non novit; sed ut dignoscat ab eo quod alterum novit” (quoting Augustine). See Chapter II for further discussion of this point.

<sup>60</sup> *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 [Mand. 1.122]: “Respondeo dicendum, quod, secundum Augustinum *De util. credendi* cap. XI, differunt cogitare, discernere et intelligere. Discernere est cognoscere rem per differentiam sui ab aliis. Cogitare autem est considerare rem secundum partes et proprietates suas: unde cogitare dicitur quasi coagitare. Intelligere autem dicit nihil aliud quam simplicem intuitum intellectus in id quod sibi est praesens intelligibile.” I have not been able to ascertain whether the reference to *De util. cred.* is given by Thomas or inserted by Mandonnet. The text at *De util. cred.* 11.25 [CSEL 25/1.31–32] distinguishes

I say therefore, that the soul does not always cogitate or discern God, or itself, because in this way anyone would naturally know the whole nature of his soul, which is scarcely attained with great study: for such cognition, the presence of the thing in just any way is not enough; but it is necessary that [the thing] be there [i.e., in the intellect] as an object (*in ratione objecti*), and an intention of the one who knows is required. But insofar as *intelligere* means nothing more than a vision (*intuitus*), which is nothing other than an intelligible presence to the intellect in any way whatsoever, the soul always understands itself and God <Parma adds: indeterminately>, and a certain indeterminate love follows. But in another way, according to the philosophers, it is thought that the soul always understands itself in the same way that everything that is understood is only understood [when it is] illuminated by the light of the agent intellect and received into the possible intellect. Whence just as in every color bodily light is seen, so in every intelligible the light of the agent intellect is seen; but not as an object (*in ratione objecti*), but as a means of knowing (*in ratione medii cognoscendi*).<sup>61</sup>

It is immediately clear that even in this earliest text on self-knowledge, Thomas is unwilling to grant to the human soul unqualified permanent self-knowledge. His definitions of the terms *cogitare*, *discernere*, and *intelligere* allow him to divide the three terms into two groups: 1) knowledge of the soul's nature (*cogitare*, *discernere*); 2) the soul's intelligible presence to itself in any way whatsoever (*intelligere*). This division serves to restrict the soul's permanent self-knowledge to *intelligere*, which is so open-ended that it can include intellectual presence "in any way whatsoever." (Here the editions differ on whether the soul's permanent intellection of itself and God is called "indeterminate"; the word seems appropriate, given that Thomas describes permanent self-love and love of God as "indeterminate." In any case, he cannot mean that we "always" have determinate, i.e.,

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*intelligere*, *credere*, and *opinari*. Still, its definition of *intelligere* is fairly close to the definition Aquinas gives here: Augustine defines it as "aliquid mentis certa ratione videatur"; Aquinas, as "simplicem intuitum intellectus in id quod sibi est praesens intelligibile." Common to both is the notion that intellection constitutes an intellectual vision.

<sup>61</sup> *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 [Mand. 1.122]: "Dico ergo, quod anima non semper cogitat et discernit de Deo, nec de se, quia sic quilibet sciret naturaliter totam naturam animae suae, ad quod vix magno studio pervenitur: ad talem enim cognitionem non sufficit praesentia rei quolibet modo; sed oportet ut sit ibi in ratione objecti, et exigitur intentio cognoscentis. Sed secundum quod intelligere nihil aliud dicit quam intuitum, qui nihil aliud est quam praesentia intelligibilis ad intellectum quocumque modo, sic anima semper intelligit se et Deum <Parma add. indeterminate [6.43]>, et consequitur quidam amor indeterminatus. Alio tamen modo, secundum philosophos, intelligitur quod anima semper se intelligit, eo quod omne quod intelligitur, non intelligitur nisi illustratum lumine intellectus agentis, et receptum in intellectu possibili. Unde sicut in omni colore videtur lumen corporale, ita in omni intelligibili videtur lumen intellectus agentis; non tamen in ratione objecti sed in ratione medii cognoscendi."

distinct knowledge of ourselves and God, so the gist is the same no matter which version of the text one accepts.)

To say that the soul always possesses “indeterminate” self-knowledge, however, is only to say that there is some sense in which the soul is permanently intellectually present to itself. Thus, seeking a more precise answer, Thomas outlines another solution, that of “the philosophers” (viz., Aristotle, *De an.* III.4.430a2–3): the soul always knows itself in the same way as it knows anything else, namely by the light of the agent intellect.<sup>62</sup> This solution suggests two ways in which something can be encompassed in the gaze of the intellect: “as an object” (*in ratione objecti*) and “as a means of knowing” (*in ratione medii cognoscendi*). Thomas illustrates this with a comparison to vision. Both light and color are “seen,” or present to the eye, at the same time, but in different ways: the color is seen as the object of sight, whereas the light is seen as the *means* whereby the color is made present. It is certainly not true that I see the light in the same way as I see the color, since I do not *notice* the light. Yet, neither is it true that I do *not* see the light, because the color cannot be present to my eye except by means of the light.

This example of vision implies a difference in attention: that to which the eye/intellect currently attends is present as an object, whereas that which makes that object visible/intelligible is present only as a means of knowledge, unnoticed as long as attention is being paid to the object that it makes present. The light of the agent intellect, in fact, is the means of knowing insofar as it illuminates the objects of knowledge to render them

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<sup>62</sup> As mentioned in note 51 above, *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 constitutes the only text wherein Thomas interprets Aristotle’s self-knowledge “in the same way as other things” (here, *eo modo*, but elsewhere, *sicut et alia*) to mean “by the light of the agent intellect.”



intelligible.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, Thomas seems to be arguing that the intellect always perceives its own light as part of its perception of any known object—not distinctly, as though the intellect were discerning or cogitating the nature of its own light, nor attentively, as an object in its own right, but rather as a fundamental yet unnoticed element within the perception.<sup>64</sup>

*b. Towards the standard Thomistic division of self-knowledge*

The distinction between knowing the soul's nature (*cogitare/discernere*) and intellectually gazing upon the soul (*intelligere*) already contains the seeds of what will be enshrined in *De veritate* 10.8 and countless other texts as the distinction between knowing *what* the soul is and knowing *that* the soul is.<sup>65</sup> This distinction appears more clearly in *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, where Thomas offers the following response to the third objection:

It happens that through cognition the soul is bent back (*reflectitur*) upon itself or upon those things which are its own, in two ways. In one way, according as the cognitive power knows its own nature, or [the nature] of those things which are in it; and it belongs only to the intellect to know the quiddities of things. But the intellect, as it is said in III *De anima*, knows itself like other things, but indeed not by a species of itself, but [by a species] of the object which is its form; from which it knows the nature of its act, and from the nature of the act, the nature of the power of the one who knows, and from the nature of the power, the nature of the essence, and consequently [the natures] of the other powers. . . . In another way, the soul is bent back upon its own acts by knowing that these acts are (*esse*). . . . Because the

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<sup>63</sup> Thomas describes the agent intellect as the intellectual light that makes the phantasms intelligible-in-act; it is the means whereby objects are made present to the possible intellect. The classic text on this point is *ST* Ia, 79.4; see also *DV* 10.6 and *SCG* 3.45. It should be noted that the “light” of the agent intellect and visible light are both the means of knowledge, but Thomas observes that for Aristotle, they play slightly different roles as means (*ST* Ia, 79.3, ad 2 [Leon. 5.264]: “[C]irca effectum luminis est duplex opinio. Quidam enim dicunt quod lumen requiritur ad visum, ut faciat colores actu visibiles. Et secundum hoc, similiter requiritur, et propter idem, intellectus agens ad intelligendum, propter quod lumen ad videndum.—Secundum alios vero, lumen requiritur ad videndum, non propter colores, ut fiant actu visibiles; sed ut medium fiat actu lucidum, ut Commentator dicit in II *de Anima*. Et secundum hoc, similitudo qua Aristoteles assimilat intellectum agentem lumini, attenditur quantum ad hoc, quod sicut hoc est necessarium ad videndum, ita illud ad intelligendum; sed non propter idem.”

<sup>64</sup> For texts proposing a similar doctrine, which will be examined at length in Chapter III, see *In Sent.* I.17.1.5; *DV* 8.14, *DV* 10.8, ad 9 and ad 10 s.c.; *DV* 18.1, ad 10; *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 4.

<sup>65</sup> See for instance, *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 1.3; *SCG* 2.75; *SCG* 3.46; *ST* Ia, 87.1, 87.4, and 111.1, ad 3; *De unit. int.* 5; *Quodl.* 2.2; and *DM* 16.8, ad 7.

intellect is a power that does not use a corporeal organ, it can know its act, insofar as it is affected in some way by the object and informed by the species of the object.<sup>66</sup>

Here Thomas presents two types of self-knowledge: knowledge of the soul's nature and perception of one's own existing acts, a distinction that he characterizes in later texts as knowing oneself *quid est* vs. knowing oneself *an est*. Significantly, Thomas here for the first time explains that both types of self-knowledge depend upon the actualization of the soul in receiving a species from without. In order to know the existence of one's acts, there must *be* an act, informed by a species; moreover, one can only know one's own nature by reasoning from the nature of that species. This insight, which remains constant throughout Thomas's writings on self-knowledge, makes it possible to preserve the uniquely human requirement that all our knowing begin in the senses.<sup>67</sup> In later texts, Thomas will specify more clearly the way in which self-knowledge proceeds from the soul's actualization in an act of knowledge: I will return to this theme in more depth in Chapters II and IV.

It is particularly interesting to note, however, certain unusual aspects of this initial immature formulation of a principle that will become the cornerstone of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge. First, although this distinction is essentially the same one that is found in every subsequent major Thomistic text on self-knowledge, Thomas' phrasing of it here is

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<sup>66</sup> *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3 [Moos 3.703–4]: [A]nimam reflecti per cognitionem supra seipsam, vel supra ea quae ipsius sunt, contingit *dupliciter*. *Uno modo* secundum quod potentia cognoscitiva cognoscit naturam sui, vel eorum quae in ipsa sunt; et hoc est tantum intellectus cuius est quidditates rerum cognoscere. Intellectus autem, ut dicitur in III *De Anima*, sicut alia, cognoscit seipsum, quia scilicet per speciem non quidem sui, sed objecti, quae est forma ejus; ex qua cognoscit actus sui naturam, et ex natura actus naturam potentiae cognoscentis, et ex natura potentiae naturam essentiae, et per consequens aliarum potentiarum. . . . *Alio modo* anima reflectitur super actus suos cognoscendo illos actus esse. . . . Intellectus autem cum sit potentia non utens organo corporali, potest cognoscere actum suum, secundum quod patitur quodammodo ab objecto, et informatur per speciem objecti."

<sup>67</sup> As Blaise Romeyer puts it, "C'est par la sensation que notre conscience psychologique s'éveille d'abord" . . . "l'intuition concrète ou prise de conscience par l'esprit se trouve au terme, non à l'origine, de nos actes mentaux; elle n'est pas une semence, elle est un fruit." See "Notre science de l'esprit humain," (1923), 32 and 44.

disadvantageous. By dividing self-knowledge into knowledge of the soul's nature and knowledge of one's own acts, he leaves himself open to the charge of objectifying the self. In perceiving that there *is* an act, how does the intellect know that this act is its own? Christopher Martin, in fact, argues that Thomas is unable to account for the fact that in self-knowledge, intellectual and volitional acts are experienced as *our own*, and not as third-person thoughts and desires.<sup>68</sup> This charge can be dispelled by examining later texts (see Chapter II, §C.2.a and V, §C.2), but for now, it should be noted that Thomas's exposition of self-knowledge in this early text provides little in the way of defense. It is not until *DV* 10.8 that Thomas will explicitly state that in knowing its acts, the soul perceives itself to exist; and it is not until then that he offers a clear explanation of how self-knowledge follows from the soul's actualization in some intentional act.<sup>69</sup>

Second, when explaining how the soul comes to know its nature, Thomas repeats the Aristotelian dictum that the intellect knows itself in the same way as it knows other things (*De an.* III.4.430a2–3), this time with an explicit reference to *De an.* III. But interestingly, his application of this principle differs significantly from that of *In Sent.* I.3.4.5. There, he used the principle to show how the soul could be said to “always” see the light of the agent intellect in every act of abstraction. Here, the principle explains how the soul arrives at a knowledge of its own nature by a species—not a species of itself, but that of an externally known object. Has Thomas changed his mind?

Given the proximity of the two texts, a shift in doctrine seems unlikely. Rather, I think that Thomas's fascination with the *De anima* dictum has little to do with whether the

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<sup>68</sup> Martin, “Self-Knowledge and Cognitive Ascent,” 99.

<sup>69</sup> See note 74 below.

species or the agent intellect is the source of self-knowledge. Both species and the agent intellect can be said to effect self-knowledge because they are *both* responsible for actualizing the possible intellect in the act of knowing: the agent intellect by producing a species and the species by in-forming the possible intellect.<sup>70</sup> The insight that Thomas recognizes in Aristotle, in fact, is that all self-knowledge begins *from the act in which another is known*, whether one reasons from that act to a quidditative knowledge of the soul, or whether one perceives the existence of that act, and therefore one's own existence, in that act. In subsequent writings, Thomas will tend to emphasize the role of the species rather than that of the agent intellect in actualizing the intellect, possibly in order to avoid the mistaken interpretation that the light of the agent intellect can render the soul intelligible to itself independently of the knowledge of sense-objects.

Third, *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3 is also noteworthy for explicitly linking reflexion to self-knowledge: "Through cognition the soul is bent back (*reflectitur*) upon itself or upon those things which are its own, in two ways." Because Thomas usually treats reflexion separately from self-knowledge, this passage is worth highlighting as evidence of their connection. I will return to this theme in Chapter IV, §C.

In his Commentary on the *Sentences*, then, Thomas sketches a preliminary portrait of self-knowledge. It lays out the basic distinctions that become familiar in later texts, yet without the precision and development of later treatments. In doing so, it manifests

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<sup>70</sup> *ST* Ia, 79.3 [Leon. 5.264]: "Sed quia Aristoteles non posuit formas rerum naturalium subsistere sine materia; formae autem in materia existentes non sunt intelligibiles actu: sequebatur quod naturae seu formae rerum sensibilium, quas intelligimus, non essent intelligibiles actu. . . . Oportebat igitur ponere aliquam virtutem ex parte intellectus, quae faceret intelligibilia in actu, per abstractionem specierum a conditionibus materialibus. Et haec est necessitas ponendi intellectum agentem"; *In De an.* III.1 [Leon. 45/1.206:323–26]: "[S]pecies igitur intelligibilis non est forma intellectus possibilis nisi secundum quod est intelligibilis actu, non est autem intelligibilis actu nisi secundum quod est a fantasmatis abstracta."

Thomas's concern, right from the start, to outline a theory of self-knowledge that respects the soul's fundamental orientation toward the senses while accounting for both the soul's perception of its singular self and its understanding of its own nature. Yet it is not until two or three years later, in *De veritate*, that Thomas articulates a more refined and convincing explanation of how this works.

## **2. A Fourfold Doctrine of Self-Knowledge: *De veritate*, q. 10, a. 8**

The *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*<sup>71</sup> contains the longest and most detailed exposition of self-knowledge that Thomas has left to us. In question 10, Thomas discusses various Augustinian principles regarding the human mind. Article 8 examines the question of “Whether the mind knows itself through its essence (*per essentiam*), or through some species.” The position that the human mind knows itself through its essence is ostensibly supported by Augustine's claim that “mind knows itself through itself (*per seipsam*) because it is incorporeal.”<sup>72</sup> As we have already seen in *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3, however, Thomas is committed to the principle that the intellect must be in act in order for any self-knowledge to occur. *DV* 10.8 adds a further consideration: the human intellect is essentially in potency to its object, and must be actualized by knowledge of some other object.<sup>73</sup> Therefore to admit that the human mind knows itself through its own essence would be to admit that the human mind is essentially actual, not needing actualization from without. In order to maintain the properly human character of self-knowledge without abandoning Augustinian authority,

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<sup>71</sup> Torrell dates *De veritate* at 1256–59; see *Saint Thomas Aquinas* 1:62. Weisheipl clarifies that q. 10 was disputed during the academic year 1257–58; see *Friar Thomas d'Aquino*, 126.

<sup>72</sup> *DV* 10.8, arg. 1 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.320:117–18]: “Mens se ipsam per se ipsam novit quoniam est incorporea,” citing *De Trin.* 9.3.3, cited above in note 5.

<sup>73</sup> See notes 82 and 99 below. For discussion of this principle, see Lambert, “Aquinas' Comparison of the Intellect to Prime Matter,” 80–99. See also *SCG* 3.46; *DV* 8.6; *DV* 10.8; *De unit. int.* 1; *In De an.* II.6; *In De an.* III.3.

Thomas provides his longest and most detailed presentation of the four different ways in which the soul can know itself.

Thomas begins his exposition by outlining a twofold division in self-knowledge:

A twofold knowledge of the soul can be had by everyone, as Augustine says in Book 9 of the *De Trinitate*. One is that by which the soul of each man knows itself only with respect to that which is proper to it; the other is that by which the soul is known with respect to that which is common to all souls. The latter knowledge, therefore, which concerns every soul commonly, is that by which the nature of the soul is known; but the knowledge which someone has of the soul insofar as it is proper to himself, is the knowledge of the soul insofar as it exists (*habet esse*) in this individual. Thus, through this knowledge, it is known that the soul is (*an est*), as when someone perceives that he has a soul. Through the other type of knowledge, however, it is known what the soul is (*quid est*) and what its proper accidents are.<sup>74</sup>

This Augustinian distinction between knowing *that* the soul is (which I will call self-awareness) and knowing *what* the soul is (which I will call quidditative self-knowledge), is already familiar from the Commentary on the *Sentences*, but appears here fully-fledged for the first time. In particular, Thomas is now referring to self-awareness more precisely as the soul's perception, not just of its existing acts, but of its singular existing self.

Self-awareness (the perception "that the soul exists" or "that one has a soul"<sup>75</sup>) can be divided into two kinds, actual and habitual. Actual self-awareness is a perception of one's individually existing soul in one's acts: "One perceives that he has a soul and lives and is, because he perceives that he senses and understands and exercises other vital

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<sup>74</sup> DV 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:200–216]: "[D]e anima duplex cognitio haberi potest ab unoquoque, ut Augustinus dicit in IX De Trinitate: una quidem qua cuiusque anima se tantum cognoscit quantum ad id quod est ei proprium, alia qua cognoscitur anima quantum ad id quod est omnibus animabus commune. Illa igitur cognitio quae communiter de omni anima habetur, est qua cognoscitur animae natura; cognitio vero quam quis habet de anima quantum ad id quod est sibi proprium, est cognitio de anima secundum quod esse habet in tali individuo. Unde per hanc cognitionem cognoscitur an est anima, sicut cum aliquis percipit se animam habere; per aliam vero cognitionem scitur quid est anima et quae sunt per se accidentia eius." See *De Trin.* 9.6.9 cited above in note 15.

<sup>75</sup> DV 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:213–15]: "[C]ognoscitur an est anima . . . aliquis percipit se animam habere."

operations of this kind.”<sup>76</sup> The consistent use of verbs of sensation or vision (*videre*, *experiri*, *percipere*) here and in parallel passages is intriguing. The usage is consistent with Thomas’s definition of intellection in *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 as a “gaze of the intellect,” but it does raise the question of what an intellectual “gaze” is. Even more curious is Thomas’s diverse characterization of the act’s content: “one perceives that he has a soul”; “one perceives that he has a soul and lives and is”; “it itself is actually perceived”; “each one experiences in himself that he has a soul and that the acts of the soul are within him.”<sup>77</sup> These peculiarities are significant enough to deserve a treatment of their own: I shall return to them in Chapter II.

The second kind of self-awareness is habitual, in which “the soul sees itself through its essence (*per essentiam*), that is, from the fact that its essence is present to itself, it has the power to go forth into an act of cognition of its own self. . . . Thus it is clear that in some way our mind knows itself by its essence, as Augustine says.”<sup>78</sup> It is frequently thought that Thomas introduces habitual self-awareness so as to have some way of admitting Augustine’s *per essentiam* self-knowledge without having to grant it any real epistemological status. Indeed, habitual self-awareness is one of the most Augustinian aspects of Aquinas’s treatment of self-knowledge; it derives precisely from Augustine’s self-familiarity (*se*

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<sup>76</sup> DV 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:221–25]: “[S]ic dico quod anima cognoscitur per actus suos: in hoc enim aliquis se percipit animam habere et vivere et esse quod percipit se sentire et intelligere et alia huiusmodi vitae opera exercere.”

<sup>77</sup> DV 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:215]: “[A]liquis percipit se animam habere”; [321:222–24]: “[A]liquis se percipit animam habere et vivere et esse”; [322:245–46]: “[E]x ea enim actus progrediuntur in quibus actualiter ipsa percipitur”; and ad 8 s.c., [325:522–24]: “[U]nusquisque in se ipso experitur se animam habere et actus animae sibi inesse.”

<sup>78</sup> DV 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:235–38, 322:311–14]: “[A]nima per essentiam suam se videt, id est, ex hoc ipso quod essentia sua est sibi praesens, est potens exire in actum cognitionis sui ipsius . . . Sic ergo patet quod mens nostra cognoscit se ipsam quodam modo per essentiam suam, ut Augustinus dicit.”

*nosse*).<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, habitual self-awareness has considerable cognitive and ontological significance. As will be explained in Chapter III and V, it is an integral and indispensable part of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge as well as of his understanding of human nature.

In *DV* 10.8, Thomas also divides quidditative self-knowledge into simple apprehension and judgment.<sup>80</sup> As I will argue in Chapter IV, these are not really two different kinds of self-knowledge, but two stages in the attainment of quidditative self-knowledge. The first kind describes the deduction by which the soul comes to apprehend its nature. Starting with the fact that the soul knows universal natures, philosophers reason that the soul's species (and therefore the soul itself) must be immaterial; "from this they proceeded to discover the other properties of the intellectual soul."<sup>81</sup> This quidditative self-knowledge is curiously like and unlike quidditative knowledge of other natures. Just as in apprehending the nature of sense-objects, so too in apprehending its own nature, the soul relies on species abstracted from sense-perception in order to gain an understanding of what it is (though this species is not a species of the soul itself, but rather whatever species is currently informing the possible intellect). Here Thomas gives a first insight into a point

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<sup>79</sup> Though we shall see in Chapter III that Thomas does not always interpret Augustine's permanent familiarity with oneself as habitual self-awareness: rather, in some texts he offers an alternate interpretation.

<sup>80</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:250–55]: "[A]d cognitionem enim duo concurrere oportet, scilicet apprehensionem et iudicium de re apprehensa; et ideo cognitio qua natura animae cognoscitur potest considerari et quantum ad apprehensionem et quantum ad iudicium."

<sup>81</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:275–86]: "Quod patet intuendo modum quo philosophi naturam animae investigaverunt: ex hoc enim quod anima humana universales rerum naturas cognoscit, perceperunt quod species qua intelligimus est immaterialis, alias esset individuata et sic non duceret in cognitionem universalis; ex hoc autem quod species intelligibilis est immaterialis, perceperunt quod intellectus est res quaedam non dependens a materia, et ex hoc ad alias proprietates cognoscendas intellectivae animae processerunt."



that will become a matter of overriding concern in his theory of self-knowledge and that is most clearly developed in *ST* Ia, 87.1: the essential passivity of the human intellect.<sup>82</sup>

The second kind of quidditative self-knowledge is that wherein, after grasping the soul's essence by simple apprehension, we pronounce in an act of judgment, "that it exists as we had apprehended from the previously mentioned deduction (*deductio*) . . . 'insofar as we behold the inviolable truth, we define, as perfectly as we can, not what sort of mind each man has, but what sort of mind it ought to be in the eternal norms.'"<sup>83</sup> This judgment of self is mentioned only here and then again in *ST* Ia, 87.1. Like habitual self-knowledge, the judgment of self "insofar as we behold the inviolable truth" appears to be introduced in an attempt to fuse the Augustinian and Aristotelian theories of knowing. The role of the "eternal norms" or "inviolable truth" in achieving certainty regarding the objects of knowledge is, in fact, the flashpoint of the medieval struggle between Augustinian illuminationism, in which certainty is given by the light of divine truth falling from above into the mind, and the rising Aristotelian theory of knowledge derived from sensation. Yet perhaps Thomas's positing of this judgment is more than a sop to Augustine. We will return to quidditative self-knowledge and judgment of self in Chapter IV.

To summarize: the main two-part division of self-knowledge into knowing one's individual soul and knowing the soul's common nature is a refinement upon Thomas's earliest distinction in *In Sent.* I. 3.4.5 between intellection of self vs. cogitation/discernment

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<sup>82</sup> Just as prime matter can only be known through its actualization by a form, so the human soul, the lowest of the intellects, can only be known through its actualization by a *species superinducta* (see *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:258–75], Latin text cited in note 99 below).

<sup>83</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:295–304]: "Si vero consideretur cognitio quam de natura animae habemus quantum ad iudicium quo sententiamus ita esse ut deductione praedicta apprehenderamus, sic notitia animae habetur in quantum 'intuemur inviolabilem veritatem ex qua perfecte quantum possumus diffinimus, non qualis sit uniuscuiusque hominis mens sed qualis esse sempiternis rationibus debeat,' ut Augustinus dicit IX De Trinitate." See *De Trin.* 9.6.9 [CCSL 50.301], cited in note 15 above.

of self, and the subsequent distinction in *In Sent.* III. 23.1.2, ad 3, between the soul's knowledge of its existing acts and the knowledge of its nature. The further bifurcation of this main twofold division, for a total of four types of self-knowledge, seems to be an attempt to enumerate thoroughly all the ways in which the soul had historically been said to know itself (*per essentiam*, *per actum*, *per speciem*, and *intuendo veritatem inviolabilem*). By distinguishing these four different kinds of self-knowledge, Thomas can reconcile apparently conflicting authorities, by arguing that they are discussing different types of self-knowledge.<sup>84</sup> We will see that in later texts Thomas generally mentions only the broader two-part distinction between individual and universal self-knowledge. In so doing, he is able to spend more time elaborating some of the problems that necessitate this distinction.

### ***3. Knowing the Soul Through Itself: Summa contra gentiles, bk. 3, ch. 46***

The next major text in which Thomas treats of self-knowledge is *SCG* 3.46.<sup>85</sup> This time, the context for discussion is the question of whether the soul in this life can know separate substances. In the previous chapter (ch. 45), Thomas had determined that the separate substances are too blindingly intelligible to be known by weak human intellects as united to the body. In *SCG* 3.46, he addresses self-knowledge in order to refute an objection

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<sup>84</sup> See the end of the *responsio* in *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:311–17]: “Sic ergo patet quod mens nostra cognoscit seipsam quodammodo per essentiam suam, ut Augustinus dicit: quodam vero modo per intentionem, sive per speciem, ut philosophus et Commentator dicunt; quodam vero intuendo inviolabilem veritatem, ut item Augustinus dicit.”

<sup>85</sup> The precise date of the *Summa contra gentiles* is hard to pinpoint. Although certain chapters of book 3 can be precisely dated, it is unclear whether 3.46 was written closer to the period in which *De veritate* was written, or whether it overlaps with the composition of the *Prima Pars* at all: Torrell dates book 3 of the *Summa contra gentiles* at 1260–64 (see *Saint Thomas Aquinas* 1:102). It seems safe to assume that our text is either intermediate between *De veritate* and the *Prima Pars*, or that it is closer but still prior to the latter, which was composed in the years immediately preceding 1268. Texts parallel to *SCG* 3.46 include *ST* Ia, 88.1.

that argues that the soul knows its own essence through itself (*per seipsam*), and thus knows the essences of separate substances through its own self-knowledge.<sup>86</sup>

The discussion of self-knowledge in *SCG* 3.46 is rather unsystematic, and some of its main points will be much more clearly expressed in *ST*, but it does offer some interesting new insights, together with a puzzling departure from the doctrine of *DV* 10.8. Ch. 46 begins by stacking up a series of four arguments against the possibility of the soul's knowing its own quiddity through itself (*per seipsam*). The gist of these four arguments is that if the soul knew its own essence *per seipsam*, our simple everyday experience of self-knowledge would be entirely different: we would unerringly always know the nature of the soul. In reality, however, this knowledge is not only difficult to attain, but never reached by most people. Thus Thomas proceeds to outline four ways in which knowing one's essence *per seipsam* would produce perpetual perfect knowledge of the soul's nature. The implied premise in each of these cases is the obvious fact that most people do not perfectly or even accurately know the soul's nature: by *modus tollens*, therefore, Thomas concludes that the soul does not know its nature *per seipsam*.<sup>87</sup>

The third of these arguments deserves special note. Thomas explains that if the soul knew what it is *per seipsam*, it would naturally have quidditative knowledge of itself. "But in those things which are naturally known, no one can err: in fact, no one errs in the knowledge of indemonstrable principles. Therefore no one would err regarding what the

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<sup>86</sup> The text of Augustine, as cited by Thomas, is as follows: "Mens, sicut corporearum rerum notitias per sensus corporis colligit, sic incorporearum rerum per semetipsam. Ergo et seipsam per seipsam novit: quoniam est incorporea" (*SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.122], citing an almost identical passage from *De Trin.* 9.3.3 (see note 5 above).

<sup>87</sup> For a parallel line of reasoning, see *In De anima* II.6 [Leon. 45/1.94:186–90]: "Si autem directe essenciam suam cognosceret anima per se ipsam, esset contrarius ordo observandus in anime cognitione; quia quanto aliquid esset propinquius essentiae animae, tanto per prius cognosceretur ab ea."

soul is, if the soul knew this through itself.”<sup>88</sup> He concludes that since we *do* err regarding the soul’s nature,<sup>89</sup> the soul does not know what it is *per seipsam*. Now, it is interesting that in *DV* 10.8, ad 2, Thomas insists that although we can be mistaken regarding the nature of the soul, we can never be mistaken regarding its individual existence: “No one has ever erred by not perceiving that he lived, which pertains to the knowledge by which someone knows singularly what occurs in his soul; according to which knowledge it is said that the soul is known habitually through its essence.”<sup>90</sup> Given the unmistakeable self-evidence of the soul’s knowledge of its own existence, could the third argument of *SCG* III.46 imply that perception of one’s existence is immediate and even *per seipsam* in some sense?

This suggestion, in fact, is explicitly validated immediately afterwards, in Thomas’s positive solution to the problem. The key to this solution lies in his interpretation of a crucial Augustinian passage, which Thomas quotes as follows:

When the soul seeks self-knowledge, it does not seek to see itself as though it were absent, but strives to discern (*discernere*) itself as present: not to know itself, as though it knew not; but in order to distinguish itself from what it knows to be distinct.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.122]: “In his autem quae sunt naturaliter nota, nullus potest errare: in cognitione enim principiorum indemonstrabilium nullus errat. Nullus igitur erraret circa animam quid est, si hoc anima per seipsam cognosceret.”

<sup>89</sup> See *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.122]: “. . . cum multi opinati sint animam esse hoc vel illud corpus, et aliqui numerum, vel harmoniam.”

<sup>90</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 2 [Leon. 22/2.323:335–41]: “Ad secundum dicendum quod nullus umquam erravit in hoc quod non perciperet se vivere, quod pertinet ad cognitionem qua aliquis singulariter cognoscit quid in anima sua agatur; secundum quam cognitionem dictum est quod anima per essentiam suam cognoscitur in habitu.” He repeats the same point in ad 8 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.325:521–25]: “Ad octavum dicendum quod secundum hoc scientia de anima est certissima quod unusquisque in se ipso experitur se animam habere et actus animae sibi inesse; sed cognoscere quid sit anima difficillimum est.” As will become clear in the third chapter, for Thomas, “knowing what the soul is” means that one knows the full correct definition of the soul, not that one has developed one’s own idea of what a soul may be; thus to think that the soul is mortal is not to “know what the soul is.” Conversely, we shall see that “knowing that one has a soul” does not mean that one knows that one’s soul is immortal and immaterial: it is simply a perception of a “this” which may later even be construed as a neural epiphenomenon by materialists.

<sup>91</sup> *De Trin.* 10.9.12, as cited by Aquinas [Leon. 14.123]: “Anima, cum sui notitiam quaerit, non velut absentem se quaerit cernere, sed praesentem se curat discernere: non ut cognoscat se, quasi non novit; sed ut

Aquinas reads this text as distinguishing between the soul's knowledge of itself merely as present to itself and its discernment of itself as distinct from other things. Since, as noted earlier, he considers the Augustinian *discernere* to signify quidditative knowledge,<sup>92</sup> it is not surprising that he then goes on to identify these two types of knowledge with the soul's knowledge of its own existence (*quod est*) and its knowledge of its nature (*quid est*).<sup>93</sup> He then concludes:

. . . we know regarding the soul that it is (*quia est*) through itself (*per seipsam*), insofar as we perceive its acts; yet we investigate what it is (*quid est*) from [its] acts and objects through the principles of speculative sciences. . . .<sup>94</sup>

As in *DV* 10.8, the soul perceives its own existence in its acts, and knows its own nature by reasoning from its object, through a species.<sup>95</sup> And here again self-knowledge hinges upon the soul's actualization from without.<sup>96</sup> But now Thomas adds the claim that the soul knows its own existence through itself (*per seipsam*). Indeed, if the soul knows its own existence *per seipsam*, all the characteristics that were denied to quidditative self-knowledge in the

dignoscat ab eo quod alterum novit.” This is a paraphrase of the actual text from *De Trin.* [CCSL 50.325]: “Non itaque velut absentem se quaeret cernere, sed praesentem se curet discernere. Nec se quasi non norit cognoscat, sed ab eo quod alterum novit dinoscat.”

<sup>92</sup> See *In Sent.* I.3.4.5, cited above in note 60.

<sup>93</sup> *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “Ex quo dat intelligere quod anima per se cognoscit seipsam quasi praesentem, non quasi ab aliis distinctam. Unde et in hoc dicit aliquos errasse, quod animam non distinxerunt ab illis quae sunt ab ipsa diversa. Per hoc autem quod scitur de re quid est, scitur res prout est ab aliis distincta: unde et definitio, quae significat quid est res, distinguit definitum ab omnibus aliis. . . . Sic igitur, secundum intentionem Augustini, mens nostra per seipsam novit seipsam inquantum de se cognoscit *quod est*. Ex hoc enim ipso quod percipit se agere, percipit se esse; agit autem per seipsam; unde per seipsam de se cognoscit quod est.”

<sup>94</sup> *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “Sicut autem de anima scimus quia est per seipsam, inquantum eius actus percipimus; quid autem sit, inquirimus ex actibus et obiectis per principia scientiarum speculativarum: ita etiam de his quae sunt in anima nostra, scilicet potentiis et habitibus, scimus quidem quia sunt, inquantum actus percipimus; quid vero sint, ex ipsorum actuum qualitate invenimus.”

<sup>95</sup> *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “[I]ntellectus vero possibilis noster [intelligit de se quid sit] per speciem intelligibilem, per quam fit actu intelligens.”

<sup>96</sup> *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “Dicit enim [Aristoteles] in III de anima, quod intellectus possibilis intelligit se sicut alia. Intelligit enim se per speciem intelligibilem, qua fit actu in genere intelligibilem. . . . [I]ntellectus vero possibilis noster per speciem intelligibilem, per quam fit actu intelligens”; this is a reference to Aristotle, *De an.* 3.4.430a1–2. Note that just as in *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:286–95], Thomas here interprets this “sicut alia” as referring to knowledge through species.

first part of *SCG* 3.46 must belong to self-awareness. The claim that the soul knows its existence *per seipsam* thus suggests an explanation for the immediacy and certitude of self-awareness.

This new claim seems inconsistent with *DV* 10.8, where Thomas argued that the soul can only be said to know itself habitually *per essentiam* or *per seipsam*. Indeed, Thomas now even incorporates the characteristics of habitual self-awareness from *DV* 10.8 into his discussion of knowledge *quod est* in *SCG* 3.46 (for instance, he says that the soul knows that it is, because it is present to itself<sup>97</sup>). Moreover, Thomas cannot be unaware that in the context of *De Trinitate* 10.9, Augustine is equating the soul's "knowing itself as present, not distinct," with self-familiarity (*se nosse*), a phenomenon which appears to be relegated to the realm of habitual self-knowledge in *DV* 10.8.

In sum, then, this text from the *Summa contra gentiles* is one of Thomas's most interesting yet baffling texts on self-knowledge. He carries forward the themes of previous texts, contrasting the self-evidence of one's knowledge of one's own existence with the difficulty of quidditative self-knowledge; he also emphasizes the origin of self-awareness in the soul's acts and the necessity for discursively reasoning to the soul's nature. The text also makes an important contribution to Thomas's overall discussion of self-knowledge in its interpretation of an important Augustinian passage: in quidditative self-knowledge, the soul knows itself as distinct from everything else, whereas in self-awareness, it knows itself *as present, not as distinct from other things* (the significance of this clue will be addressed in Chapter II, §A). Yet the characterization of self-awareness as occurring *per seipsam* appears

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<sup>97</sup> See *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: "Ex quo [Augustinus] dat intelligere quod anima per se cognoscit seipsam quasi praesentem"; and compare *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:235–38]: "[A]nima per essentiam suam se videt, id est, ex hoc ipso quod essentia sua est sibi praesens, est potens exire in actum cognitionis sui ipsius."

to contradict the *De veritate* doctrine. This apparent contradiction will be investigated in the conclusion to this chapter.

#### 4. *Knowing the Soul Through its Act: Summa theologiae Ia, q. 87, a. 1*

The next *ex professo* treatment of self-knowledge occurs in q. 87, a. 1 of the *Prima Pars*,<sup>98</sup> which raises the same question as *DV* 10.8: Does the intellectual soul know itself by its essence? Here again, too, as in *DV* 10.8, Thomas is explicitly concerned with classifying types of self-knowledge. Yet the focus of this article is more anthropological than previous discussions of self-knowledge. The article's central operative principle is the principle briefly mentioned in *De veritate*, and *Summa contra gentiles*<sup>99</sup> and developed here in depth: namely, that by nature, the human intellect is in potency to knowledge, and that self-knowledge requires actualization from outside by an intelligible species.

The familiar distinction between self-awareness and quidditative self-knowledge is again in evidence in *ST Ia*, 87.1. But this time, there is a slight shift in terminology: Thomas maintains that both occur *per actum*. Also, departing from the doctrine of *DV* 10.8, he leaves no room for the possibility of human self-knowledge *per essentiam* in this life. As the contrast between *per essentiam* and *per actum* self-knowledge is the main theme of the

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<sup>98</sup> Torrell dates the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa theologiae* to 1265–68 (*Saint Thomas Aquinas* 1:333). It is worth noting that the teaching of the *Summa* is restated exactly in the *Sententia libri De anima*; see *In De anima* III.3, at 430a2 [Leon. 45/1.216:65–217:106]; Torrell, following Gauthier, dates this commentary as contemporaneous with qq. 75–89 of the *Summa theologiae* (see *Saint Thomas Aquinas* 1:341).

<sup>99</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:258–66]: “Anima enim nostra in genere intellectualium tenet ultimum locum, sicut materia prima in genere sensibilibus . . . sicut enim materia prima est in potentia ad omnes formas sensibiles, ita et intellectus possibilis noster ad omnes formas intelligibiles, unde in ordine intelligibilium est sicut potentia pura ut materia in ordine sensibilibus”; *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “Intelligit enim se per speciem intelligibilem, qua fit actu in genere intelligibilium. In se enim consideratus, est solum in potentia ad esse intelligibile”; *SCG* 4.11. See also *In De an.* II.6 [Leon. 45/1.94:173–90] and *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:87–217:206]. None of the texts we have discussed from *In Sent.* explicitly link the potency of the human intellect to the need for actualization from outside; but in *In Sent.* I.17.1.4, Thomas makes this point: “. . . cum intellectus noster potentialis sit in potentia ad omnia intelligibilia, et ante intelligere non sit in actu aliquod eorum; ad hoc quod intelligat actu, oportet quod reducatur in actum per species acceptas a sensibus illustratas lumine intellectus agentis” [Mand. 1.403].

article, I will begin by outlining a point we have not yet explored in depth, but which is important for understanding the boundaries of his theory of self-knowledge: namely, what exactly Thomas means by “knowledge *per essentiam*.”

Thomas begins q. 87, a. 1 with the principle that intelligibility follows actuality, because a thing must *be* in order to be known: immaterial substances are intelligible *per essentiam* insofar as they are in act *per essentiam*.<sup>100</sup> Since God is pure act, he is purely and perfectly intelligible by his own essence, and all things are intelligible to him in his essence. Likewise, since an angel is a subsisting form and therefore intelligible in act, it understands itself by its own essence.<sup>101</sup> But the human intellect, as a power of the soul, is in pure potency to intelligible form, with no act of its own other than the form of the known thing.

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<sup>100</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.355]: “Unde et in substantiis immaterialibus, secundum quod unaquaeque earum se habet ad hoc quod sit in actu per essentiam suam, ita se habet ad hoc quod sit per suam essentiam intelligibilis.” It should be noted here that Thomas is speaking of intelligibility from the point of view of the object, not the subject (i.e., he is describing how an object is intelligible in itself, rather than how an object becomes intelligible *to a human intellect*). In this respect, Lambert entirely misses the relationship between actuality and intelligibility when he accuses Thomas of incoherence, arguing that “intelligibility cannot be an inherent characteristic of objects . . . Things *in se* are just there, just what they are; the fact that someone knows or even could know about them is not primarily a function of the objects but of their presentation to an appropriate audience” (“Nonintentional Experience of Oneself,” 262). This essentially constitutes a rejection of the notion of ontological truth. Even though intelligibility is relative to a knower, we must posit at least some basic objective intelligibility, from the simple fact that things in potency do not exist yet and therefore cannot be known until they are in act. Thus intelligibility depends on the degree of an object’s actualization. Thomas, in fact, clearly states that insofar as an object is, it is true. Its truth is simply its being perceived under the *ratio* of adequation to the intellect, i.e., intelligibility (see *DV* 1.1, ad 4 and 5). Moreover, as McKian points out, knowledge is the act of taking on the form/act of another object as the perfection of the intellect: there must thus *be* an act in order for that act to be imparted to the intellect in knowledge: “The understanding which any subject has of some object consists in a vital act which that subject exercises and represents a greater immanent perfection which the subject has achieved by becoming the other as other” (“The Metaphysics of Introspection,” 90).

<sup>101</sup> *ST* Ia, 56.1 [Leon. 5.62]: “Sic igitur et si aliquid in genere intelligibilium se habeat ut forma intelligibilis subsistens, intelliget seipsum. Angelus autem, cum sit immaterialis, est quaedam forma subsistens, et per hoc intelligibilis actu. Unde sequitur quod per suam formam, quae est sua substantia, seipsum intelligat.” McKian puts it aptly: “[Angels are] suffused with such a light that they always exist as actual in the genus of intelligible things. In this manner the angel, since it is by its essence a subsistent form and therefore by nature both actually intelligent and actually intelligible, is enabled to know itself, through its own essence” (“The Metaphysics of Introspection,” 92).



Thomas therefore compares the human possible intellect to prime matter, insofar as it cannot be understood unless it is actualized by a form from without:

The human intellect is located in the genus of intelligible things as being only in potency, just as prime matter is located in the genus of sensible things: whence it is called *possible*. Considered in its essence in this way, therefore, it exists as understanding in potency. Whence from itself it has power to understand, but not to be understood, except insofar as it is made actual.<sup>102</sup>

If the soul had self-knowledge *per essentiam*, then, it would need nothing besides itself in order for knowledge to happen: it would know itself simply by being itself. But such self-sufficiency is manifestly beyond the potency-nature of the human intellect, belonging only to the divine or angelic intellects, which are by nature always in the act of understanding.

Deborah Black comments:

To attribute any direct, essential self-knowledge to the intellect would, on Aristotelian principles, be tantamount to declaring the human intellect a separate substance, and hence it would entail precisely those difficulties attributed to Plato's position in the *Summa*'s discussion of the intellect's relation to the body.<sup>103</sup>

Thomas's theory of the unified human substance thus prevents him from assenting to any theory in which the human intellectual soul could be viewed as a separate substance conjoined to a material substance.

Accordingly, Aquinas concludes in *ST* Ia, 87.1 that the intellect knows itself "through its act,"<sup>104</sup> since it is only when actualized from without that it becomes intelligible to itself. Yet he reminds us that the intellect is only intelligible-in-act on account of the

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<sup>102</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.355]: "Intellectus autem humanus se habet in genere rerum intelligibilium ut ens in potentia tantum, sicut et materia prima se habet in genere rerum sensibilium: unde *possibilis* nominatur. Sic igitur in sua essentia consideratus, se habet ut potentia intelligens. Unde ex seipso habet virtutem ut intelligat, non autem ut intelligatur, nisi secundum id quod fit actu."

<sup>103</sup> Black, "Aquinas's Critique of Averroes's Psychology," 362.

<sup>104</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: "Non ergo per essentiam suam, sed per actum suum se cognoscit intellectus noster." See likewise *ST* Ia, 88.2, ad 3 [Leon. 5.367]: "[A]nima humana intelligit seipsam per suum intelligere, quod est actus proprius eius, perfecte demonstrans virtutem eius et naturam." This claim is the central thesis of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge. So far, we have seen this position repeated in *In Sent.*, *DV*, and *SCG*, and it will reappear in our texts from *In De an.* and *Sup. Lib de caus.* Other texts that make the same claim include *In Met.* XII.8; *CT* 1.85 [Leon 42.110:139–42].

species of the external object currently being understood. Otherwise it lapses into passivity. Thus there is a sense in which the intellect's self-knowledge is *per speciem*: "Therefore, the human intellect, which becomes actual through the species of the thing known, is known by that same species, as by its own form."<sup>105</sup> When it is thus actualized, the intellect is instantly intelligible in act and becomes known to itself—no further species is necessary.

After establishing that the intellect knows itself through its act, Aquinas proceeds to specify the two ways, by now familiar, in which this knowledge *per actum* can occur:

This happens in two ways: In the first way, singularly, in the way that Socrates or Plato perceives that he has an intellective soul from perceiving that he understands. In the second way, universally, in the way that we consider the nature of the human mind from the act of the intellect. But it is true that the judgment and efficacy of this knowledge through which we know the nature of the soul belongs to us according to the derivation of the light of our intellect from divine truth, in which the reasons (*rationes*) of all things are contained, as was said above. Whence Augustine too says, in *De Trinitate* IX, we behold (*intuemur*) inviolable truth, from which, as much as we are able, we perfectly define, not what sort each human mind may be, but what sort it should be in the sempiternal reasons. There is, however, a difference between these two kinds of knowledge. For having the first knowledge of the mind, the very presence of the mind suffices, which is the principle of the act from which the mind perceives itself. And therefore the mind is said to know itself by its own presence (*per suam praesentiam*). But for having the second knowledge, [the mind's] presence does not suffice, but a diligent and subtle inquiry is required. Whence not only are many ignorant of the nature of the soul, but many also err regarding the nature of the soul.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.356] : "Et ideo intellectus humanus, qui fit in actu per speciem rei intellectae, per eandem speciem intelligitur, sicut per formam suam." Goehring, "Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness," 10, specifies that knowledge of the object is therefore "logically prior" to self-knowledge, though not necessarily "temporally prior."

<sup>106</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: "Et hoc dupliciter. Uno quidem modo, particulariter, secundum quod Socrates vel Plato percipit se habere animam intellectivam, ex hoc quod percipit se intelligere. Alio modo, in universali, secundum quod naturam humanae mentis ex actu intellectus consideramus. Sed verum est quod iudicium et efficacia huius cognitionis per quam naturam animae cognoscimus, competit nobis secundum derivationem luminis intellectus nostri a veritate divina, in qua rationes omnium rerum continentur, sicut supra dictum est. Unde et Augustinus dicit, in IX *de Trin.*: *Intuemur inviolabilem veritatem, ex qua perfecte, quantum possumus, definimus non qualis sit uniuscuiusque hominis mens, sed qualis esse sempiternis rationibus debeat.*—Est autem differentia inter has duas cognitiones. Nam ad primam cognitionem de mente habendam, sufficit ipsa mentis praesentia, quae est principium actus ex quo mens percipit seipsam. Et ideo dicitur se cognoscere per suam praesentiam. Sed ad secundam cognitionem de mente habendam, non sufficit eius praesentia, sed requiritur diligens et subtilis inquisitio. Unde et multi naturam animae ignorant, et multi etiam circa naturam animae erraverunt." The text from Augustine is quoted above in note 15.

Thomas's division of self-knowledge here into individual and universal self-knowledge is basically consistent with the twofold division outlined in *In Sent.*, *DV*, and *SCG*. *ST* Ia, 87.1 repeats the doctrine of these texts on several points. In individual self-knowledge (self-awareness), the soul perceives its own existence in its acts. Universal (quidditative) self-knowledge is achieved by a "diligent and subtle inquiry" fraught with the risk of error. Here again, too, we find the only other reference in the Thomistic texts to judgment of the soul's nature, whose description here is basically identical with that found in *DV* 10.8.

Yet there are some odd quirks. Given that Ia, 87.1 is concerned, like *DV* 10.8, with classifying various types of self-knowledge, it seems strange that it only mentions three out of the four types of self-knowledge. Why does it categorically deny the possibility of the human soul's knowing itself *per essentiam*, without at all mentioning habitual self-awareness? Conversely, why does Thomas say here, as in *SCG* 3.46, that in individual self-knowledge the soul knows itself "by its own presence," when this characterization was applied to habitual self-awareness in *DV* 10.8?<sup>107</sup> Again, as in *SCG* 3.46, but contradicting claims made in *DV* 10.8 (especially ad 1 s.c.), Thomas here allows that the soul can actually know its individual self *per seipsam* because all that is needed for such knowledge is its own act.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> He even references the same Augustinian text to distinguish individual self-knowledge from universal self-knowledge [Leon. 5.356]: "Propter quod Augustinus dicit, X de Trin., de tali inquisitione mentis: *Non velut absentem se quaerat mens cernere; sed praesentem quaerat discernere*, idest cognoscere differentiam suam ab aliis rebus, quod est cognoscere quidditatem et naturam suam." Compare the texts in note 91 above.

<sup>108</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 1 [Leon. 5.356]: "[M]ens seipsam per seipsam novit, quia tandem in sui ipsius cognitionem pervenit, licet per suum actum: ipsa enim est quae cognoscitur, quia ipsa seipsam amat, ut ibidem subditur. Potest enim aliquid dici per se notum dupliciter: vel quia per nihil aliud in eius notitiam devenitur, sicut dicuntur prima principia per se nota; vel quia non sunt cognoscibilia per accidens, sicut color est per se visibilis, substantia autem per accidens." Compare *SCG* 3.46, cited in note 94 above.

This text from the *Summa theologiae*, then, follows the basic contours of the theory of self-knowledge outlined in previous texts. In some ways, it has close ties to *DV* 10.8, since it alone also refers to the judgment of the soul's nature. But it also continues an odd shift found in *SCG* 3.46, by characterizing actual self-awareness in terms that *DV* 10.8 had restricted to habitual self-awareness (we will evaluate how significant this shift is in the conclusion of this chapter). Its contribution to the discussion of self-knowledge consists especially in its lengthy elaboration of how the human intellect's self-knowledge is bound to its status as the lowest of the intellects.

### **5. Knowing Oneself as Other Things: In De anima, bk. III**

It is generally agreed that Thomas wrote his Commentary on *De anima* at the same time as qq. 75-89 of the *Prima Pars*, by way of preparing for the discussion of human nature there.<sup>109</sup> It can be precisely dated to 1268–69 because Thomas uses for the first time Moerbeke's *nova translatio* of the *De anima*, which appeared only at the end of 1267.<sup>110</sup> In this text, his main treatment of self-knowledge occurs in *In De an.* III.3, which comments on *De an.* III.4.<sup>111</sup> As noted in section A.2 above, *De an.* III.4 discusses the problem of how the intellect can receive all forms without having anything in common with any of them.<sup>112</sup> In analyzing the *dubium* that Aristotle sets up here, Thomas shifts the emphasis slightly to

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<sup>109</sup> Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas* 1:341.

<sup>110</sup> See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas* 1:172–73.

<sup>111</sup> Note that the chapter divisions in Thomas's commentary do not correspond to the chapter divisions in Aristotle.

<sup>112</sup> The *nova translatio* text before St. Thomas reads: "Amplius autem si intelligibilis et ipse, aut enim aliis inest intellectus, si non secundum aliud ipse intelligibilis est, unum autem aliquid intelligibile specie est; si autem sit mixtum, aliquid habebit quod facit intelligibile ipsum sicut alia" [Leon. 45/1.214, 429b26–29]. This is, in fact, a strikingly accurate translation of the original Greek, though the question mark seems to have been dropped: "ἔτι δ' εἰ νοητὸς καὶ αὐτὸς; ἢ γὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοις νοῦς ὑπάρξει εἰ μὴ κατ' ἄλλο αὐτὸς νοητὸς, ἐν δέ τι τὸ νοητὸν εἶδει, ἢ μεμιγμένον τι ἔξει, ὃ ποιεῖ νοητὸν αὐτὸν ὥσπερ τὰλλα" (ed. Ross, 71).

focus on the nature of intelligibility, rather than the common ground between intellect and its objects. (Note, however, that these are merely two dimensions of the same problem: actual intelligibility, for Aristotle, simply indicates the identity of the intelligible-in-act and the intellect-in-act.)<sup>113</sup> If intelligibility is a property common to intellect and other things univocally, and intellect is intelligible insofar as it is intellect, then it would seem that everything intelligible is intelligible insofar as it is intellect. And one would have to conclude that “all intelligibles understand.” On the other hand, if the intelligibility of the intellect is due to some accidental property that it shares with other intelligible objects, then it is intelligible in the same way that everything else is, and we must conclude once again that everything that is actually intelligible (i.e., actually being-understood) also understands.<sup>114</sup>

Given Thomas’s shift in emphasis to the nature of intelligibility, this second horn of the dilemma now appears to derive from clearly invalid reasoning (all intellects are intelligible on account of *x*; all apprehended forms are intelligible on account of *x*; therefore all apprehended forms are intellects; therefore all intelligibles understand).<sup>115</sup> But Thomas’s reasoning is more subtle than it appears. Let us review his exact words: “But if [the intellect] is intelligible by the fact that it has something else adjoined to itself, it would

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<sup>113</sup> *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:68–71]: “Quod probat ex hoc quod intellectum in actu et intelligens in actu sunt unum, sicut et supra dixit quod sensibile in actu et sensus in actu sunt unum.”

<sup>114</sup> *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.214:21–215:36]: “Et est ista dubitatio quod, *si* intellectus est intelligibilis, hoc potest contingere duobus modis: uno modo, quod sit intelligibilis secundum se et non secundum aliud, alio modo, quod habeat aliquid sibi adiunctum quod faciat ipsum intelligibilem; *si* autem *ipse* secundum se ipsum *est* intelligibilis et non *secundum aliud*, intelligibile autem inquantum huiusmodi *est unum specie*, sequetur, si hoc non solum est intelligibile set intellectus; quod etiam alia intelligibilia sint intellectus, et ita omnia intelligibilia intelligunt; *si autem* est intelligibile per hoc quod habet aliquid sibi admixtum, sequetur quod habeat *aliquid aliud quod faciat ipsum intelligibilem sicut* et *alia* que intelliguntur, et ita uidetur sequi idem quod prius, scilicet quod semper id quod intelligitur intelligat.”

<sup>115</sup> For Aristotle, the conclusion was rather that the intellect would then have something in common (*x*) with its object; see §A.2 above.

follow that it has something that makes it intelligible, just like other things that are known: and thus the same thing as before seems to follow, namely that whatever is understood, understands.”<sup>116</sup> Elsewhere, Thomas holds that objects are rendered intelligible by the activity of the agent intellect, when it abstracts an intelligible species from the phantasm.<sup>117</sup> In fact, a few paragraphs later he takes this “something adjoined to the intellect” to be the abstracted form, rather than simply the property of intelligibility, as Aristotle seems to hold.<sup>118</sup> Consequently, *the same thing*, i.e., the form of the tree, renders both the known tree *and* the knowing intellect intelligible. Or, adopting the subject’s point of view (keeping in mind that intelligibility-in-act is identical with intellecting-in-act): it is by *the same thing*, i.e., the form of the tree, that the intellect knows both itself and the tree. But the tree too possesses tree-form, and this form is precisely what renders it intelligible. According to Thomas’s interpretation of the *dubium*, then, one might then conclude that the tree itself, possessing this species as its own form, ought likewise to be a knowing being.<sup>119</sup> Thus the reasoning that leads to the second horn of the dilemma is therefore quite valid, and could be summarized as follows: Intellect is intelligible, because some form *x* is adjoined to it. Likewise, the tree is intelligible, because *x* is adjoined to it. But intelligibility-in-act is identical with intellecting-in-act; in receiving *x*, the intellect both understands and is

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<sup>116</sup> For the Latin text, see note 114 above.

<sup>117</sup> See again *ST* Ia, 79.4.

<sup>118</sup> *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:80–86]: “Species igitur rei intellecte in actu est species ipsius intellectus, et sic per eam se ipsum intelligere potest; unde et supra Philosophus per ipsum intelligere et per id quod intelligitur scrutatus est naturam intellectus possibilis: non enim cognoscimus intellectum nostrum nisi per hoc quod intelligimus nos intelligere.” Note too that in every instance in which Thomas quotes 430a3 (with the notable exception of *In Sent.* I.3.4.5), he assumes that what Aristotle means by “in the same way” is “by means of a species,” as we have seen in *DV* 10.8, arg. 6; *ST* Ia, 87.1; compare also *ST* Ia, 14.2; *QDDA* 3 and 16.

<sup>119</sup> We might expect that *what* the tree would know in this case would be itself, but Thomas does not specify *se* here; on the other hand, he may be assuming that if a thing is capable of self-knowledge it must be capable of knowing other things, since only an immaterial (and therefore intellectual) object is capable of self-knowledge; see the discussion of *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15, in §6 below.

intelligible. It seems, then, that in possessing *x*, the tree too should understand and be intelligible.

I may here be accused of reading too much meaning into this short passage. But my interpretation is validated by Thomas's (or Thomas's construal of Aristotle's) solution to this *dubium*. Thomas begins by agreeing that the known-in-act and the knower-in-act are one in the act of knowing. But then he notes that something can only be intelligible-in-act if it is actually abstracted from matter. And in fact, the reasoning I outlined above is problematic precisely because it fails to distinguish between the way in which a species is present in an object and in the mind. The *dubium* can be resolved quite simply by noting that the tree possesses its form *qua* informing matter, whereas the intellect possesses the same form immaterially. The form of the tree has ontological being—the form in the intellect has intellectual being. Thus the situations are not parallel, and the fact that tree-form causes knowledge in the intellect by informing the intellect cannot imply that it also causes knowledge in the tree by informing the tree.

Thomas therefore concludes, closely following the Aristotelian text at 429a2, that

if we receive intelligibles in act, that which is knowing and that which is known are the same, just as the sensing-in-act and the sensed-in-act are the same; for *speculative science* itself *and the knowable too*, i.e., the knowable in act, *are the same*. Therefore the species of the thing known in act is the species of the intellect itself, and thus through it [viz., that species], it can know itself; whence also above the Philosopher examined the nature of the possible intellect through the act of knowing (*intelligere*) itself, and through that which is known (*intelligitur*); for we cognize our intellect by this alone—that we know ourselves to know.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1:216:76–86]: “Et ideo hic dicit quod *in hiis que sunt sine materia*, id est si accipiamus intelligibilia actu, *idem est intelligens et quod intelligitur*, sicut idem est sciens in actu et quod sentitur in actu; ipsa enim *sciencia speculativa et sic scibile*, id est scibile in actu, *idem est*” (76–79); for lines 80–86 of this quote, see note 118 above.

Thus Thomas (like Joseph Owens<sup>121</sup>) interprets Aristotle as holding that there is no knowledge without self-knowledge: since the form of the tree *is* the form of the intellect in the act of knowing, one necessarily knows oneself in the very act of knowing the tree. Moreover, this text definitely lays to rest the notion that self-knowledge starts from a species *of the intellect itself*; to the contrary, the intellect has no other form besides that of the intelligible species.

Thomas finishes his commentary on this passage with a response to an objection: if the intelligibility of the intellect is caused by the species by which other objects are intelligible, why does the intellect not always know the intelligible? The answer is simple. The species that inform material objects are only *potentially* intelligible (because they are only potentially immaterial): “The intelligible in potency is not the same as the intellect, but only the intelligible in act.” Thus, although tree-form informs the tree for two years, it may only be known, *actually* intelligible, for ten minutes of that time, when a forester happens to notice it, and his intellect is informed by that species. Thomas points out an interesting correlate to this truth: because being-known-in-act is identical with knowing-in-act, it is the same to say that the enmattered species are only potentially intelligible as to say that the intellect whose object they are is only potentially knowing.<sup>122</sup> Thus at last we discover the reason for Thomas’s insistence that the human intellect, alone among all other intellects, is

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<sup>121</sup> See footnote 49 above.

<sup>122</sup> *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.217:107–123]: “Deinde cum dicit: *non autem* respondet ad obiectionem, que erat in contrarium; dicens quod, ex quo intellectus possibilis habet aliquid quod facit ipsum intelligibilem sicut et alia, restat ut consideretur *causa non semper intelligendi*, id est quare non semper intelligibile intelligit; quod ideo est quia *in rebus habentibus materiam* species non est intelligibilis secundum actum, set secundum potenciam tantum, intelligibile autem in potencia non est idem cum intellectu, set solum intelligibile in actu, unde *illis* que habent speciem in materia *non inerit intellectus*, ut scilicet intelligere possint, quia *intellectus talium*, idest intelligibilium, est quaedam *potentia sine materia*, *illud autem* quod est in materia est *intelligibile*, set in potencia tantum; quod uero est in intellectu est species intelligibilis secundum actum.”



in a fundamental condition of potency that prevents it from enjoying *per essentiam* self-knowledge: as the lowest of the intellects, its proper object is the form of a material object, and such objects are only potentially intelligible.

Thomas's Commentary on *De anima* III.4, therefore, provides significant clarification of his views on self-knowledge. Most importantly, it offers context for the way in which Thomas understands the Aristotelian dictum that the intellect knows itself through a species in the same way as it knows others (*sicut alia*). This dictum does not mean, "The intellect has something that makes it intelligible in the same way that other things are made intelligible." Rather it means something like, "The intellect has something that makes it intelligible in the way that [this same something] makes other things intelligible." One species does double duty: it makes the tree intelligible by informing the intellect immaterially—and it likewise makes the intellect intelligible in the same way, by informing the intellect immaterially.

This text is, however, unhelpful with respect to clarifying the types of self-knowledge. The discussion of intelligibility seems to indicate that the species grants the intellect its actual intelligibility insofar as in receiving it the intellect becomes intelligibly what the tree is actually. Thus the doctrine outlined here should apply equally to both types of self-knowledge. Still, the only type of self-knowledge that Thomas explicitly mentions here is quidditative (and indeed, very often when he cites the principle "The intellect is intelligible like other things," he goes on to discuss quidditative self-knowledge, though generally without giving the impression that the principle is restricted to quidditative self-

knowledge<sup>123</sup>). Indeed, in concluding the discussion of intelligibility, he notes that it is because the “species of the thing in the intellect-in-act is a species of that very intellect,” that the nature of the intellect can be known by examining “the understanding itself and that which is understood.”<sup>124</sup> This statement seems to be an application of the principles from his discussion of intelligibility, however, and does not indicate that the entire discussion applies exclusively to quidditative self-knowledge.

## 6. *Returning to One’s Essence: Super Librum de causis, propositions 7 and 15*<sup>125</sup>

Thomas’s Commentary on the *Liber de causis*, propositions 7 and 15, presents what are likely his last words on self-knowledge.<sup>126</sup> Yet although Thomas did not compose a commentary on the *Liber de causis* until nearly the end of his life, he was already familiar with this Neoplatonic treatise from his days as a bachelor at Paris and refers to it by name approximately 300 times throughout his works, beginning in *In I Sent.*<sup>127</sup> There he already

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<sup>123</sup> For instance, this occurs in *In Sent.* III.23.1.2.3, ad 3; *DV* 10.8; *QDDA* 3, ad 4; *QDDA* 16, ad 8 (though in all these contexts this Aristotelian dictum does not appear to be restricted to quidditative self-knowledge). Thomas explicitly interprets this as referring to quidditative self-knowledge only in *DV* 10.8, ad 6 [Leon. 22/2.323:356–60]: “[I]llud verbum philosophi est intelligendum, secundum quod intellectus intelligit de se quid est, et non secundum quod habitualiter habet notitiam de se an sit”; and *SCG* 3.46. Conversely, in three texts (*SCG* 2.98; *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 3; *ST* Ia, 87.1), he presents this dictum as more broadly indicating that self-knowledge depends on the intellect’s actualization by receiving a species, a requirement that applies to both self-awareness and quidditative self-knowledge.

<sup>124</sup> *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:80–86], cited above in note 118.

<sup>125</sup> For Thomas’s commentary on the *Liber de causis*, I will refer to H.D. Saffrey’s edition, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Super Librum de causis expositio* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1954). Saffrey includes an edition of the *Liber de causis* itself, but this has been superseded by A. Pattin’s more recent edition of the medieval text, which appears as vol. 1 of *Miscellanea*, (Leuven: Bibliotheek van de Facultet Godgeleerdheid, 2000). Consequently when citing the *Liber de causis*, I will refer to Pattin’s edition, and only to Saffrey’s when it is expedient for purposes of comparison.

<sup>126</sup> Torrell dates it to the first half of 1272 (*Saint Thomas Aquinas* 1:222–23 and 346), but notes in the “Additions and Corrections to the Second Edition” that Gauthier has more recently dated it to the Paris-Naples period, 1272–73 (*ibid.*, 434; see Gauthier, *Index scriptorum ab ipso Thomas nominatorum*, in Leon. 25/2.498).

<sup>127</sup> *In Sent.* I.4.1.2. Saffrey notes that a charter of the University of Paris, dated March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1255, lists the *Liber de causis* among the works of Aristotle and decrees its use as an official text. Saffrey concludes: “. . . ceci arrivait au moment même où saint Thomas lisait les *Sentences* à Paris, l’année de son *De ente et essentia*” (Saffrey, “Introduction,” xix). In fact, Thomas cites the *Liber de causis*, prop. 9 in *DEE* 4 [Leon. 43.376:36–40], which is approximately contemporaneous with *In Sent.*, being dated to c. 1252–56.

cites props. 7 and 15, even quoting the latter directly.<sup>128</sup> Thomas's comments on these texts are significant for the present discussion of self-knowledge for three reasons. First, Thomas himself seems to have attached some importance to the *Liber de causis* in elucidating his theory of knowledge. It provides him with a number of important epistemological principles (such as "every intelligence is filled with forms" and "everything that is received in something is received in it according to the mode of the receiver"<sup>129</sup>), not to mention the famous principle from prop. 15 regarding self-knowledge, "every knower who knows his own essence returns to his essence with a complete return," which Thomas quotes at least six times throughout his work.<sup>130</sup> In fact, the *Liber de causis* seems to be the source for the terms *reflexio* and *reditio*, which are not found either in Augustine's or Aristotle's discussions of self-knowledge, but which Thomas uses frequently in connection with self-knowledge.<sup>131</sup> Thomas's commentary, at least on propositions 7 and 5, can therefore be taken as indicating his own position with respect to the *reditio completa*, since he frequently appeals to these principles in systematic discussions elsewhere.<sup>132</sup> Second, these texts most clearly reveal how reflexivity defines an intellectual substance, and thus

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<sup>128</sup> For prop. 7, see *In Sent.* II.17.1.2, obj. 1 s.c.; for prop. 15, see *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 3.

<sup>129</sup> For "Omnis intelligentia est plena formis" see *Liber de causis*, props. 10 [Pattin, 70–72]; and for "Omne quod recipitur in aliquo, recipitur in eo per modum recipientis" see prop. 24 [Pattin, 97–99]. Note that the latter principle is not stated verbatim in prop. 24, but rather summarizes its doctrine.

<sup>130</sup> See for instance *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 3; *In Sent.* II.19.1.1; *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 1; *DV* 1.9; *DV* 2.2, ad 2; *DV* 8.6, arg. 5 s.c.; *DV* 10.9. Latin and full text of the proposition are cited below in note 140.

<sup>131</sup> "[C]'est de cet ouvrage, et de l'*Elementatio theologica* du même Proclus, que Thomas d'Aquin reçoit le terme de '*reditio completa*' véhiculé par la tradition néo-platonicienne" (Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 168). Mariasusai Dhavamony, on the other hand, argues that *reflexio* is an Aristotelian notion (*Subjectivity and Knowledge in the Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas* [Rome: Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1965], 79); George P. Klubertanz, "St. Thomas and the Knowledge of the Singular," *New Scholasticism* 26 (1952): 146, makes the same claim, citing *DV* 2.6, but that text does not offer any evidence for this position. Its reference to Aristotle concerns, not *reflexio*, but the analogy between the relationship of phantasms to intellect, and the relationship of colors to sight.

<sup>132</sup> See for instance *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 3; and *DV* 2.6.

have special bearing on the relation of Thomas's doctrine of self-knowledge to his views on the human person.

Proposition 7 states that an intelligence is undivided.<sup>133</sup> To prove this point, the author of the *Liber de causis* notes that only those things that are undivided can revert to their essences; but an intelligence can revert to its essence; thus intelligences must be undivided.

Because an intelligence exists according to this mode [i.e., outside time], it admits of no division whatsoever. And the signification of this is its return upon its essence (*reditio sui super essentiam suam*), namely, because it is not extended with an extended thing in such a way that one of its extremities would be distant from another. The reason is that when it desires the knowledge of a corporeal thing, it is not extended with it, and itself stands fixed according to its disposition; because it is a form from which nothing goes forth.<sup>134</sup>

In commenting on this proposition, Thomas notes that the same point is made in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, props. 15 and 171, but that here, due to "a faulty translation," the argument is confused.<sup>135</sup> He explains that the ability of intelligences to return to their essence actually manifests their incorporeality, not their indivisibility—though of course incorporeal beings are indivisible on account of their incorporeality.

And this proof is here added confusedly enough, when it is said: *And the signification of this*, that is, that an intelligence is not a body, *is the return upon its essence*, that is, that it is turned back upon itself by knowing itself, which is proper to it because it is not a body or a magnitude having one part distant from another. And this is what he adds: *Namely because it is not extended*, with the extension of magnitude, that is, *with an extended thing*, that is

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<sup>133</sup> Here, an intelligence (*intelligentia*) is a separate substance (for Thomas, God or the angels). The proposition is worth looking at, however, because it ascribes the *reditio*, not solely to intelligences, but to any undivided being (or as Thomas takes it, to any incorporeal being); this reading is confirmed by prop. 15, where as we will see, the *reditio* is ascribed also to human souls.

<sup>134</sup> *Lib. de caus.*, prop. 7 [Pattin, 62]: "Cum ergo intelligentia sit secundum hunc modum, penitus divisionem non recipit. Et significatio [quidem] illius est reditio sui super essentiam suam, scilicet quia non extenditur cum re extensa, ita ut sit una suarum extremitatum secunda ab alia. Quod est quia quando vult scientiam rei corporalis < . . . > non extenditur cum ea, sed ipsa stat fixa secundum suam dispositionem; quoniam est forma a qua non pertransit aliquid."

<sup>135</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 7 [Saffrey, 51]: "Sed sciendum est verba hic posita ex vitio translationis esse corrupta, ut patet per litteram Procli."

with something having magnitude, *such that one of its extremities would be distant from another*, that is, distinct from the other in the order of position.<sup>136</sup>

*Reditio*, then, is restricted to incorporeal beings, since a body cannot return to itself, its parts being extended. Each part of a body can turn back upon another part (as when I touch my head), but not upon itself, since matter is extended and therefore has parts outside of parts. As Ruane notes, “It is no more possible for something material to reflect on itself, than it is for two bodies to simultaneously occupy the same place.”<sup>137</sup> Because of the extension of matter, the entirety of A can never turn back upon the entirety of A; rather, the only reversion possible for material beings is the contact of one part with another part. Thus no true *reditio* occurs in material beings.

This observation leads to two interesting conclusions. First, *reditio* clearly involves a very specific type of presence to oneself. In order to achieve a *reditio*, it is not enough for a thing simply to *be* itself. Neither is it adequate that some part of the thing be in contact with another part. Rather, the whole thing must be placed in contact, so to speak, with the whole of itself. Only an indivisible and incorporeal being can be made wholly present to itself since it has no parts that get in the way of each other. But the presence of an incorporeal being to itself (other than metaphysical identity) is simply self-knowledge, as Thomas notes: an incorporeal being is turned back upon itself precisely by knowing itself (*convertitur supra seipsam intelligendo se*). Consequently, *reditio* is identical with the

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<sup>136</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 7 [Saffrey, 52]: “Et haec quidem probatio hic subditur satis confuse, cum dicitur: *Et significatio quidem illius*, scilicet quod intelligentia non sit corpus, *est reditio super essentiam suam*, id est quia convertitur supra seipsam intelligendo se, quod convenit sibi quia non est corpus vel magnitudo habens unam partem ab alia distantem. Et hoc est quod subdit: *scilicet quia non extenditur*, extensione scilicet magnitudinis, *cum re extensa*, id est magnitudinem habente, *ita* quod *sit una suarum extremitatum secunda ab alia*, id est ordine situs ab alia distincta.”

<sup>137</sup> Ruane, “Self-Knowledge and the Spirituality of the Soul,” 441.

intellectual act of knowing oneself; moreover, all and only incorporeal beings are capable of *reditio*.<sup>138</sup>

While proposition 7 highlights the reversion of intelligences upon their essence only in order to demonstrate their metaphysical indivisibility, proposition 15 focuses more narrowly on self-knowledge as such, and most specifically, human self-knowledge<sup>139</sup>:

Every knower knows his essence; therefore, he is returning to his essence with a complete return (*reditio completa*). The reason is that knowledge is nothing more than an intelligible action; therefore when a knower knows his essence, he then returns through his intelligible operation to its essence. And this is so only because the knower and the known are one thing, because the knowledge of one knowing his essence is from himself and toward himself: it is from himself, because he is a knower, and towards himself because he is the known. The reason is that, because knowledge is the knowledge of a knower, and the knower knows his essence, his operation is returning to his essence once again. And by ‘the return of a substance to its essence’ I do not mean anything other than that it is standing, fixed through itself, not lacking in its fixity and its essence any other thing raising it up, because it is a simple substance, sufficient through itself.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Other texts in which immateriality is linked to self-knowledge include *In Sent.* II.19.1.1; and *SCG* 2.49, which echoes Augustine’s notion of the soul knowing itself as a whole.

<sup>139</sup> The author of the *Liber de causis*, of course, most likely has in mind here Soul as such, the emanation from the Intelligence; for Thomas, however, the topic is the *human soul*. At the end of his comments on prop. 13, Thomas compares separate intelligences to the intellective soul and promises to consider the self-knowledge of the latter “below,” which can only refer to prop. 15 (“Sed utrum haec convenient animae intellectuali, infra considerabimus” [Saffrey, 84]). In commenting on prop. 15, he is again careful to clarify that the discussion does not concern intelligences, noting that “de anima enim est intelligendum quod hic dicitur” [Saffrey, 90]). Most notably, at the end of his commentary on prop. 15, he repeats his standard account of human self-knowledge, noting that “anima intellectiva . . . intelligit substantiam suam, non per essentiam suam, sed . . . per intelligibiles species.” This is the same account that he has repeatedly offered of human self-knowledge in texts such as *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 87.1, and it is an account that he always restricts to human self-knowledge, as distinct from divine or angelic knowing. It is interesting that Thomas takes prop. 15 in this way, since one would think, from reading the Proclean text, which begins “Omnis sciens qui scit essentiam suam . . .” (see note 140 below), that the proposition could be applied to any knower. Moreover, the principle that every incorporeal substance returns to its own essence is applied equally to separate intelligences in prop. 7. Quite likely Thomas restricts his interpretation this way, because whereas humans, angels, and God know their own essences, the latter two know their essences through that essence itself. Only humans know their essences through their acts (*per actum*), which Thomas may have taken to be referenced in the Proclean author’s statement that “cum ergo scit sciens suam essentiam, tunc redit per operationem suam intellectibilem ad essentiam suam” (see note 140 below). Whatever the reason, it seems that Thomas took the principle that “every knower returns to its essence with a complete return” as applying to any incorporeal, intellectual substance (since he applies it to God in *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 1 and *DV* 2.2, ad 2), but read prop. 15 as a whole, as applying to human self-knowledge.

<sup>140</sup> *Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15 [Pattin, 79–80]: “Omnis sciens qui scit essentiam suam est rediens ad essentiam suam reditione completa. Quod est quia scientia non est nisi actio intelligibilis; cum ergo sciens scit essentiam suam, tunc redit per operationem suam intelligibilem ad essentiam suam. Et hoc non est ita nisi quoniam sciens et scitum sunt res una, quoniam scientia scientis essentiam suam est ex eo et ad eum: est ex eo quia est sciens, et ad eum quia est scitum. Quod est quia propterea quod scientia est scientia scientis, et sciens

Thomas's rather lengthy commentary on this passage, which is perhaps one of his most interesting texts on self-knowledge, identifies three principles as the rational skeleton of the *Liber's* argument. 1) The soul knows its essence; 2) Therefore the soul returns to itself by a complete return (*reditio completa*) according to both substance and operation; 3) Therefore the soul is separable from a body.<sup>141</sup> Thus from the fact that the soul knows itself, we can deduce its immortality and separability. The whole argument hinges on the first principle, which is merely assumed here; Thomas notes, however, that Proclus proves it in the *Elements of Theology*.<sup>142</sup>

Thomas's commentary makes clear that the second of these three principles ("the soul returns to its essence by a complete return") merely draws out the implications of the first ("the soul knows its own essence"). To know one's essence is to complete in second act the return which originates in first act as the knower's metaphysical self-subsistence.<sup>143</sup>

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scit essentiam suam, est eius operatio rediens ad essentiam suam; ergo substantia eius est rediens ad essentiam ipsius iterum. Et non significo per reditionem substantiae ad essentiam suam, nisi quia est stans, fixa per se, non indigens in sui fixatione et sui essentia re alia rigente <Patin notes: for *erigente*, which is also the reading given by Saffrey, p. 91> ipsam, quoniam est substantia simplex, sufficiens per seipsam."

<sup>141</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15 [Saffrey, 90–91]: "His igitur visis, considerandum est quod in hoc libro tria ponuntur. Quorum primum est quod anima *sciat essentiam suam*; de anima enim est intelligendum quod hic dicitur. Secundum est quod ex hoc concluditur, quod *redeat ad essentiam suam reditione completa*. . . . Ex hoc autem quod secundum suam operationem redit ad essentiam suam, concludit ulterius quod etiam secundum *substantiam suam est rediens ad essentiam suam*; et ita fit *reditio completa secundum operationem et substantiam*. . . . Et hoc potest esse tertium, quod scilicet *anima sit separabilis a corpore*."

<sup>142</sup> Thomas suggests that this point is proven in Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 186, which reads: "At vero quod cognoscit seipsam manifestum: si enim et quae super ipsam cognoscit, et seipsam nata est cognoscere multo magis, tamquam a causis quae ante ipsam cognoscens seipsam" (edition of the medieval text by C. Vansteenkiste, *Tijdschrift voor filosofie* 13 [1951]: 522). Proclus does not mention knowing the *essence* of the soul here, however. Even if he did, it would be odd for Thomas to accept this argument as an argument for the soul's knowledge of its own essence, given that he does not hold that we know the essences of entities above us such as separate substances.

<sup>143</sup> Because Thomas describes quidditative self-knowledge as a "return according to operation" and self-subsistence as a "return according to substance," it is tempting to interpret them as representing, respectively, the knowledge of one's singular acts (operations) and the knowledge of one's essence (substance). Still, for instance, says that the "return according to operation" indicates that the starting-point for knowing one's essence is "the intellect's reflexive grasping of its own act" ("Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-

For Thomas, following the Proclean author, the return of an intellectual being to itself is inaugurated already in its very being, in its self-subsistence and “fixity in itself” (i.e., the return according to substance, or first act).<sup>144</sup> This return is completed (*reditio completa*) when the intellectual being knows its own essence (i.e., the return according to operation, or second act). At this moment, the soul completes a circular motion, being now knower and known. According to Thomas, this self-unification in knowing one’s essence is what validates the use of terms like “reversion” (*reditio*) and “conversion” (*conversio*) to refer to self-knowledge.<sup>145</sup>

Thus the Proclean *reditio ad suam essentiam*, as Thomas interprets it, is not a circle in the sense that the soul goes forth to the senses and returns thence to itself, perceiving itself in its acts.<sup>146</sup> Although the dependence of human self-knowledge on sense-knowledge

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Knowledge,” 131); Dhavamony likewise describes the *reditio secundum operationem* as “signifying a conscious presence of the spiritual being to itself, autopoiesis, immediate consciousness of the subsisting form. It is the subsistence of the form which is expressed in the luminous sphere of consciousness” (*Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 79). This interpretation, however, is not borne out by the texts, which point to quidditative, scientific knowledge of the soul as the completion of the return according to substance.

<sup>144</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15 [Saffrey, 91]: “Illa enim dicuntur secundum substantiam ad seipsa converti quae subsistunt per seipsa, habentia *fixionem* ita quod non convertantur ad aliquid aliud sustentans ipsa, sicut est conversio accidentium ad subiecta; et hoc ideo convenit animae et unicuique scienti seipsum, quia omne tale *est substantia simplex, sufficiens sibi per seipsam*, quasi non indigens materiali sustentamento.”

<sup>145</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15 [Saffrey, 90]: “[C]um dico quod *sciens scit essentiam suam*, ipsum scire significat operationem intelligibilem, ergo patet quod in hoc quod *sciens scit essentiam suam*, *redit*, id est convertitur, *per operationem suam intelligibilem ad essentiam suam*, intelligendo scilicet eam. Et quod hoc debeat vocari *reditus* vel *conversio*, manifestat per hoc quod, cum anima scit essentiam suam, *sciens et scitum sunt res una*, et ita *scientia* qua scit *essentiam suam*, id est ipsa operatio intelligibilis, *est ex ea in quantum est sciens et est ad eam in quantum est scita*: et sic est ibi quaedam circulatio quae importatur in verbo redeundi vel convertendi.” It is not clear whether the “dico” indicates Thomas speaking in his own person or in the person of the author of the *Liber de causis* (though the *Liber* does not contain the word “dico”). Regardless, as I have noted above, what Thomas says here can be taken as exemplifying his own views on the matter as well, since he uses the same principles in the same way in his other systematic works. This is made especially clear in Chapter V.

<sup>146</sup> For interpretations that the *reditio* is a motion into and back from the senses, see for instance Still, “Aquinas’s Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 125; Ruane, “Self-Knowledge and the Spirituality of the Soul,” 441. In fact, this is an Augustinian interpretation: see *De Trin.* 10.8.11 [CCSL 50.325]: “Cum ergo sit mens interior, quodam modo exit a semetipsa cum in haec quasi uestigia multarum intentionum exierit amoris affectum . . .” Although Thomas frequently describes the soul’s circular motion in terms of self-knowledge, it would be a mistake to assume that for Thomas, circular motion indicates simply an *exitus* to the senses and



is certainly an authentic Thomistic doctrine, it is not the doctrine to which the term ‘*reditio*’ or the image of self-knowledge as a circular motion refers. Rather, *reditio* refers to the total identity of knower and known in the act of knowing one’s essence through knowing one’s individual activity.<sup>147</sup>

The inference from the second to the third principle, i.e., from soul’s *reditio completa* to its separability, however, is even more intriguing. In prop. 7, the immateriality of knowledge, manifested in the *reditio*, was used to argue for the immateriality of the knower (which for the human soul would imply its separability). But this is not the argument we find in prop. 15. Instead, because the “return according to operation” proves that the soul enjoys a complete return (i.e., one according to operation *and* substance), one can conclude to the soul’s separability *because the return according to substance implies separability*. In order to understand fully what this means, Chapter V will return to this text to examine the return according to substance and its relationship to personhood and self-knowledge.

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*reditus* back to oneself. *In De div. nom.* IV.7 [Marietti, 121–22, n. 376], shows that circular motion more properly refers to uniformity of knowledge. While moving from the multiplicity of sensations to the unity of self-knowledge achieves a preliminary circular motion, perfect circularity is achieved only when the soul beholds God, because only God is perfectly simple; see as well as parallel discussions of the same Dionysian principle in *ST* IIa-IIae, 180.6 [Leon. 10.430–31] and *DV* 10.8, ad 10 [Leon. 22/2.323:386–91], where he describes circular motion as a resolution to first principles. Still, Thomas does occasionally seem to equate circular motion with a return from the senses, probably as a shorthand; see *In De an.* I.7 [Leon. 45/1.35:227–35]: “Nam in anima est primo considerare *aspectum rectum*, secundum quod aspicit directe ad suum obiectum, et postea reditur *in circulum* in quantum intellectus reflectit se supra se ipsum”; and *DV* 2.2 [Leon. 22/1.45:212–19]: “[E]t quidem in nobis fit per quemdam discursum, secundum quem est exitus et reditus in animam nostram, dum cognoscit seipsam. Primo enim actus ab ipsa exiens terminatur ad obiectum; et deinde reflectitur super actum; et demum supra potentiam et essentiam, secundum quod actus cognoscuntur ex obiectis, et potentiae per actus”—Thomas then argues that Divine self-knowledge is not discursive, but is still in some sense a “circling” [*circuitus*] insofar as in seeing other things, God sees in them a likeness of his own essence.

<sup>147</sup> I will address in Chapter IV the problem of whether *reditio completa* is reducible to one of the two major kinds or four subdivisions discussed in other texts, or whether it constitutes a fifth type of self-knowledge.

Thomas's Commentary on the *Liber de causis*, props. 7 and 15, then, can be ranked along with *ST Ia*, 87.1 (which examines the intellect's fundamental potency) and *In De an.* III.3 (which examines the intellect's intelligibility), as a significant treatment of the relationship between human self-knowledge and the nature of the intellective soul. Its contribution is to explore how self-knowledge demonstrates the incorporeality and separability of the soul. This commentary is also important for providing insight into the character of the *reditio completa* to which Thomas appeals in discussing self-knowledge in other texts. The fact that this thoroughly Neoplatonic concept is consistent with his overall theory of self-knowledge is manifested in Thomas's concluding comments on prop. 15. There Thomas clarifies that the type of knowledge attributed to the soul in the *reditio completa* does not occur *per essentiam*. Rather, "according to the Platonists," human self-knowledge is achieved "through higher things, in which [the soul] participates; but according to Aristotle, in *III De anima*, through intelligible species which are rendered in some way into forms insofar as through them [the intellect] is rendered into act."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15 [Saffrey, 92]: "[U]nde [anima intellectiva] intelligit substantiam suam, non per essentiam suam, sed, secundum Platonicos, per superiora quae participat, secundum Aristotelem autem, in *III De anima*, per intelligibiles species quae efficiuntur quodammodo formae in quantum per eas fit actu." I should note that Wébert draws the opposite conclusions from this text, which he takes as an indication that Thomas wishes to distance himself from the *Liber de causis* as a treatment of purely historical interest ("Reflexio," 323). He appears to take this interpretation for two reasons. First, Wébert considers the *Liber de causis* to contain "une voie dangereuse d'introversion mystique, tout-à-fait étrangère à l'inclination du Docteur Angélique" (325). This is probably quite true, from Proclus's perspective. Yet these concluding comments of Thomas's, in my opinion, precisely show Thomas's effort to prevent the doctrine in his commentary on prop. 15 from being taken in support of this sort of mystical introversion. Thus he stresses that only if applied to pure intellects can the *reditio* be understood to occur *per essentiam*: if applied to embodied intellects, the *reditio* can only occur through participation (if one is a Platonist) or through the soul's act (if one is an Aristotelian). Second, Wébert seems to take the *reditio secundum operationem* (incorrectly, I believe) to be what he calls *reflexion-reploiement*, i.e. a prediscursive reflexion upon oneself, parallel to the perception of one's existing self presented in *DV* 10.8. At the same time, he seems to take the content of this *reditio* to be quidditative. Consequently, Wébert takes Thomas's commentary on prop. 15 to be describing a pre-discursive quidditative self-knowledge, which of course would contravene every principle of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge. But regardless of Proclus's own opinion, Thomas seems to present the *reditio secundum operationem* as an ordinary quidditative self-knowledge, and in no way suggests that it constitutes a

## 7. Analysis of Historical Development in the Texts

From 1254 to 1272, then, Thomas's doctrine of self-knowledge does not seem to have undergone any radical transformations. In general, he uses the same principles and draws the same portrait of self-knowledge consistently throughout all his writings, though some evolution towards his preferred set of definitions and distinctions is evident. From the texts we have examined in this chapter, then, we can therefore sketch a general summary of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge as follows.

### a. The basis for self-knowledge in human nature

One of the fundamental traits of the human intellectual soul is its reflexivity, namely, its power to be reflected back upon its acting self, to examine its own experience and discover its own essence.<sup>149</sup> Reflexivity is the prerogative of intellectual, self-subsistent substances (*Sup. Lib de caus.*, props. 7, 15). Immaterial beings, being utterly simple, are able to return to themselves, in such a way that every act of knowledge includes self-awareness in some way: one's own self is always present, though usually unnoticed, on the horizon of one's knowledge of the other (*In Sent.* I.3.4.5; *In De an.* III.3). The human soul presents a unique problem for self-knowledge since, as the lowest of the intellects and the form of a material body, it is by nature in potency to its object (*DV* 10.8; *SCG* 3.46; *ST* Ia, 87.1; *In De an.* III.3). Since nothing is known except insofar as it is in act, then, the human soul cannot be intelligible to itself until it is actualized by a species born in the senses (a

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prediscursive reflexion. Thus there is nothing in his comments that could be taken as describing a theory of self-knowledge that is in any way inimical to his own.

<sup>149</sup> Besides the texts discussed in this chapter, numerous other passages discuss the reflexivity of other immaterial powers within the soul: see for instance *In Sent.* IV.49.3.3, ad 2 [Parma 7/2.1219]; *In De mem.* 2. [Leon. 45/2.110:229–32], on remembering mental acts; *In Ethic.* IX.11 [Leon. 47/2.540.96–104]; *DV* 22.12, on the mutual reflexivity of all powers; *ST* Ia, 16.4, ad 1; *ST* Ia, 82.4, ad 1; *ST* Ia, 85.2; *ST* Ia-IIa, 112.5; and *ST* IIa-IIae, 25.2.

point emphasized in all of our texts). Once it is actualized, however, the soul's reflexivity allows it to be intellectually present to itself: the soul's self-knowledge springs directly from its own actualized being, although it requires an outside catalyst for that actualization.

Thomas thus acknowledges that human self-knowledge is proportionate to the soul's nature and arises, like all other natural human knowledge, in the senses. Yet he also takes into consideration the fact that the soul *is* itself and thus is in special proximity to itself as subject.

*b. Classification of phenomena*

Thomas is also strikingly consistent in his classification of the phenomena of self-knowledge. Throughout his writings, he repeatedly distinguishes two main types of self-knowledge: individual and universal, sometimes formulated as a distinction between knowing *that* I am (*quia / an / quod est*) and *what* I am (*quid est*) (*In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3; *DV* 10.8; *SCG* 3.46; *ST* Ia, 87.1). Individual self-knowledge, or self-awareness, is that by which the soul knows what is proper to itself alone, namely, that it is engaged in certain individual acts, among which the primary act is that of existing. In self-awareness, the soul attains its particular being, as well as its particular acts. It possesses unshakeable certitude and is available to everyone. The precise content of such knowledge, however, is a matter that we shall have to investigate more closely in Chapter II, §A.

In contrast, universal or quidditative self-knowledge, in which the soul knows its own nature, requires multiple layers of further reasoning. It is grounded on the soul's awareness of its own acts and existence, and develops through a consideration of the species by which the soul is rendered into act. From this consideration, the soul can reason to the

nature of its act, then infer what powers produce such acts, and what sort of nature must have such powers (*In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3; *DV* 10.8; *SCG* 3.46; *ST* Ia, 87.1; *In De an.* III.3). This type of inquiry is dangerously liable to error and can only be undertaken with great difficulty.

Such, then, is the broad portrait of human self-knowledge as Thomas paints it, and it is surprisingly consistent throughout his writings. But throughout the texts, we have noted some rather puzzling textual divergences on a number of points, some quite serious. These points can be grouped into two main problem areas; in this way, possible solutions can be discussed and reached more easily.

*c. Problem group #1: mechanisms of self-knowledge*

The first group contains a cluster of three problems related to the different means whereby various types of self-knowledge are achieved. The first set of textual divergences appears in Thomas's varying description of self-knowledge as occurring either *per actum* or *per speciem*. In *De veritate* 10.8, Thomas says that actual self-awareness occurs *per actum*, while apprehension of the soul's nature occurs *per speciem* (though at the end of the response, he apparently combines both under the single heading of *per intentionem sive per speciem*<sup>150</sup>). In *In Sent.* III.23.1.2 and *SCG* 3.46, he also describes quidditative self-knowledge as *per speciem*. But in *ST* Ia, 87.1, he describes both individual and universal self-knowledge as occurring *per actum*, though he suggests that they can also be described as occurring *per speciem*.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> See *DV* 10.8, text cited in note 84 above.

<sup>151</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [5.355–56]: “[S]ic seipsum intelligat intellectus noster, secundum quod fit actu per species a sensibilibus abstractas per lumen intellectus agentis, quod est actus ipsorum intelligibilium, et eis mediantibus intellectus possibilis.”

The second set of textual divergences occurs with reference to the terms *per essentiam*, *per seipsam*, and *per praesentiam*. In *DV* 10.8, Thomas seems to identify *per essentiam* and *per seipsam* self-knowledge, and restricts both to habitual self-awareness. He upholds the possibility of habitual self-awareness *per essentiam* precisely because “from the fact that [the soul’s] essence is present to itself, it is able to go forth into the act of cognizing its own self.”<sup>152</sup> But in *SCG* 3.46, he claims that the soul perceives that it exists (actual self-awareness) *per seipsam*, and equates such self-awareness with Augustine’s claim that the soul “knows itself as present.”<sup>153</sup> Again in *ST* Ia, 87.1 Thomas denies that the soul has any *per essentiam* knowledge whatsoever, but grants that the soul perceives its individual self *per praesentiam suam*, in terms that echo almost exactly his description of habitual self-awareness in *DV* 10.8.<sup>154</sup>

The third set of textual divergences concerns the disappearance of the fourfold division of self-knowledge from *De veritate* and the reduction thereafter of the categories of self-knowledge to the two main ones discussed above. Although the relation between this problem and the preceding two may not be obvious at the moment, I believe that these mysteries must be cleared up all together, or not at all.

In fact, in my opinion these variations in terminology actually do not pose a serious obstacle to the consistency of Thomas’s doctrine of self-knowledge. The divergences are quite easily reconciled, given two considerations.

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<sup>152</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:234–38]: “Sed quantum ad habitualement cognitionem, sic dico, quod anima per essentiam suam se videt, id est ex hoc ipso quod essentia sua est sibi praesens est potens exire in actum cognitionis sui ipsius.”

<sup>153</sup> *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “Ex quo [Augustinus] dat intelligere quod anima per se cognoscit seipsam quasi praesentem.”

<sup>154</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: “Nam ad primam cognitionem de mente habendam, sufficit ipsa mentis praesentia, quae est principium actus ex quo mens percipit seipsam. Et ideo dicitur se cognoscere per suam praesentiam.”

First, in *ST Ia*, 87.1, Thomas describes both individual and universal human knowledge as *per actum*, but adds that there is a sense in which the intellect's self-knowledge is *per speciem*. The reason is that the species is precisely that by which the intellect is actualized. "Therefore, the human intellect, which becomes actual through the species of the thing understood, is understood by that same species, as by its own form."<sup>155</sup> Because of the fundamental passivity of the human intellect, until the human intellect is informed by a species, there is no act. In fact, *the human intellect cannot be actualized except by a species*. Due to the identity of the intelligible-in-act and the intellect-in-act in the act of knowledge, *per speciem* and *per actum* refer basically to the same phenomenon: the intellect only becomes intelligible when it takes on a form (since nothing is intelligible without a form, and the form of the intellect is whatever it happens to be knowing at the time).<sup>156</sup> In taking on the form of the object via the species, the intellect is actualized and thus becomes intelligible to itself. The actualization of the intellect by a species is the starting point for *both* self-awareness and quidditative self-knowledge, so either of the two designations can be used for any type of self-knowledge.

The reason that Thomas sometimes distinguishes quidditative self-knowledge as *per speciem* from perception of one's existing soul *per actum* (as in *In Sent.* III.23.1.2; *DV* 10.8; *SCG* 3.46), I think, is that the nature of the species provides vital information about the nature of the soul's act. In these same texts Thomas discusses the proper order to be followed in investigating the nature of the soul: one must begin by understanding the nature

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<sup>155</sup> *ST Ia*, 87.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.356]: "Et ideo intellectus humanus, qui fit in actu per speciem rei intellectae, per eandem speciem intelligitur, sicut per formam suam." See also note 151 above.

<sup>156</sup> Compare to the discussion of Thomas's commentary on the *Sentences* (§1 above) where I offered a similar account of Thomas's shift from the light of the agent intellect to species as the way in which the soul knows itself "just like all other things."

of the object (which can only be understood through a consideration of the species), then proceed to the nature of the act, whence one can understand the nature of the power, and finally the soul's nature. To investigate the nature of the act presupposes a proper understanding of how the species relates to the object, i.e., as the form of the object, rendered immaterial and presented to the possible intellect. Thus it is particularly appropriate to say that we attain quidditative self-knowledge *per speciem*. The fact remains, however, that the investigation of the nature of the species is only possible when we have become aware of an existing act of knowledge. Thus the recognition of the existence of one's act, actualized by an external species, is still the prerequisite for the philosophical search for quidditative self-knowledge.

Secondly, Thomas does not seem to have abandoned the phenomena classified in *De veritate* as "habitual self-awareness" and "judgment that the soul exists in the way that we had apprehended." Rather, he simply stopped identifying them as separate categories of self-knowledge and folded them into the main twofold division of self-knowledge. Habitual self-awareness, which will serve as the topic of Chapter III, came to be described instead as a state of self-presence from which self-awareness (now identified with *DV* 10.8's "actual" self-awareness) is spontaneously generated whenever the intellect is actualized by an external species. The judgment of self-knowledge was incorporated into quidditative self-knowledge, broadly speaking, as the stage wherein we verify our understanding of the soul's essence in the same way as we verify our understanding of all essences, i.e., according to the divine light (more on this point in Chapter IV, §B).



I believe that this shift also accounts for the change in Thomas's use of the phrases *per essentiam*, *per praesentiam suam*, and *per seipsam* after *De veritate*. Now that habitual self-knowledge is being treated as merely a dimension of individual self-knowledge, some terms like *per essentiam*, which was appropriately applied to habitual self-awareness, would be exceedingly misleading if applied to actual self-awareness. But conversely, some terms reserved in *DV* 10.8 for habitual self-awareness can be applied to actual self-awareness in a qualified sense. In *SCG* 3.46, Thomas always describes *per seipsam* self-knowledge in terms of the soul's knowledge of its acts: "From the very fact that it perceives itself to act, it perceives that it exists; but it acts through itself, so it knows through itself that it exists."<sup>157</sup> It is therefore clear that self-knowledge *per seipsam* is not distinct from knowledge *per actum*: rather, the soul knows its existence *per seipsam* because it knows its own acts. It is in perceiving itself to act that it perceives its existence. Because the soul acts through itself (in that the soul is the author of its own acts and not merely a passive recipient of actuality), it can be said to know itself through itself. And this is precisely the same reasoning that Thomas uses to explain why individual self-knowledge occurs *per praesentiam* in *ST* Ia, 87.1: the soul is present to itself insofar as it is the principle of its acts.<sup>158</sup> *SCG* 3.46's

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<sup>157</sup> *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: "Ex hoc enim ipso quod percipit se agere, percipit se esse; agit autem per seipsam; unde per seipsam de se cognoscit quod est."

<sup>158</sup> See also the same argument in *DV* 10.9, ad 1 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.330:350–67]: "Alius [modus cognoscendi] est eorum quae sunt in parte intellectiva, quae quidem per sui praesentiam dicit cognosci quia ex eis est ut in actum intelligendi exeamus, in quo actu ea quae sunt intelligendi principia cognoscuntur; et ideo dicit quod artes per sui praesentiam cognoscuntur. . . . quamvis etiam habitus affectivae partis per sui praesentiam sint quoddam remotum principium cognitionis inquantum eliciunt actus in quibus eos intellectus cognoscit, ut sic etiam possit dici quod quodammodo, per sui praesentiam cognoscuntur"; and ad 8 s.c. [331:418–22]: "[Q]uamvis praesentia habitus in mente non faciat eam actualiter cognoscentem ipsum habitum, facit tamen eam actu perfectam per habitum quo actus eliciatur, unde habitus cognoscatur."

knowledge *per seipsam*, therefore, seems to be identical with what Thomas calls in *ST Ia*, 87.1 knowledge *per praesentiam*.<sup>159</sup>

Moreover, Thomas's claim that the soul acts *per seipsam* in the *Summa theologiae* should not be viewed as incompatible with his refusal there to grant that it knows itself *per essentiam* or *per seipsam*. Even though in *De veritate*, self-knowledge *per seipsam* is equated with habitual self-knowledge *per essentiam*, now that habitual self-awareness is folded into self-awareness in general as its starting-point, it is appropriate to describe self-awareness as occurring *per seipsam*, but inappropriate to describe it as occurring *per essentiam*. Knowledge *per essentiam* requires that one essentially possess everything necessary for self-knowing, which is not true of the human soul. Moreover, the soul does not act through its essence (*per essentiam*) and therefore the essence of the soul is only the remote and not the immediate principle of operation. But once the soul is actualized from outside, it performs its operations of knowing, willing, loving, etc. through itself (*per seipsam*, i.e., with its own activity), as the true author of its own act, unlike, for instance, a stone being thrown, which merely receives the motion. As I will argue in Chapter II, §C.2.b, the species is necessary only to actualize the intellect, but not to mediate its self-knowledge.

Thus the meaning of knowing oneself *per seipsam* has shifted somewhat after *DV* 10.8. Instead of being identical with self-knowledge *per essentiam* (i.e., indicating that the

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<sup>159</sup> In fact, Thomas is even willing to go to far as to argue that there is a sense in which the soul can be said to be *per se* known. It is not *per se* known in the sense of a first principle, which requires nothing besides itself in order to be known, since the soul needs to be actualized in order to be known. Yet it can be *per se* known in the sense that color is *per se* visible: i.e., it is not known through some mediating agent. See *ST Ia*, 87.1, ad 1, cited in note 108 above. The relation between *per actum*, *per seipsam*, and *per praesentiam* knowing will be investigated in more depth in Chapter II.

soul already possesses everything it needs to know itself, including its own actuality, from itself), it now indicates that *once the soul is actualized from outside*, it possesses everything it needs to know itself. This difference in meaning is highlighted especially when we compare Thomas's interpretation of the same Augustinian claim that "The mind knows itself through itself" (*per seipsam*)<sup>160</sup> in *DV* 10.8, ad 1 s.c., *SCG* 3.46, and *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 1. In *DV*, he concludes that Augustine was referring to habitual self-awareness. In *SCG*, he argues that the text applies only to knowledge of one's own existence in perceiving one's acts. But in *ST* Ia, 87.1, however, he further specifies that this claim is to be taken, not in the sense that the soul can know itself all by itself, as first principles are *per se* known (which would imply self-knowledge *per essentiam*). Rather, it means that once actualized, it knows itself through itself without the need for mediation, as color, once illuminated, is *per se* visible.<sup>161</sup>

Therefore, the fact that Thomas agrees in *SCG* 3.46 that the human soul can perceive its own existence *per seipsam*, but denies in *ST* Ia, 87.1 that it can have any self-knowledge *per essentiam* does not mark a development in his understanding of self-knowledge. Rather, it manifests his decision to collapse his fourfold distinction of self-knowledge back into a twofold distinction, together with a shift away from identifying *per seipsam* with *per essentiam* self-knowledge.

*d. Problem group #2: self-familiarity and permanent self-knowledge*

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<sup>160</sup> See *De Trin.* 9.3.3 [CCSL 50.296]), cited in note 5 above.

<sup>161</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 1 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.324:441–47]: "[V]erbum Augustini est intelligendum quod mens seipsam per seipsam cognoscit, quod ex ipsa mente est ei unde possit in actum prodire, quo se actualiter cognoscat percipiendo se esse; sicut etiam ex specie habitualiter in mente retenta inest menti ut possit actualiter rem illam considerare." For *SCG* 3.46, see note 94 above. For *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 1, see note 108 above. In the latter text, Thomas is presupposing the Aristotelian view of the relationship between light and color, discussed in note 63 above.

The second problem that is manifested when one compares texts throughout Thomas's writing is that of permanent self-knowledge. This amounts to the question of how, in the final analysis, Thomas accounts for Augustine's notion of "self-familiarity" (*se nosse*). He certainly is fully aware of the problem which it is supposed to solve and indeed takes advantage of the chronic ambiguity that haunts this phenomenon throughout Augustine's text. But in different texts, he appears to link self-familiarity with different types of self-knowledge. Thus in *In Sent.* I.3.4.5, he seems to identify it either with indeterminate self-intellection, or with knowing oneself as a means of knowing. The latter notion that we know ourselves, though without noticing it, at the horizon of all our external-oriented knowledge, seems to fit well with Augustine's description of self-familiarity. In *De veritate* 10.8, however, we find strong evidence that it is habitual self-knowledge that is modeled on Augustine's *se nosse*, since Thomas compares it to a habit of science in precisely the same way that Augustine compares self-familiarity to a habit of grammar. Then in *SCG* 3.46, Thomas describes knowledge of one's own existence by an Augustinian quote taken from a discussion of self-familiarity: "When the soul seeks self-knowledge, it does not seek to see itself as though it were absent, but strives to discern (*discernere*) itself as present: not to know itself, as though it knew not; but in order to distinguish itself from what it knows to be distinct."<sup>162</sup> Augustine's main motivation for making the distinction between self-familiarity and consideration of oneself (*se nosse* vs. *se cogitare*) is the fact that the soul must already know itself in some sense in order to be able to decide to seek itself. It thus appears that Augustinian self-familiarity is described in terms of something

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<sup>162</sup> *De Trin.* 10.9.12, cited in note 91 above.

like implicit self-knowledge in Thomas's Commentary on the *Sentences*, with habitual self-awareness in *DV*, and with actual knowledge of one's existence in *SCG*.

In order to reconcile these texts, a fuller discussion of both actual and habitual self-awareness will be necessary. For the moment, I merely suggest two ways in which the problem may be solved. On the one hand, perhaps knowing oneself as the means of knowing (*in ratione medii cognoscendi*) will turn out to be the same as habitual self-knowledge. In this case, one's permanent familiarity with oneself (*se nosse*) is simply the disposition for self-knowledge, the psychological starting-point for actual knowledge of one's existence. Alternatively, perhaps for Thomas, Augustinian familiarity with self conceals more than one cognitive phenomenon; there are, in fact, indications that he interprets the same Augustinian texts in two different ways. In this case, we could argue that Thomas distinguishes between two phenomena that Augustine combines under the heading of self-familiarity: Thomas would then be proposing a distinction between habitual self-knowledge (the psychological starting-point for actual knowledge of one's existence) and implicit self-knowledge (the awareness of oneself as means of knowing, on the horizon of every conscious act). This is a crucial point within Thomas's theory of self-knowledge, and I will return to it in Chapter III, §C.

During the course of our inquiry into the main Thomistic texts on self-knowledge, numerous questions arose concerning specific details of each kind of self-knowledge, and many more remain to be clarified. What is an intellectual perception, and what would its content be? What exactly is habitual self-knowledge, and does it really count as knowledge? Can it be identified with implicit self-knowledge, and does Thomas even have a way of

accounting for implicit and explicit self-knowledge? How do reflexion and *reditio* relate to other types of self-knowledge? These questions will serve to inspire the next three chapters, which will investigate the various phenomena for which Thomas's theory of self-knowledge accounts.

## CHAPTER II

### ACTUAL SELF-AWARENESS: PERCEIVING THAT I EXIST

#### Introduction

We now turn to Thomas's four types of self-knowledge: perception of one's own existence and acts, either actual or habitual; and quidditative self-knowledge, including apprehension of one's essence and judgement thereof. The present chapter examines the first of these, i.e., the actual perception of one's own singular existing self (actual self-awareness), which is one of the most intriguing and perplexing cognitive phenomena in Thomas's writings.<sup>1</sup>

As we saw in *De veritate* 10.8, self-awareness is the knowledge whereby someone actively "considers that he has a soul" through perceiving his acts: "he perceives that he has a soul and lives and is, because he perceives that he senses and knows and exercises other such vital operations."<sup>2</sup> Self-awareness is had by everyone, and it bears infallible certitude.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Note that it can be difficult to identify texts in which Thomas is discussing self-awareness, since when he mentions in passing the intellect's self-knowledge, he often does not distinguish precisely whether his statement applies to self-awareness, quidditative self-knowledge, or both. Consequently, quite a few texts are unresolvably ambiguous. The texts in which Thomas most clearly distinguishes self-knowledge *an est* from self-knowledge *quid est* (*In Sent.* III.23.1.2; *DV* 10.8 and 10.9; *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 1.3; *SCG* 2.75 and 3.46; *ST* Ia, 87.1, 87.4, and 111.1, ad 3; *DM* 16.8, ad 7; *De unit. int.* 3 and 5), however, offer a number of clues to help interpret other passages. Descriptions of self-awareness are characterized by: 1) use of verbs of sensation such as *percipere*; 2) emphasis on the singularity of the object, whether it be the soul itself, its existence, or its acts; 3) use of accusative-and-infinitive constructions that show the intellect grasping a state of affairs (*intelligit se intelligere*). While these clues may not allow us to sift out the inherent ambiguity in some texts, they do allow us to recognize at least a few passages in the following texts as likely referring to self-awareness: *In Sent.* I.1.2.1, ad 2, and IV.49.3.2; *DV* 10.10, ad 5; *In Ethic.* IX.11; *In De an.* I.1 [Leon. 45/1.5:93–95] and 3 [45/1.216:84–86]; *ST* Ia, 76.1, 79.6, ad 2, 87.2, and 93.7, ad 4.

<sup>2</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:219–33]: "Quantum igitur ad actuale cognitionem qua aliquis se in actu considerat animam habere, sic dico, quod anima cognoscitur per actus suos; in hoc enim aliquis percipit se animam habere et vivere et esse quod percipit se sentire et intelligere et alia huiusmodi vitae opera exercere . . . Nullus autem percipit se intelligere nisi ex hoc quod aliquid intelligit, quia prius est intelligere aliquid quam intelligere se intelligere; et ideo anima pervenit ad actualiter percipiendum se esse per illud quod intelligit, vel sentit."

Moreover, although the act of self-awareness is accidental to the soul, the habit whence it springs is not an accident, but rather belongs to the very essence of the soul.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the ground from which self-awareness springs is the very presence of the soul to itself.<sup>5</sup>

Self-awareness offers two intriguing conundrums for consideration in this chapter. First, what is the content of self-awareness? And if self-awareness aims at the soul's existence, does self-awareness violate the principle that knowledge of existence follows knowledge of essence? The second puzzle concerns the mode of an act of self-awareness. Although the human soul, as the lowest of the intellects, must be actualized by a species in order to know itself, it seems that self-awareness ought to enjoy special immediacy insofar as the soul is already identical with itself. Could self-awareness be some sort of intuition, particularly since its object is a singular existent? In probing this question, special caution is needed since intuitive cognition is difficult to define and has historically elicited considerable controversy. I shall therefore preface my discussion of the mode of self-awareness by sketching briefly the positions that various Thomistic scholars have held on intuitive cognition and the intuitivity of self-knowledge.

## A. THE CONTENT OF SELF-AWARENESS

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<sup>3</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 2 [Leon. 22/2.323:335–39]: “[N]ullus unquam erravit in hoc quod non perciperet se vivere, quod pertinet ad cognitionem qua aliquis singulariter cognoscit quid in anima sua agatur”; and ad 8 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.325:521–25]: “Secundum hoc scientia de anima est certissima quod unusquisque in se ipso experitur se animam habere et actus animae sibi inesse”; *In De an.* I.1 [Leon. 45/1.5:93–95]: “[Q]uia et certa est (hoc enim quilibet experitur in se ipso, quod scilicet habeat animam et quod anima uiuificet.”

<sup>4</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 14 [Leon. 22/2.324:419–22]: “[N]otitia qua anima seipsam novit, non est in genere accidentis quantum ad id quo habitualiter cognoscitur, sed solum quantum ad actum cognitionis qui est accidens quoddam”; and ad 11 [22/2.322:395–99]: “[N]on oportet quod semper intelligatur actualiter ipsa mens, cuius cognitio inest nobis habitualiter, ex hoc quod ipsa eius essentia intellectui nostro est praesens.”

<sup>5</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.355]: “Nam ad primam cognitionem de mente habendam, sufficit ipsa mentis praesentia, quae est principium actus ex quo mens percipit seipsam. Et ideo dicitur se cognoscere per suam praesentiam.”



## 1. Indistinct Knowledge and the Twofold Operation of the Intellect

### a. The problem and a path to its solution

Oddities in Aquinas's descriptions of self-awareness make it difficult to determine the content of this act. Most frequently, self-awareness is described as a perception of facticity: the soul perceives "that it exists" (*se esse, an est, quia est*).<sup>6</sup> But on occasion, Aquinas says that the mind "perceives *itself*" (*seipsam*),<sup>7</sup> or itself engaged in some act (indicated with an accusative-and-infinitive construction, *percipit se intelligere*),<sup>8</sup> both of which seem to imply something more than just perceiving one's own existence. In *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 87.1, self-awareness even seems to include some sort of essential content: one perceives not only "that he exists," but "that he has an intellective soul," or even "that he has a soul, that he lives, and that he exists."<sup>9</sup> The perception of oneself as an intellective, living soul seems to be much more than a bare perception of facticity. It implies some sort of essential content, some sort of attempt to answer not only the question "Does it exist?" but also the question, "What is it?"

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<sup>6</sup> For *se esse*, see for instance *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321–26:224, 233, 241, 334, 354, 445, etc.]. For *an est*, see *ibid*, line 213: "... cognoscitur an est anima." For *quia est*, see *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: "[D]e anima scimus quia est per seipsam."

<sup>7</sup> *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: "[D]e anima scimus quia est per seipsam, inquantum eius actus percipimus"; *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: "... mens percipit seipsam"; *ST* Ia, 79.6, ad 2 [Leon. 5.271]: "[E]t ideo sicut intelligit seipsum intellectus, quamvis ipse sit quidam singularis intellectus, ita intelligit suum intelligere, quod est singularis actus vel in praeterito vel in praesenti vel in futuro existens"; *De unit. int.* 3 [Leon. 43.303:27–31]: "Manifestum est enim quod hic homo singularis intelligit: numquam enim de intellectu quereremus nisi intelligeremus; nec cum querimus de intellectu, de alio principio querimus quam de eo quo nos intelligimus"; *DM* 6, ad 18 [Leon. 23.152:645–46]: "[I]pse intellectus intelligit se ipsum per actum suum."

<sup>8</sup> See for instance *In Sent.* I.1.2.1, ad 2 [Mand. 1.38]: "[E]adem operatione intelligo intelligibile, et intelligo me intelligere"; *De unit. int.* 5 [Leon. 43.312:234–38]: "Unde et intellectus meus quando intelligit se intelligere, intelligit quendam singularem actum"; as well as *ST* Ia, 79.6, ad 2; *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:84–86]; *In Ethic.* IX.11 [Leon. 47/2.540.96–104]; *De unit. int.* 5 [Leon. 43.312:234–38]: "Vnde et intellectus meus quando intelligit se intelligere, intelligit quendam singularem actum"; and multiple instances in *DV* 10.8.

<sup>9</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: "[P]ercipit se habere animam intellectivam"; *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:222–24]: "[A]liquis se percipit animam habere et vivere et esse."

Even if one could somehow explain away the attributions of essential content to self-awareness and establish that self-awareness is only a perception of existence, this conclusion would clash with a well-known Thomistic principle: namely, knowledge of essence, apprehended in the first operation of the intellect (simple apprehension), logically precedes knowledge of existence, apprehended in the second operation of the intellect (judgment).<sup>10</sup> According to this principle, if self-awareness is purely a perception of existence, it must be logically posterior to knowledge of the soul's essence. But the texts clearly indicate that actual self-awareness, for which "the very presence of the mind suffices," possesses priority, even temporal priority, over quidditative knowledge of the soul, which is gained slowly, through "a diligent and subtle inquiry" with a strong possibility of failure.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, self-awareness (perception of the soul's existence) must be logically and temporally prior to knowledge of the soul's essence. But this would reverse the order that Aquinas has established in his general theory of knowledge. Moreover, experience contradicts the notion that one's initial awareness of one's own existence includes knowledge of the soul's essence, since much time and effort are needed in order to discover what the soul is.

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<sup>10</sup> See for instance *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 6.3 [Leon. 50.167:114–17]: Et tamen sciendum quod de nulla re potest sciri an est nisi quoquo modo sciatur de ea quid est, uel cognitione perfecta, uel saltem cognitione confusa." This only makes sense since we encounter existence as belonging to a subject, no matter how little we know about the subject. Cf. Joseph de Finance, *Connaissance de l'être: traité d'ontologie* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966), 47: "... nous ne pensons l'exister qu'à travers l'existant, l'esse qu'à travers l'ens."

<sup>11</sup> *ST Ia*, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: "Nam ad primam cognitionem de mente habendam, sufficit ipsa mentis praesentia, quae est principium actus ex quo mens percipit seipsam. . . . Sed ad secundam cognitionem de mente habendam, non sufficit eius praesentia, sed requiritur diligens et subtilis inquisitio"; *DV* 10.8, ad 8 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.325:521–25]: "Secundum hoc scientia de anima est certissima quod unusquisque in se ipso experitur se animam habere et actus animae sibi inesse; sed cognoscere quid sit anima difficillimum est." See also the *responsio* of *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.325:275–99], where Thomas describes the long process of reasoning or *deductio* by which philosophers investigate the nature of the soul.

A path to a solution is suggested by *SCG* 3.46 and *ST* Ia, 87.1, in which Thomas suggests distinguishing self-awareness and quidditative self-knowledge in the following way: in the former, one knows oneself as *indistinct* from other things, and in the latter, as *distinct* from other things. In these texts, Thomas makes the following point in expositing the same Augustinian text:

*SCG* 3.46: [Augustine] explains that the mind knows itself through itself as present, not as distinct from other things. Whence he says that some erred in that they did not distinguish the soul from other things that were diverse from it. But through knowing what a thing is, it is known insofar as it is distinct from other things: hence also a definition, which signifies what a thing is, distinguishes the definitum from every other thing.<sup>12</sup>

*ST* Ia, 87.1: Augustine says regarding such inquiry of the mind [into the soul's nature]: 'Let the mind seek, not to see itself as absent, but to discern its present self,' i.e., to know its difference from other things; which is to know its essence and nature.<sup>13</sup>

By claiming that in self-awareness (here referred to as “knowing oneself as present”) the soul does not know how it is “distinct from other things,” Aquinas cannot mean that the soul confuses its own identity with other things. Self-awareness is precisely the awareness of oneself as the one sensing or knowing, not as the thing sensed or known. Rather, the self-aware soul's inability to know itself as distinct from other things means that it has not yet discovered the *specific difference* that distinguishes it from the other kinds of things that it

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<sup>12</sup> *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “Ex quo dat intelligere quod anima per se cognoscit seipsam quasi praesentem, non quasi ab aliis distinctam. Unde et in hoc dicit aliquos errasse, quo animam non distinxerunt ab illis quae sunt ab ipsa diversa. Per hoc autem quod scitur de re quid est, scitur res prout est ab aliis distincta: unde et definitio, quae significat quid est res, distinguit definitum ab omnibus aliis.” The Augustinian text in question is *De Trin.* 10.9.12. As cited by Aquinas in *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123], it reads: “Anima, cum sui notitiam quaerit, non velut absentem se quaerit cernere, sed praesentem se curat discernere: non ut cognoscat se, quasi non novit; sed ut dignoscat ab eo quod alterum novit.” The actual text of Augustine, as given in *CCSL* 50.325, reads: “Non itaque velut absentem se quaeret cernere, sed praesentem se curet discernere. Nec se quasi non norit cognoscat, sed ab eo quod alterum novit dinoscat.”

<sup>13</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: “Propter quod Augustinus dicit, *X de Trin.*, de tali inquisitione mentis: *Non velut absentem se quaerat mens cernere; sed praesentem quaerat discernere*, idest cognoscere differentiam suam ab aliis rebus, quod est cognoscere quidditatem et naturam suam.” The same point is made in *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 2 and 4 [Leon. 5.409–410], as well as in *DM* 16.8, ad 7 [Leon. 23.322:284–88]: “Una quidem qua cognoscitur de anima quid est, discernendo ipsam ab omnibus aliis; et quantum ad hoc melius cognoscit animam Daemon, qui intuetur eam in seipsa, quam homo, qui investigat naturam ipsius per actus ipsius.”

senses. In the first instant of self-awareness, I know that I am a different *thing* from the tree that I see before me; I may even be aware that there are significant perceptible differences between myself and the tree (I am not green or rooted to the ground). In other words, I am aware of an existential and even descriptive difference between myself and my object. But I cannot articulate the specific difference between myself and the tree, because my knowledge of my own nature remains indistinct.

In quidditative self-knowledge, on the other hand, the soul does know the ways in which it is distinct from everything else (*suam differentiam*, literally, that which differentiates it from others). A close examination of the above extract from SCG 3.46 clarifies this point: literally, it says that when one “scientifically knows a thing’s quiddity” (*scitur de re quid est*), one “scientifically knows it as distinct from others”—and Thomas goes on to explain that a definition, which signifies the quiddity, “distinguishes the definitum from all other things.” Thus it is clear that quidditative self-knowledge is a special kind of knowledge of the soul’s essence: it is a scientific knowledge that achieves the proper definition of the soul by capturing the specific difference whereby human souls are distinguished from every other being. This scientific, quidditative knowledge of the soul is the most distinct knowledge that one can have.

These texts sketch a path towards solving the problem of the content of self-awareness by means of the two following questions about cognition in general: First, what is the relationship between knowledge *that a thing is* and indistinct knowledge, and between knowledge of *what a thing is* (quidditative) and distinct knowledge? And second, is there an essential, indistinct knowledge that is *not* quidditative? In order to answer these questions, I

begin by examining Thomas's general theory of indistinct vs. distinct knowledge. Then I will examine how the account of indistinct knowledge relates to Thomas's account of how one knows a thing's essence and existence. This will clarify the way in which a perception of facticity must include some essential elements, thus suggesting a hierarchy of accounts that can be given of a thing's essence. I will then return to self-awareness in §2 to explain it as a special kind of indistinct knowledge with both existential and essential content.

*b. A theory of indistinct knowledge*

Thomas's theory of indistinct knowledge is indebted to two Aristotelian principles:

1) What is first known to us are confused generalities;<sup>14</sup> and 2) The more specific our knowledge is, the more perfect it is.<sup>15</sup> Thomas's theory is based on the premise that initially we grasp things as wholes, on both the sensible and intellectual levels, and only afterwards discern their parts:

[Aristotle] says that a sensible whole is more known to us according to sense; therefore also an intelligible whole is more known to us according to intellect. But a universal is a certain intelligible whole, because it comprehends many things as parts, namely, its inferiors: therefore a universal is more known to us according to intellect.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See *Physics* I.1.184a21–b14: “Now what is to us plain and obvious at first is rather confused masses, the elements and principles of which become known to us later by analysis. Thus we must advance from generalities to particulars; for it is a whole that is best known to sense-perception, and a generality is a kind of whole, comprehending many things within it, like parts. Much the same thing happens in the relation of the name to the formula. A name, e.g. ‘round,’ means vaguely a sort of whole: its definition analyses this into its particular senses. Similarly a child begins by calling all men ‘father,’ and all women ‘mother,’ but later on distinguishes each of them” (trans. R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. McKeon).

<sup>15</sup> *Categories* 5.2b8–14: “For if one is to say of the primary substance what it is, it will be more informative and apt to give the species than the genus. For example, it would be more informative to say of the individual man that he is a man than that he is an animal (since the one is more distinctive of the individual man while the other is more general); and more informative to say of the individual tree that it is a tree than that it is a plant” (trans. J.L. Ackrill, in *Aristotle, Categories and De Interpretatione* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1963, repr. 1994], 7).

<sup>16</sup> *In Phys.* I.1 [Leon. 2.6]: “[D]icit quod totum sensibile est notius secundum sensum; ergo et totum intelligibile est notius secundum intellectum. Universale autem est quoddam totum intelligibile, quia comprehendit multa ut partes, scilicet sua inferiora; ergo universale est notius secundum intellectum quoad nos.” See also *ST Ia*, 85.3, cited below in note 18; and *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 1.3 [Leon. 50.87:132–38]: “Et inter hec illa sunt priora, que primo intellectui abstraenti occurrunt; hec autem sunt que plura comprehendunt, uel per

As we will see later in the third section of this chapter, knowledge is always knowledge of a whole or *unum*. But due to its weakness, the human intellect grasps a whole confusedly, without initially grasping all the parts that the whole contains. Learning is simply the process of deciphering all these parts until the whole is known completely.

Now, there are two different types of wholes that are perceived indistinctly: universal wholes and integral wholes.<sup>17</sup> A universal whole may be very general, containing numerous narrower universal wholes as its parts (as ‘living body’ contains ‘animal’ and ‘plant,’ and ‘animal’ contains ‘bird,’ ‘mammal,’ ‘reptile,’ and so on). Or it may be very narrow, an *infima species* which can only be divided into singulars (as ‘man’ contains ‘Socrates,’ ‘Charlemagne,’ etc.) . The more general the universal whole is, the easier it is to grasp, but the more confused our knowledge of it is:

It is clear that to know something in which many things are contained, without having proper knowledge of each thing contained in it, is to know something under a certain confusion. . . . But to know distinctly that which is contained in a universal whole is to know a less common thing. Just as to know animal indistinctly is to know animal insofar as it is animal; but to know animal distinctly, is to know animal insofar as it is rational or irrational animal, which is to know man or lion: therefore our intellect knows animal before it knows man.<sup>18</sup>

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modum totius uniuersalis, uel per modum totius integralis; et ideo magis uniuersalia sunt primo nota intellectui, et composita componentibus, ut diffinitum partibus diffinitionis.”

<sup>17</sup> For descriptions of the various types of wholes, see *ST Ia*, 77.1, ad 1 [Leon. 5.237], where Thomas distinguishes universal, integral, and potential wholes; the first two are relevant to our discussion: “Totum enim universale adest cuilibet parti secundum totam suam essentiam et virtutem, ut *animal* homini et equo: et ideo proprie de singulis partibus praedicatur. Totum vero integrale non est in qualibet parte, neque secundum totam essentiam, neque secundum totam virtutem. Et ideo nullo modo de singulis partibus praedicatur; sed aliquo modo, licet improprie, praedicatur de omnibus simul, ut si dicamus quod paries, tectum et fundamentum sunt domus.”

<sup>18</sup> *ST Ia*, 85.3 [Leon. 5.336]: “Manifestum est autem quod cognoscere aliquid in quo plura continentur, sine hoc quod habeatur propria notitia uniuscuiusque eorum quae continentur in illo, est cognoscere aliquid sub confusione quadam. . . . Cognoscere autem distincte id quod continentur in toto universali, est habere cognitionem de re minus communi. Sicut cognoscere animal indistincte, est cognoscere animal in quantum est animal; cognoscere autem animal distincte, est cognoscere animal in quantum est animal rationale vel irrationale, quod est cognoscere hominem vel leonem. Prius igitur occurrit intellectui nostro cognoscere animal quam cognoscere hominem: et eadem ratio est si comparemus quodcumque magis universale ad minus universale.”

This simply means that likeness is easier for the human intellect to perceive than distinction; but it is distinction that makes things fully intelligible. Thus our knowledge is always initially confused, because we begin with the more general universals and only later identify specific differences that subdivide the genera into their species, and finally the distinctions between individuals in a species: “[T]hose things that are more known to us are confused—and universals are such things; therefore it is fitting for us to proceed from universals to singulars.”<sup>19</sup>

The reason that the confusion of our knowledge is in direct proportion to its universality is that universals contain their particulars in potency. Therefore, the many that fall under the universal are only known potentially, so that universal knowledge is partly potential knowledge, and partly actual knowledge. When we know man as animal, for instance, we know the genus actually, but the specific difference (i.e., “rational”) only potentially.<sup>20</sup> Thus in some way we know something of what man is, in the sense of knowing a larger genus to which he belongs, but we have not fully or precisely attained the

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<sup>19</sup> *In Phys.* I.1 [Leon. 2.5]: “Innatum est nobis ut procedamus cognoscendo ab iis quae sunt nobis magis nota, in ea quae sunt magis nota naturae; sed ea quae sunt nobis magis nota, sunt confusa, qualia sunt universalia; ergo oportet nos ab universalibus ad singularia procedere.” For this reason very small children will call any four-legged animal, including squirrels, cats, and dogs, by the name of “doggie.” See also *DV* 10.6, ad 4 [Leon. 22/1.313:250–55]: “[A]liquis, antequam aliquam scientiam acquirat, amare eam potest in quantum eam cognoscit quadam cognitione universali, cognoscendo utilitatem illius scientiae vel visu vel quocumque alio modo.”

<sup>20</sup> *In Phys.* I.1 [Leon. 2.6]: “Dicendum est autem quod totum integrale et universale convenient in hoc, quod utrumque est sed in potentia tantum, ita qui apprehendit domum, nondum distinguit partes: unde cum ratione confusionis totum sit prius cognitum quoad nos, eadem ratio est de utroque toto. Esse autem compositum non est commune utrique toti: unde manifestum est quod signanter dixit supra *confusa*, et non *composita*.” See also *In Meteor.* I.1.1 [Leon. 3.326]: “Scientia autem quae habetur de re tantum in universali, non est scientia completa secundum ultimum actum, sed est medio modo se habens inter puram potentiam et ultimum actum. Nam aliquis sciens aliquid in universali, scit quidem aliquid eorum actu quae sunt in propria ratione eius: alia vero sciens in universali non scit actu, sed solum in potentia. Puta, qui cognoscit hominem solum secundum quod est animal, solum scit sic partem definitionis hominis in actu, scilicet genus eius: differentias autem constitutivas speciei nondum scit actu, sed potentia tantum. Unde manifestum est quod complementum scientiae requirit quod non sistatur in communibus, sed procedatur usque ad species.”

quiddity of man as such. As we learn more about animals, knowledge of the parts of the universal ‘animal’ is actualized. We begin to be able to distinguish man from more and more animals, until we are finally able to formulate the definition of man.<sup>21</sup> Here the formula of genus+specific difference identifies an essence that can be further subdivided only into individuals and which can be precisely distinguished from all others (the object of quidditative knowledge in the proper sense).

Integral wholes, on the other hand, are individual *things*, the objects of perception. Such things are first perceived indistinctly as wholes; this original perception may include some of the most salient parts, but contains all the other parts only indistinctly. For instance, I first see “this house” as a whole, but fail to notice the color of the door, and the style of the ornately carved railings. Only later, when I have grasped every detail, can I claim to have seen the house distinctly. Or I first hear “Beethoven’s fifth symphony” as a whole, instantly noting the memorable main theme but only hearing the carefully constructed cello line after several hearings. Thus an initial perception of an integral whole is always indistinct; it takes time before we gain a distinct perception that includes all the parts.

Now, one of the parts of an integral whole is the essence,<sup>22</sup> which itself is represented conceptually as a universal whole. Thus it is crucial to note that indistinct knowledge of an integral whole *may involve knowing the essence of that whole in a too-universal way*. Thus, perceiving the house (an integral whole) from a distance, I might only know it indistinctly as “a building” or even “a square thing.” As Aquinas explains, when we

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<sup>21</sup> See *ST* Ia, 85.3, ad 3 [Leon. 5.337]: “[P]rius enim cognoscimus hominem quadam confusa cognitione, quam sciamus distinguere omnia quae sunt de hominis ratione.”

<sup>22</sup> The essence is, of course, a special kind of “part,” since it is present in all the parts of the object or integral whole. Nevertheless, as one of the metaphysical components of the object, it may be considered as a part.



perceive something in the distance, “we perceive that this is a body before perceiving that it is an animal, and this, before perceiving that it is a man, and lastly that it is Socrates.”<sup>23</sup> Here, the integral whole is perceived indistinctly insofar as its quiddity is perceived under a too-broadly-universal aspect. Distinct knowledge requires that this quiddity be properly defined according to its genus and differentia.<sup>24</sup>

It is important to emphasize that knowing a universal whole indistinctly is not the same as perceiving an integral whole indistinctly with a too-general grasp of its essence. When one has indistinct knowledge of a universal whole, one fails to recognize its division into further parts; one groups all four-legged creatures together under the single universal “four-legged animal” without recognizing the distinctions between squirrels, cats, and dogs. One has simply not learned these further distinctions; i.e., one has not yet become aware of their specific differences. But when one perceives the nature of some integral whole indistinctly (as when one perceives that moving thing as “an animal”), one may very well already know the distinction of the universal whole “animal” into further species. But in *this perception*, one is not able to perceive enough of the integral parts of that whole to discover to which species *this animal* belongs. Significantly, the development towards distinctness in this situation always constitutes an increasing distinctness in one’s understanding of the essence of *this given object*: That is something—that is an animal—that is a man—that is Socrates.

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<sup>23</sup> *In Phys.* I.1 [Leon. 2.6]: “[C]um aliquis a remotis videtur, prius percipimus ipsum esse corpus quam esse animal, et hoc prius quam quod sit homo, et ultimo quod sit Socrates.”

<sup>24</sup> *In Phys.* I.1 [Leon. 2.6]: “[D]efinientia secundum se sunt prius nota nobis quam definitum; sed prius est notum nobis definitum, quam quod talia sint definientia ipsius: sicut prius sunt nota nobis animal et rationale quam homo; sed prius est nobis notus homo confuse, quam quod animal et rationale sint definientia ipsius.”

Now, the point that is relevant to our discussion of the content of self-awareness is this: I argue that when one perceives an integral whole as “something,” one is perceiving it at the most universal level as “a being” or “an existent.” It is here that perception of facticity occurs, and it is important to note that this perception of facticity already includes a maximally indistinct knowledge of the essence of that integral whole, at the most universal level of “being.” Suppose that while hiking, I see in the distance a red blob on the horizon. In perceiving the blob, an integral whole, I fail to grasp the vast majority of its integral parts; certainly not enough to recognize its specific essence. Yet in the very act of perceiving that “something is there” (the facticity of the integral whole) I perceive its essence indistinctly as “a being,” “an existent.” Even bare facticity is perceived as belonging to *something*, even if all one can say about it is that it *is* something. The reason is simply that in perception of integral wholes, knowledge of existence and knowledge of essence, however indistinct, converge precisely at the point at which some substance is recognized to be “something.” In order to substantiate this claim, which is of the greatest significance for self-awareness, it is necessary to review briefly Thomas’s account of how the intellect knows essences and existence.

*c. Indistinct knowledge and the knowledge of essence and existence*

Knowledge of essence and knowledge of existence are generally attributed to two different operations of the intellect. In the first operation, simple apprehension, the possible intellect receives an essence as an indivisible unit, abstracted from matter. This is the “intellection of indivisibles, by which the intellect knows *what* each thing is . . . [this] concerns the nature itself of a thing, according to which the understood thing holds a certain

rank among beings.”<sup>25</sup> The intellect’s second operation is judgment, in which truth and falsity are located.<sup>26</sup> Here the intellect produces a judgment, a statement that composes or divides the natures grasped in simple apprehension.<sup>27</sup> Because judgment distinguishes the parts in a whole, signifying their union or distinction by the verb *is* which unites or divides the subject and predicate, Aquinas states in *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 5.3: “The second operation concerns a thing’s *esse* (*ipsum esse rei*), which in composites results from the union of the principles of a thing or accompanies the thing’s simple nature, as in the case of simple substances.”<sup>28</sup>

The reference here to *ipsum esse rei* has been strongly disputed, but I shall take it here, in accordance with the opinion of Gilson, Maritain, Owens, and Wippel, to mean that whereas the object of simple apprehension is a thing’s essence, the object of judgment is a thing’s actual existence. Taking *ipsum esse rei* literally, they explain that existence is not apprehended as a concept, but is apprehended by the judgment as the reality of the thing that

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<sup>25</sup> *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 5.3 [Leon. 50.147:91–93 and 97–101]: “. . . [una operatio] que dicitur intelligentia indivisibilium, qua cognoscit de unoquoque quid est . . . Prima quidem operatio respicit ipsam naturam rei, secundum quam res intellecta aliquem gradum in entibus obtinet, sive sit res completa, ut totum aliquod, sive res incompleta, ut pars vel accidens.” For a few Aristotelian texts that underlie Thomas’s doctrine of the two operations of the intellect, see Aristotle *De an.* III.6.430a27–b30; *De int.* 1.16a9–12. Thomas compares this operation to the impression of a sense object upon the senses: it is the “passio intellectus possibilis secundum quod informatur specie intelligibili” (*ST Ia*, 85.2, ad 3 [Leon. 5.334]).

<sup>26</sup> *ST Ia*, 16.2 [Leon. 4.208]: “[Q]uando iudicat rem ita se habere sicut est forma quam de re apprehendit, tunc primo cognoscit et dicit verum. Et hoc facit componendo et dividendo: nam in omni propositione aliquam formam significatam per praedicatum, vel applicat alicui rei significatae per subiectum, vel removet ab ea”; as well as *In De an.* III.5; *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 5.3; and *In Perierm.* I.3. For the Aristotelian background, see *De an.* III.6.430a26–29, trans. J.A. Smith, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon [New York: Random, 1941]: “[W]here the alternative of true or false applies, there we always find a putting together of objects of thought in a quasi-unity.”

<sup>27</sup> See *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 5.3 [Leon. 50.147:93–95]: “[A]lia vero qua componit et dividit, scilicet enuntiationem affirmativam vel negativam formando”; *ST Ia*, 85.2, ad 3 [Leon. 5.334–35]: “Qua quidem formatus, format secundo vel definitionem vel divisionem vel compositionem, quae per vocem significatur. Unde ratio quam significat nomen, est definitio; et enuntiatio significat compositionem et divisionem intellectus.”

<sup>28</sup> *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 5.3 [Leon. 50.147:101–5]: “Secunda vero operatio respicit ipsum esse rei; quod quidem resultat ex congregatione principiorum rei in compositis, vel ipsam simplicem naturam rei concomitatur, ut in substantiis simplicibus.”

was grasped in the first operation. The judgment's apprehension of existence thus enables it to formulate an *enunciatio* which expresses the union of essence and existence which are apprehended simultaneously by simple apprehension and judgment.<sup>29</sup> "What things are is known through conceptualization. That they exist is known through a different activity technically called judgment. What is known *dynamically* through judgment is represented *statically* in a proposition."<sup>30</sup>

Much could be said about the relation between simple apprehension and judgment that this view implies, but only one point needs to be made here for our purposes. Essence is apprehended by simple apprehension and existence by judgment, in two simultaneous and co-dependent but distinct acts: "At the instant when sense perceives, in its blind fashion, without intellection or mental word, that *this exists*; at that instant the intellect says (in a judgment), *this being is or exists* and at the same time (in a concept), *being*."<sup>31</sup> Each

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<sup>29</sup> See Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 25; Joseph Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence* (Milwaukee, Wisc.: Bruce Publishing Co., 1968), 24–25; Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantieri and Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948), 25; Étienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: PIMS, 1949), 203–9. There are, of course, differences in interpretation within this position, among these authors, but I cannot enter into these here, and restrict myself to sketching the broad position on which they agree. I will follow Wippel here in describing *esse* merely as "actual existence" (*Metaphysical Thought*, 31), since I wish to set aside the controversial question of whether *esse* additionally refers to the *actus essendi*. It is certain that *esse* refers at least to facticity, and this is all that we need to know about *esse* for the purposes of this dissertation.

The interpretation of these four authors is disputed by L.-M. Régis, who insists that the existence of a thing is apprehended along with its essence in separate concepts by the first operation. These concepts are re-joined by the operation of judgment, whose sole function is to create true or false statements by uniting or dividing the concepts understood in the first operation. According to this interpretation, the *ipsum esse rei* which is the object of judgment is actually not the thing's existence, but the thing's "mode of existing" in the ten categories. See Régis, *Epistemology*, trans. Imelda Choquette Byrne (New York: Macmillan, 1959), especially 312–32; Francis A. Cunningham, *Essence and Existence in Thomism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 47, seems to share the same opinion. Régis's position is usually criticized for essentializing existence.

<sup>30</sup> Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence*, 24.

<sup>31</sup> See Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 203–9; Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence*, 25; Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 25; Wippel concurs, explaining that simple apprehension can be "regarded as first in the order of nature from the standpoint of material causality; for it provides the subject for an existential judgment. Such a judgment, on the other hand, may be regarded as prior in terms of formal

operation subsequently expresses what it apprehended, the first as a concept and the second as a propositional statement by composition and division. There is an ontological priority of knowledge of essence over knowledge of existence, since we always experience existence as the existence *of some subject*.<sup>32</sup> But this priority does not mean that an essence, at least in the context of a corresponding sense-experience, can be known apart from its existence. Gilson explains:

[B]oth operations are equally required for knowledge, which always is a cognition of actual being. Fundamental as it is, the distinction between abstract knowledge and judgment should therefore never be conceived as a separation. Abstraction and judgment are never separated in the mind, because essence and existence are never separated in reality. . . . All real knowledge is by nature both essential and existential.<sup>33</sup>

We know the forms of sense-objects, not just as disembodied essences, but as forms of existing things.<sup>34</sup>

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causality, though again only in the order of nature; for it grasps actual existence, which may be regarded as the actualization of the subject” (*Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 40). While one might object that suspension of judgment disproves the notion that judgment always accompanies apprehension, an interesting passage of the commentary on *De anima* suggests that even a cautiously qualified suggestion constitutes a judgment: “[C]um aliquid intelligimus, asserimus sic esse, cum autem opinamur, dicimus sic uideri uel apparere nobis; sicut igitur intelligere requirit sensum, ita et opinari requirit fantasiam” (*In De an.* II.28 [Leon. 45/1.191:244–48]).

<sup>32</sup> See *In Perierm.* I.1 [Leon. 1\*/1.5:10–11]: “[N]on potest esse compositio et divisio nisi simplicium apprehensorum.”

<sup>33</sup> Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 203–5; see also 209: “Any empirically given existence is that of a given being, and our knowledge of existence is therefore bound to be that of an existing being. This is why there are no concepts without judgments nor any judgments without concepts. . . . It must be so, since ‘to be’ is part of ‘being.’” Also “at the instant when sense perceives, in its blind fashion, without intellection or mental word, that *this exists*; at that instant the intellect says (in a judgment), *this being is* or *exists* and at the same time (in a concept), *being*.” Owens, similarly, says, “A nature in abstraction from existence is just not there to be grasped, and existence apart from something it actuates is nowhere found in the range of human experience. Both appear and are grasped as different aspects of the one existent thing . . . they are aspects known through two different kinds of intellectual activity, one of which is communicated through simple terms, the other through sentences” (*An Interpretation of Existence*, 25). E. Peillaube strongly disagrees with this thesis, which he finds in some form in Romeyer; see “Avons-nous l’expérience du spirituel?” pt 1, *Revue de philosophie* 36 (1929): 252–53.

<sup>34</sup> One might cite *DEE* 4 as a counter-text [Leon. 43.376:98–101]: “Omnis autem essentia uel quidditas potest intelligi sine hoc quod aliquid intelligatur de esse suo; possum enim intelligere quid est homo uel fenix et tamen ignorare an esse habeat in rerum natura.” Here, however, Thomas is not referring to knowledge of essence that begins in sense-perception of *a real man* or *a real phoenix*, which is what we are concerned with here in this dissertation. Rather, *DEE* 4 explains that it is possible to consider a quiddity, either of an object

With these principles in mind, we can return to indistinct knowledge of an integral whole (the red blob on the horizon), indistinct insofar as its specific essence is not yet evident to the perceiver. In the initial, most indistinct perception, the blob appears as “something,” “a being,” “an existent.” As the hiker approaches the blob and its parts begin to come into focus, his knowledge of its essence is deepened by degrees, each new and more specific grasp of essence building on the previous one, and each accompanied by an apprehension of existence on the part of judgment. In Gilson’s words:

Being does not come first in the sense that what comes next no longer is being. Being comes first and it stays there. Being accompanies all my representations. But even that is not saying enough, for each and every cognition is a cognition of being. I never get out of being, because, outside it there is nothing. What I begin by espying from afar is first to me just a ‘being;’ if it comes nearer, I know that it is an animal, but it still is ‘a being;’ let it come near enough, and I will know that it is a man, then, finally, Peter, but all these successive determinations of the known object remain as so many more and more determined cognitions of a being.<sup>35</sup>

What interests us here is what happens when something is perceived as the most general level as “a being.” Certainly to call something “a being” is to predicate its essence at the most universal level, in such a way that it cannot be distinguished from anything else. Indeed, “a being” constitutes a perfectly reasonable, though maximally indistinct, answer to the question, “What is it?” On the other hand, being is “*id quod est*,”<sup>36</sup> and it is understood precisely as the subject of existence: “what one first discovers through original judgments of existence can be summed up, as it were, under the heading being, or reality, or something

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which we have experienced (such as a man) or of an object which we have not experienced, without reference to the existence of that object in reality.

<sup>35</sup> Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 204. Gilson is here interpreting the text from *DV* 1.1 [Leon. 22/1:5, 100–102]: “*Illud autem quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum et in quod omnes conceptiones resolvit est ens.*”

<sup>36</sup> See *ST* Ia-IIae, 26.4 [Leon. 6.190]: “. . . ens simpliciter est quod habet esse.”

similar.”<sup>37</sup> To grasp that *x* is a being is the same as to grasp that *x* is an existent, or even that *x* exists.

Thus at this most general level, simple apprehension and judgment appear to converge upon the same reality: a substance’s concrete actuality. In some way, the first and most foundational thing that we know about *every perceived object* is that it is a being and that it exists: “all concrete knowledge of being can be reduced to perception of a *habens esse*.”<sup>38</sup> In fact, when our knowledge of some perceived object is most indistinct, we generally say that all we know about it is that it exists (its facticity), i.e., “that there is something there.”<sup>39</sup> But clearly this cannot be taken to mean that we know *nothing at all* of its essence, however, since our knowledge of existence follows our knowledge of essence, insofar as existence cannot be posited without a subject for existence. In some way, then, the judgment of facticity and a maximally indistinct apprehension converge in a perception of “an existent,” “a being,” “something that exists” (*id quod est*). As de Finance notes: “The two concepts [of being and existing] are identical with respect to their representational content; they only differ according to what they illuminate, their direction of intention.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 44; see also 33–35.

<sup>38</sup> Régis, *Epistemology*, 304. See also Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 209: “[B]eing itself is neither existence nor essence; it is their unity, and this is why it is whole and sound. Since an *ens* is an *esse habens*, all that which is conceived as a being is also judged to be an is. It must be so, since ‘to be’ is part of ‘being.’”

<sup>39</sup> It might be argued that if we are seeing the black speck on the horizon and are sure it is not a trick of the light, we already know it must be a body; but since we are discussing natural this-worldly knowledge, which always comes through the senses, it is already assumed that if we are perceiving something, it must be a body. I do not think that this fact necessarily adds content to our knowledge of facticity, because the pre-philosophical notion of being, which is the normal concept of being which we use in everyday cognition, already contains the notion of materiality (i.e., someone might give a pre-philosophical definition of what it means for *x* to exist as, “I can see, smell, taste, hear *x*”).

<sup>40</sup> de Finance, *Connaissance de l’être*, 47: “Les deux concepts [être et exister] sont identiques quant au contenu représentatif; ils ne diffèrent que par l’éclairage, la visée de l’intention.”

In fact, I would argue that the perception of the red blob as “a being” is achieved by both operations of the intellect together. Judgment is responsible for the concrete existential character of the notion “a being,” and simple apprehension is responsible for its universal character—namely, the fact that “a being” can be posited as the most indistinct answer to the question “what is it?”<sup>41</sup> For Thomas, the notion of “a being” immediately includes the notions of “a thing” (*res*—the notion that this being possesses an essence); “one” (*unum*—the notion that this being is undivided from itself); and “some thing” (*aliquid*—the notion that this being is divided from other beings).<sup>42</sup> In other words, at this level, all that distinguishes this object to us from any other object is the fact that it is *this* being, a unity which is not any other thing; in the phrasing of the *Categories*, we know that it is a primary subject, an existent. When we know “that something exists,” the content of our knowledge of that thing is as follows: it is something, and it exists.<sup>43</sup> Thus at its most indistinct, knowledge can be said to be purely a knowledge of facticity in the sense that nothing is known about a certain object except *that it exists*; but this statement is not to be taken absolutely, as though denying that we have any essential knowledge whatsoever about the thing, since we know the facticity of the object, not as self-subsisting existence, but as the existence of *something* which is perceived precisely as the subject of existence.

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<sup>41</sup> Its indistinctness is especially manifested in the fact that the answer “a being” is ultimately no answer at all, since it is presupposed by the very question “What is *it*?”, where “*it*” is some real perceived thing.

<sup>42</sup> DV 1.1 [Leon. 22/1.5:106–150]; see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 193 and 470.

<sup>43</sup> The soul is therefore known in the sense given by de Finance, “Affirmer en général qu’il y a de l’être, ce n’est nullement affirmer un être *indéterminé*, mais simplement un être *dont on ignore les déterminations*. Mais celles-ci sont affirmées implicitement, dès là qu’on dit: *quelque chose*, car une *chose*, c’est un *quid*, une certaine spécification de l’être, et *quelque* signifie distinction, séparation et donc détermination” (*Connaissance de l’être*, 45). Cf. DV 1.1.



I argue, then, that the perception of facticity is inseparable from (and experientially indistinguishable from) the perception of something as “a being.” But I would also argue that in no case does a human being intellectually apprehend any present sense-object exclusively as “a being”; rather, even where the quiddity is not formulated, simple apprehension of the essence of an object present to the senses always achieves a nominal or descriptive grasp of the essence according to its accidents. It is true that the most indistinct perceptions of integral wholes attain their essences only at the most general level of “a being.” But to focus too much on this fact causes us to lose sight of the fact that one also perceives the red blob as “a red blob.” Even though there is no essence “red blobness,” the designation “a red blob” stands descriptively in the place of the essence and can be predicated universally of *that thing* and of other red shapeless masses. It can even serve as a preliminary prephilosophical attempt to answer the “what is it?” question, though it can never be the real answer to that question. Interestingly, though, with some experience of what kinds of entities populate the world, the hiker would probably recognize that “red blob” most likely will turn out to be, not what that *really is*, but only what it *looks like*.

Here we come to a crucial point in Thomas’s account of how simple apprehension attains essences. In fact, apprehensions of a thing’s form occur at different levels, as Thomas argues in an important passage from the Commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*:

If it were not possible to have some intelligibility (*ratio*) of a thing other than the definition, it would be impossible for us to know scientifically that anything *is*, unless we knew *what it is*; for it is impossible that we should know scientifically that some thing *is*, except through some intelligibility of that thing. For we cannot know scientifically whether a thing is or not, which is in every way unknown to us. But there is some other account of a thing besides the definition; which is, in fact, either the expositive intelligibility of the meaning of the name, or the intelligibility of the denominated thing—an intelligibility different from the definition, because it does not signify *what it is*, as the definition does, but rather something accidental. . . . Therefore, in order to distinguish the signifying intelligibility of *what it is* from other intelligibilities, [Aristotle] adds that an intelligibility may be said to be one in two ways. For

some [intelligibility] may be one only by conjunction: and in this way the *Iliad*, i.e., the poem about Trojan history, has unity. And in this way something is said to be *one intelligibility*, which explains the name, or manifests the denominated thing by some accidents: as when it is said that man is a risible animal able to be educated. Another intelligibility is one insofar as it simply signifies some one concerning the single thing of which it is the intelligibility, and not accidentally. And this intelligibility is the definition signifying *what it is*, because the essence of each thing is one.<sup>44</sup>

Here Thomas presents an epistemological problem. If knowledge of existence depends on knowledge of essence (since there must be some “what” posited as the subject of existence—it is impossible to perceive sheer existence), how is it possible to know, say, that a wallaby exists, even if we are unable to give the proper definition of a wallaby? He solves this problem by explaining that we do indeed apprehend some wallaby-intelligibility, but this intelligibility is not necessarily the right matter for a definition. Our understanding of that which is posited as the subject of existence therefore does not have to be properly quidditative, since less proper but still valid intelligibilities can serve as the placeholders for the essence when positing existence. For instance, suppose I perceive a wallaby hopping into the Australian forest and shout, “There’s a wallaby!” (judgment of existence). In some

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<sup>44</sup> *In Post. an.* II.8 [Leon. 1\*/2.203:92–130]: “Si autem non posset haberi aliqua alia ratio rei quam diffinitio, impossibile esset quod sciremus aliquam rem esse, quin sciremus de ea ‘quid est’, quia impossibile est quod sciamus rem aliquam esse nisi per aliquam illius rei rationem: de eo enim quod est nobis penitus ignotum, non possumus scire si est aut non. Inuenitur autem *aliqua* alia ratio rei preter diffinitionem, que quidem uel est *ratio* expositiua significationis nominis, uel est *ratio* ipsius rei nominate, altera tamen a diffinitione, quia non significat ‘quid est’ sicut diffinitio, set forte aliquod accidens. . . . Ad distinguendum autem rationem significantem ‘quid est’ ab aliis, subiungit quod *dupliciter* aliqua *ratio* potest dici *una*: quedam enim est una solum *coniunctione*, per quem modum etiam habet unitatem *Ylias*, id est poema de historia Troiana (et per hunc modum dicitur esse una ratio que est expositiua nominis, uel manifestatiua ipsius rei nominate per aliquam accidentia, ut si dicatur quod: ‘Homo est animal risibile susceptibile discipline’); *alia vero* ratio est una in quantum simpliciter significat unum de re una, cuius est ratio, et hoc non *secundum accidens*; et talis ratio est diffinitio significans ‘quid est’, quia essentia cuiuslibet rei est una. Sic igitur concludit quod illa que dicta est, est una diffinitio diffinitionis, scilicet quod diffinitio est ratio ipsius ‘quod quid est’”; see also *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 6.3: [Leon. 50.167:114–168:129]: “Et tamen sciendum quod de nulla re potest sciri an est nisi quoquo modo sciatur de ea quid est, uel cognitione perfecta uel saltem cognitione confusa; prout Philosophus dicit in principio Phisicorum quod diffinita sunt precognita partibus diffinitionis: oportet enim scientem hominem esse et quaerentem quid est homo per diffinitionem scire quid hoc nomen ‘homo’ significat. Nec hoc esset, nisi aliquam rem quoquo modo conciperet quam scit esse, quamuis nesciat eius diffinitionem: concipit enim hominem secundum cognitionem alicuius generis proximi uel remoti, et aliquorum accidentium que extra apparent de ipso. Oportet enim diffinitionum cognitionem sicut et demonstrationum ex aliqua praeexistenti cognitione initium sumere.”

sense I must know what a wallaby is, in order to judge that it exists. But I can satisfy the condition of “knowing what a wallaby is,” without having definitional quidditative knowledge. For instance, Thomas suggests, I might have nominal knowledge: I know what the name “wallaby” refers to and I recognize it when I see it.<sup>45</sup> Or (what more or less amounts to the same thing), I might have descriptive knowledge: a wallaby is a furry creature with a pouch, smaller than a kangaroo, and native to Australia.<sup>46</sup>

In each of these cases, I have apprehended some form or intelligibility (a *ratio*), *but in abstracting this intelligibility from the phantasm, I have only succeeded in abstracting a form that is an aggregate of sensible characteristics, not the proper form that is essentially a “one.”* Thus I will have some answer to make when someone asks “what a wallaby is,” insofar as I can provide a description that is reasonably successful in identifying referents of the term “wallaby.” But only when I can define a wallaby according to its genus and specific difference can I truly and properly be said to know “what a wallaby is,” because only then am I able to distinguish wallabies from everything else (for instance, descriptive knowledge alone might make it difficult for me to distinguish wallabies and wallaroos).

These observations suggest three conclusions. First, there are two kinds of intelligibilities, or rather two kinds of accounts that can be given of a thing. On the one hand, there are nominal or descriptive accounts, in which the form apprehended is only accidentally one. On the other hand, there are essential accounts, in which the form

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<sup>45</sup> For nominal knowledge of God, see *DV* 10.12, ad 4 s.c.: [Leon. 22/2.342:280–83]: “[A]d hoc quod cognoscatur aliquid esse, non oportet quod sciatur de eo quid sit per definitionem, sed quid significetur per nomen.”

<sup>46</sup> For descriptive knowledge, see also *In De an.* I.1 [Leon. 45/1.7:254–60]: “[S]et quia principia essentialia rerum sunt nobis ignota, ideo oportet quod utamur differentiis accidentalibus in designatione essentialium (bipes enim non est essenziale, set ponitur in designatione essentialis), et ut per ea, scilicet per differencias accidentales, perveniamus in designationem essentialium.” See also *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 6.3, cited above in note 44.

apprehended is properly one and belongs essentially to the thing. Second, essential accounts may be further distinguished into indistinct and distinct essential accounts. In indistinct essential knowledge, the form apprehended belongs to the thing essentially, but is not specified sufficiently to distinguish that thing from all others (as when I apprehend a wallaby as “animal” or “marsupial”). Distinct essential knowledge, however, is quidditative: it alone properly answers the question “what is it?”<sup>47</sup> Both nominal/descriptive accounts and indistinct essential knowledge are therefore indistinct, because they fail to distinguish a thing from everything else. But indistinct essential knowledge is qualitatively different from nominal/descriptive accounts, because it perceives something that belongs to the thing essentially, and not merely accidentally.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, nominal/descriptive accounts, despite their accidental character, provide a true account, an apprehended form, that legitimately stands in the place of the essence so as to enable predication of the thing’s existence.

Third, nominal/descriptive accounts can stand in the place of the essence precisely because, when they are predicated of a *real thing*, they are always connected to some sort of

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<sup>47</sup> *In Post. an.* II.2 [Leon. 1\*/2.180:65–66]: “[D]iffinitio est indicativa eius ‘quod quid est’.” One should note, however, that quidditative knowledge is not necessarily comprehension, in which a thing is known thoroughly. Quidditative knowledge is as distinct as knowledge can get, because it successfully distinguishes a thing from everything else. But that does not mean that one can know comprehensively the entire nature of anything. It is with comprehension in mind that Thomas makes claims like the following: *In symbolum Apostolorum*, prooem., no. 864 [Marietti, 194]: “Dicendum, quod hoc dubium *primo* tollit imperfectio intellectus nostri: nam si homo posset perfecte per se cognoscere omnia visibilia et invisibilia, stultum esset credere quae non videmus; sed cognitio nostra est adeo debilis quod nullus philosophus potuit unquam perfecte investigare naturam unius muscae: unde legitur, quod unus philosophus fuit triginta annis in solitudine, ut cognosceret naturam apis.”

<sup>48</sup> Thomas helpfully distinguishes between descriptive and indistinct essential knowledge as lesser alternatives to quidditative knowledge, in *In Post. an.* II.7 [Leon. 1\*/2.199:126–35]: “[Aristotiles] dicit quod rem aliquam esse possumus scire absque eo quod sciamus perfecte quid est, dupliciter: uno modo secundum quod cognoscimus aliquod *accidens* eius, puta si per uelocitatem motus estimemus leporem esse; alio modo per hoc quod cognoscimus *aliquid* de essentia eius (quod quidem est possibile in substantiis compositis, ut puta si comprehendamus hominem esse per hoc quod est rationalis, nondum cognitis aliis, quae complent essentiam hominis).”

indistinct essential apprehension.<sup>49</sup> Thus in the text from *In Post. an.* above, Thomas's example of descriptive knowledge is the apprehension of man as "a risible animal able to be educated," which contains the essential account "an animal." At the very least, descriptive knowledge contains the essential account "a being." Thus if I apprehend a wallaby descriptively as "small furry Australian creature with a pouch," this description already contains the essential account "a being": it is equivalent to apprehending a wallaby as "a being that is small and furry, has a pouch, and lives in Australia." In this way, descriptive or essential apprehension of the form of a present sense-object is inextricable from perception of existence. As Gilson says in the passage cited above, "Being does not come first in the sense that what comes next no longer is being. Being comes first and it stays there. Being accompanies all my representations. But even that is not saying enough, for each and every cognition is a cognition of being." Descriptive knowledge of a real thing, therefore, is always an accidental description appended to some level of indistinct essential knowledge, at least "a being."

## 2. *Making Sense of Self-Awareness*

Armed with these considerations, we can now return to the problem of the content of self-awareness, to propose the following four-part solution. First of all, it is now clear that the soul's perception that it exists is not simply a judgment of facticity (*an sit*) bare of

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<sup>49</sup> It is important to note that nominal or descriptive knowledge is the only kind of knowledge that can be had of nonexistents; see *In Post. an.* II.6 [Leon. 1\*/2.194:17–26]: "Quia enim non entis non est aliqua quiditas uel essentia, de eo *quod non est nullus* potest scire 'quod quid est', set potest scire significationem nominis, uel rationem ex pluribus nominibus compositam, sicut potest aliquis scire quid significat hoc nomen '*tragelaphus*' uel '*yrcoerus*' (quod idem est), quia significat quoddam animal compositum ex yrco et ceruo; set *impossibile est* sciri 'quod quid est' yrcocervi, quia nichil est tale in rerum natura." One might argue that this description too contains the essential account "animal"—but Aquinas in this text is careful to add that the descriptive account of the "goatstag" is a composite only of names. We know what "animal" means, but as predicated of "goatstag" it does not signify any real essential unity.

essential content, for such a judgment would be impossible. Rather, this perception of one's own existence is the perception of oneself as "a being," "an existent," "something," an undifferentiated "whole."<sup>50</sup> As was argued above, the perception of some integral whole as "a being" is a maximally indistinct perception achieved by *both* operations of the intellect, judgment perceiving that-it-is and simple apprehension perceiving the subject of this existence essentially as a member of the class of that-which-is (*id quod est*). This is precisely what occurs in the soul's perception of its existence in self-awareness. And it is precisely why Thomas, citing Augustine in the passages from *SCG* 3.46 and *ST* Ia, 87.1 (mentioned at the beginning of section B above), says that in self-awareness the soul knows itself "not as distinct from others." The perception of one's own existence includes a very general and confused essential knowledge of oneself, insofar as perceiving one's existence means perceiving oneself, the subject of existence, as "a being." But being is not a genus, but is shared by everything that is, so that it is impossible to differentiate one being essentially from another simply by calling it "a being."

Consequently, it would be wrong to characterize the distinction between self-awareness (*an est*) and quidditative self-knowledge (*quid est*), as a distinction between knowledge of existence and knowledge of essence. Rather, it is a distinction between indistinct essential/existential knowledge of the soul as "a being," according to which the

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<sup>50</sup> *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 2 [Leon. 5.409]: "Sed quia mens, etsi se totam quodammodo cognoscat, etiam quodammodo se ignorat, prout scilicet est ab aliis distincta; et sic etiam se quaerit, ut Augustinus ponit in IX *de Trin.*"

soul is known as differentiated only insofar as it is *this* and not *that*; and distinct or quidditative knowledge of the soul's nature as the immaterial form of a human body.<sup>51</sup>

Second, it is therefore evident that there is nothing extraordinary in Thomas's insistence that in self-awareness, the soul attains *itself, as a singular entity*.<sup>52</sup> It is true that knowing myself as "a being" or "a thing" is not equivalent to knowing myself as "this." It should be noted, however, that the dimension of singularity is precisely what is added by the perception of existence that is required for perceiving the soul as "a being"; only singulars exist, and the perception of existence is equivalent to the perception of singularity. The perception of singularity in existence requires a conversion to phantasms when material singulars are involved; here, however, there is no need to return to phantasms, since the soul's contact with itself does not take place through an abstracted species.<sup>53</sup> Thus it is the same to say "I perceive that I exist" and "I perceive myself, an existing thing."

Third, now we can see why some texts suggest that self-awareness includes more specific essential content such as "that one has an intellective soul," "that one knows," or "that one has a soul, lives, exists."<sup>54</sup> To perceive the soul's existence, i.e., to know it as "an existent" or "a being" is to have indistinct essential knowledge of it. But to this there may be added some sort of descriptive knowledge, taken from the accidents in which the soul's existence is manifested. Indeed, descriptive knowledge generally is a compilation of accidental characteristics: "red shiny thing," "wheezing hum," or "risible educable animal."

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<sup>51</sup> Note the parallels between this view and Augustine's distinction, noted in Chapter I, §A.1, between knowing oneself as a whole and knowing all of oneself.

<sup>52</sup> See texts cited in note 7 above, especially *De unit. int.* 3.

<sup>53</sup> In this regard, one might also pose the question that was heatedly debated in the 1920s and 30s, namely, whether self-awareness attains the substance/essence as the object of knowledge, or merely the act. But I shall postpone this discussion until §C.2.a.

<sup>54</sup> See note 9 above.

These characteristics are always acts—most often accidental sensibles-in-act such as color, sound, and texture, but also transitive operations (“whatever it was that kept shooting at us”), and, most importantly for self-awareness, one’s own immanent operations (“a knowing thing, a sensate being”).

Thus, because the soul perceives its existing self in its acts (a point that will be discussed in §C.2.a), these acts provide the basis for descriptive knowledge of itself. If all the soul perceives is “an act,” then it perceives its singular self as “a thing.” But if the soul perceives its act of knowing as an intellectual act (i.e., knowing that it knows), then it perceives itself, the agent, therein as “a knower.” This seems to require that one has come to recognize one’s act specifically as an act of knowing; thus self-awareness may only develop this additional content as one gains a more distinct understanding of one’s own acts. In this way, Socrates’ perceiving that he has an intellective soul seems identical to perceiving that he has a soul and perceiving that he knows.<sup>55</sup> As Owens puts it: “This concomitant cognition of self and one’s own activity is not clear cognition. It makes the percipient aware that he exists and that he is performing the activity. But the kind of activity and the kind of agent can be known only through specification by the objects.”<sup>56</sup> The richness of the descriptive content included in self-awareness simply depends on how clearly the act is perceived. One might then ask, of course, whether quidditative self-knowledge is merely an advanced form of self-awareness. This is not the case, however, because the descriptive content in self-awareness only requires the ability to differentiate and name one’s acts in

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<sup>55</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: “Uno quidem modo, particulariter, secundum quod Socrates vel Plato percipit se habere animam intellectivam, ex hoc quod percipit se intelligere . . .”

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Owens, “Aquinas on Cognition as Existence,” in *Thomas and Bonaventure: A Septicentenary Commemoration*, ed. George F. McLean, Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association 48 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1974), 82.



some way. Quidditative self-knowledge, however, requires extensive discursion in order to identify the *nature* of each of these acts and determine which one manifests the specific difference of human nature.

Fourth, it is now clear that when Thomas says in *DV* 10.9 that knowledge *quid sit anima* presupposes knowledge *an sit anima*, he does not mean that knowledge of the soul's existence precedes any knowledge of the soul's essence whatsoever. Rather, he means that indistinct essential self-knowledge of oneself as "a being" (which is a real though general unity belonging essentially to the soul, and which is discovered by perceiving the soul's existence) precedes quidditative self-knowledge.<sup>57</sup> Self-awareness is indeed prior to quidditative self-knowledge, since indistinct and more universal knowledge precedes distinct and specific knowledge. Thomas's theory of self-awareness therefore does not contradict his principle that knowledge *an sit* depends on some kind of knowledge *quid sit*.<sup>58</sup>

Thus when Aquinas quotes Augustine in *SCG* 3.46 and *ST* Ia, 87.1 to show that the self-aware soul does not know itself "as distinct from others," his claim relies on his accounts of indistinct knowledge and the knowledge of existence/essence. He means that in self-awareness the soul knows itself, an integral whole confusedly, perceiving its own

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<sup>57</sup> *DV* 10.9 [Leon. 22/2.328:162–78]: "[M]ulti enim sciunt se animam habere qui nesciunt quid est anima. . . . sed anima non est principium actuum per essentiam suam sed per suas vires, unde perceptis actibus animae percipitur inesse principium talium actuum, utpote motus et sensus, non tamen ex hoc natura animae scitur."

<sup>58</sup> Indeed, it is worth noting that Thomas's reliance on this principle should not be oversimplified, since in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* II.7, he insists that the fullness of the essence of a thing (*quod quid erat esse*) cannot be known unless we have determined whether that thing exists: "[E]t *similiter* est de eo '*quod quid erat esse*', quia aliquando scimus rem esse, nec tamen perfecte scimus quid sit, aliquando autem simul scimus utrumque, set tertium est *impossibile*, ut scilicet sciamus *quid est*, *ignorantes si est*" [Leon. 1\*/1.199:119–24]. We could conclude that while knowledge of existence depends on knowledge of the essence that constitutes the subject of existence (thus we must know what a unicorn is in order to ask whether it exists), that essence cannot be completely comprehended while its real existence remains a mystery (even though we may know what a unicorn is, we cannot completely comprehend what it means to be a unicorn, if we are not sure whether such things are merely figments of the imagination or concrete realities).

essence and existence only at the most universal level.<sup>59</sup> And at this level, it does not have enough knowledge about itself to articulate any differences between itself and other things, other than that it is “a being,”—i.e., this being and not that being.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, Black is right to argue that self-awareness does not “[convey] any determinate information about the intellectual soul as such,”<sup>61</sup> in the sense that in self-awareness the soul does not perceive itself with adequate determinacy to distinguish it from all other things (quidditative knowledge). But it would be wrong to conclude that the soul is not essentially known at all.<sup>62</sup> Self-awareness, like any other act of knowing, is achieved through the operations of simple apprehension and judgment. Simple apprehension and judgment together yield the perception of the soul (an integral whole) as “a being,” “an existent.” In addition, depending on what act the soul is manifested in and how clearly the soul is able to perceive that act, the apprehension could also include descriptions such as “self-moving,” “sensing,” “joyful,” “knowing.”

We now turn to the mode of self-awareness. In order to set the stage for this analysis, we will take a moment in the next section to discuss what intuitive cognition is, and what problems are associated with it, as these issues closely concern the mode of self-awareness.

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<sup>59</sup> Of course, our knowledge of being *qua* being is still more universal than our knowledge of “a being”—but at this most general level, it can no longer be said that we know an *object*. In other words, the most universally we can know *an oak* (the object we are currently sensing) is as “a being”; we cannot know *an oak* as being *qua* being.

<sup>60</sup> This knowledge of the soul as *a* being (involving a basic knowledge of the soul as an individual) is what Aquinas mandates when he describes self-awareness as a knowledge of one’s own soul “quantum ad id quod est sibi proprium . . . secundum quod esse habet in tali individuo” (*DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:210–12]). This crucial point forms the basis for the soul’s ability to know itself as *I*, consistently recognizing itself as the subject distinct from the objects that it knows.

<sup>61</sup> Black, “Aquinas’s Critique of Averroes’s Psychology,” 358.

<sup>62</sup> As when Lambert argues that knowledge of one’s existence is meaningless and empty “except for emotive connotations” (“Nonintentional Experience of Oneself,” 272).

## B. On Intuitive Cognition

### 1. General Definition of Intuition

Defining intuitive cognition is like trying to nail down a shadow, for the meanings of the terms are constantly shifting. It is helpful to start with the often-cited definition from Lalande's 1962 *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*. Lalande presents two basic meanings of 'intuition': the first, which he attributes to Descartes, is the "knowledge of an evident truth . . . which serves as principle and foundation for discursive reasoning." The second, which he attributes to Kant, is a "direct and immediate view of an object of thought present at that moment to the soul and grasped in its individual reality."<sup>63</sup> Lalande notes that the first meaning emphasizes the sight-like quality of such knowledge, whereas the second meaning (the foundational meaning of the term) emphasizes the immediate intellectual presence of an existing individual and evokes a comparison to sensation.<sup>64</sup> Most definitions of 'intuition' follow in the latter vein, tending to emphasize immediacy, directness, and concrete presence.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See André Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), s.v. "intuition," 537: "A. Connaissance d'une vérité évidente, de quelque nature qu'elle soit, qui sert de principe et de fondement au raisonnement discursif . . ." and 538: "B. Vue directe et immédiate d'un objet de pensée actuellement présent à l'esprit et saisi dans sa réalité individuelle." Lalande refers to Descartes, *Regulae* XII, and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* I.1, A320/B377. Descoqs disagrees that the first meaning constitutes genuine intuition, arguing that "confunditur cum *evidentia objectiva* in ordine abstracto" (*Praelectiones theologiae naturalis*, vol. 1 [Paris: Beauchesne, 1932], 539). The second meaning is adopted by Roland-Gosselin, "Peut-on parler d'intuition intellectuelle," 711; and Thomas A. Fay, "The Problem of Intellectual Intuition in the Metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas," *Sapienza: Rivista di Filosofia e di Teologia* 27 (1974): 356.

<sup>64</sup> Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique*, 541–42.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, Descoqs says: "Intuitio est apprehensio immediata et concreta alicujus objecti praesentis, actu existentis, sive materialis, sive spiritualis" (*Praelectiones theologiae naturalis* 1:538). Albert Hofstadter defines it as "immediate awareness or apprehension of an object, content, or subject matter . . . the direct presence of an object, content, or subject matter to the mind. It is direct awareness as distinct from judgment" ("Does Intuitive Knowledge Exist?" *Philosophical Studies* 6 (1955): 81). Franz Grégoire suggests that 'intuition' indicates "un contact ontologique immédiate de la conscience avec la réalité connue, par suite d'une actuation immédiate de l'esprit par cette réalité" ("Notes sur les termes 'intuition', et 'expérience,'" *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 44 [1946]: 403–4). The latter article is, in fact, one of the most valuable

But the usefulness of such definitions depends on our having criteria for the type of intellectual presence that warrants a “direct and immediate view.” Thus three considerations arise when deciding whether to label a cognitive act as intuitive, all strongly debated.

1) *Immediacy*. Broadly, ‘immediacy’ signifies the lack of an internal psychological intermediary. ‘Immediacy’ may be understood in different ways, depending on what is taken as constituting an intermediary. In the strictest sense, an act of knowing is immediate if no psychological entity besides the possible intellect and the object itself is involved, such as an intelligible or sensible species, or even the dematerializing light of the agent intellect.<sup>66</sup> According to this interpretation, no human knowledge would be immediate since the human intellect must look “through” a species in order to attain its object.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, one could interpret the notion of ‘intermediary’ to refer to a psychological entity that *distances* the intellect from its object. Thus other scholars, emphasizing the fact that the species is the form of the object itself, intelligibly present to the intellect, have argued that abstractive knowledge too can be immediate.<sup>68</sup>

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contributions on this topic. It attempts to classify the ways in which ‘intuition’ has been used, by distinguishing the five types of cognitive acts that have been identified as intuitive, providing an insightful description of the psychological structure of each act.

<sup>66</sup> In a similar line of thought, F. Gaetani argues that the act in which the soul perceives itself *mediates* self-awareness: “Ciò posto, egli afferma: la nostra mente non può conoscere se stessa immediatamente; ma mediante la conoscenza delle altre cose perviene alla conoscenza di se stessa: conosce la propria esistenza, mediante i propri atti e nei propri atti; conosce la propria natura, mediante le specie intelligibili astratte dai sensi” (“Come l’anima conosca se stessa. Controversie speculative e contributi sperimentali,” *Civiltà Cattolica* 86 [1935]: 466,); likewise Still, “Aquinas’s Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 25: “Awareness of oneself is mediated through awareness of one’s acts.”

<sup>67</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange seems to hold this view: see “Utrum mens,” 54.

<sup>68</sup> See Dewan, “Immediate Knowledge,” 392–404; Roland-Gosselin, “Peut-on parler d’intuition intellectuelle,” 719–20. Grégoire points out that if the mere interposition of a species bars an act from being intuitive, then sensation, which occurs through a sensible species, cannot be intuitive either (“Notes sur les termes,” 402, n. 2).

2) *Directness*. Whereas ‘immediacy’ indicates the lack of a psychological intermediary, ‘directness’ indicates the lack of *intermediate termini, i.e., other known objects that the intellect uses as stepping stones in reasoning*.<sup>69</sup> Directness opposes intuition to discursive reasoning. It can be construed narrowly to include only pre-discursive intellection, or more broadly to include instantaneous and effortless association. Thus Grégoire includes the inferences from sign to *significatum* as an improper type of intuition (for instance, when perceiving smoke, one intuitively infers the existence of fire, not by a process of reasoning, but by an association that instantly brings fire to mind whenever smoke is seen).<sup>70</sup>

3) *The present object*. It is generally agreed that the object must be some really existing thing currently present to the intellect (for instance, remembered events and imaginary creatures are not intuited). What this present object might be, however, is a matter of dispute. Some authors argue that the object of intuition is the concrete existence of a known object<sup>71</sup>; others, that it is the individual thing in its character as existent and

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<sup>69</sup> Sometimes, however, the terms “immediacy” and “direct” are reversed: thus Patrick Lee argues that a “direct realist” is “someone who holds that we apprehend without the mediation of any other object (such as a sense datum) . . . By ‘immediate realist’ I mean someone who holds that we know that the material world exists without the mediation of an inference” (“Review of *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 63 [1989]: 94); and John Frederick Peifer, who defines immediacy as attaining an object “in the sense that no other object or *quod* intervenes” (*The Concept in Thomism* [New York: Bookman Associates, 1952], 176). “Indirect” is another term that has been variously defined. For some authors, self-awareness is indirect because the soul only becomes intelligible to itself in its actualization from outside (which would imply that only knowledge *per essentiam* is direct); see Reichmann, “The ‘Cogito’ in Thomas and Descartes,” 347: “... were we to have direct knowledge of ourselves in the manner which Descartes contends we do, we would instantaneously possess full and unerring knowledge of the self ...”; Still, “Aquinas’s Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 26; Kennedy, “The Soul’s Knowledge of Itself,” 33; Gardeil, “Perception expérimentale,” 226; Lambert, “Habitual Knowledge,” 13; François-Xavier Putallaz, *La connaissance de soi au XIIIe siècle: de Matthieu d’Aquasparta à Thierry de Freiberg* (Paris: Vrin, 1991), 38–39; Peillaube, “Avons-nous l’expérience du spirituel?” pt. 2, 661–62.

<sup>70</sup> Grégoire, “Notes sur les termes,” 405–410; see also Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique*, 400.

<sup>71</sup> Roland-Gosselin, “Peut-on parler d’intuition intellectuelle,” 728.

present<sup>72</sup>; others, that it is the presence of existence to the senses<sup>73</sup>; others, that it is the essence of the thing.<sup>74</sup> And of course, there is wide disagreement about whether these categories are mutually exclusive.

In investigating whether Thomas's theory of knowledge includes any intuitive intellectual acts, then, it is important to articulate very precisely how the terms 'immediate' and 'direct' are being defined, and what is counted as a present object. Especially, immediacy and directness must be kept distinct. Directness does not imply immediacy, nor vice versa. They are, perhaps, both subspecies of a larger category of acts that attain their object unassisted; when there is no internal aid, the act is immediate; when there is no external aid, the act is direct.

To provide a full treatment of all these themes and ascertain the precise dimensions of Thomas's thought on intuition, a much longer discussion would be necessary. For the purposes of the present study, I will provisionally adopt Lalande's definition of intuitive cognition as a "direct and immediate view of an object of thought present at that moment to the soul and grasped in its individual reality," taking 'direct' and 'immediate' in the least controversial way possible. I understand immediacy to be the absence of a species; an object is immediately known that is not made present to the intellect *through* or *by the mediation of* any intramental entity. By directness I understand the absence of any process of reasoning preceding the knowledge of the object; an object is directly known when the

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<sup>72</sup> See Descoqs, *Praelectiones theologiae naturalis* 1:539. It might be helpful to mention Scotus: we know singulars directly by intuitive cognition—not the singularity (haecceitas), but the singular *in se*; see Sebastian J. Day, *Intuitive Cognition: A Key to the Significance of the Later Scholastics* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1947), Part II, Chapter II, on Duns Scotus, esp. 114–23. Ockham goes farther to make intuitive cognition our primary mode of knowing. Both agree that intuitive cognition is independent of any species.

<sup>73</sup> Fay, "Problem of Intellectual Intuition," 359.

<sup>74</sup> This appears to be Hofstadter's view, "Does Intuitive Knowledge Exist?" 81.

intellect first encounters the object *itself*, in its present reality, rather than reasoning to it from its effects. Finally, I understand the object of intuition to be a singular existent as such, present in its concrete reality at this very moment.<sup>75</sup>

## 2. *Intuitive Perception of the Soul*

Since “intuition” has never managed to rise up fully defined from the swamps of equivocation, it is not surprising that the ferocious debate among French Thomists beginning in 1923 and lasting into the 1930s over whether the soul possesses intuitive self-knowledge was never adequately settled. Since later authors sometimes appeal to this early-twentieth-century debate as having authoritatively debunked the notion that for Thomas, self-awareness is intuitive, it is crucial to determine the positions that were actually proposed. I here provide a sketch of the discussion.<sup>76</sup>

Critiquing the traditional way of handling questions concerning self-knowledge and knowledge of immaterial being,<sup>77</sup> Blaise Romeyer, in his 1923 article “Notre science de

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<sup>75</sup> It should be noted, however, that in some cases Thomas himself uses the terms *directe* and *immediate* in a way that does not accord with these definitions. When this occurs, I will use alternate translations, restricting the English “direct” and “immediate” exclusively to the signification specified here.

<sup>76</sup> Jordan has sketched this debate in *Ordering Wisdom*, 242, n. 7. His analysis is helpful in identifying the main contenders, but tends to exaggerate the differences between authors. Jordan himself follows Roland-Gosselin in attributing to Thomas an abstractionist view of self-knowledge that is, in my opinion, completely unsupported by the Thomistic texts (*ibid.*, 124–35).

<sup>77</sup> Romeyer lists authors such as Désiré Mercier, *Psychologie*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., vol. 2 (Louvain: Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1908), 7–8; A.-D. Sertillanges, *S. Thomas d’Aquin*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., vol. 2 (Paris: Alcan, 1925), 144–45; Grabmann, *Thomas Aquinas: His Personality and Thought*, 138; J. Durantel, *Le retour à Dieu par l’intelligence et la volonté dans la philosophie de S. Thomas* (Paris: Alcan, 1918), 228–29; and others as his main opponents in “Notre science de l’esprit humain” (1923), 34–35. Durantel’s statement succinctly summarizes the view that Romeyer critiques: “Tout ce qui dépasse le sensible ne nous est connu que par négation” (*Le retour à Dieu*, 228–29, citing *In De an.* III.5 [Leon. 45/1.227:188–90]: “[O]mnia quae transcendunt hec sensibilia nota nobis, non cognoscuntur a nobis nisi per negationem”). Interestingly, although they all deny to the human intellect any positive knowledge of immaterial entities, these authors vary considerably in their conclusions concerning self-knowledge. For instance, Grabmann argues that “Thomas solves the question of the self-knowledge of the soul in full accord with Aristotle”: the mind knows itself “by means of its acts, by way of logical conclusion,” in contrast to the Franciscan view that the mind knows itself “directly through itself, by way of intuition” (148). Durantel’s description of self-knowledge, on the other

l'esprit humain," appears to have been the first scholar to propose an in-depth analysis of Thomas's texts on self-knowledge, together with a thoughtful consideration of the phenomena of self-knowledge they describe.<sup>78</sup> He sometimes indulges in poetic exaggeration, and in his first article he does not appear to distinguish habitual from actual self-knowledge adequately, so that there he comes close to attributing actual *per essentiam* self-knowledge to the soul. But over the course of the ensuing debate from 1923-1928, the following innovative theses emerge in his writings: 1) Thomas's theory of knowledge evinces strong Augustinian tendencies; 2) Although the soul must be actualized by receiving the species of an external object, once it is so actualized, it enjoys an intuitive perception of itself through its act; 3) This intuitive perception attains not only the soul's act, but the soul itself, but without comprehending the soul's essence; 4) "Habitual self-knowledge" is the soul's disposition for self-knowledge, not a form of active self-knowing; 5) Unless the soul has some sort of access to itself that is not merely a negation of knowledge abstracted from the senses, it is impossible to have a true science of the soul. Ambroise Gardeil, writing also in 1923,<sup>79</sup> takes a similar view, stressing even more than Romeyer Thomas's Augustinian leanings.<sup>80</sup> He claims that actual individual self-knowledge, or self-awareness, is an

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hand, appears to be inconsistent with his views on knowledge of immaterial being, claiming that consciousness "nous atteste immédiatement l'existence [de notre propre âme]" (229).

<sup>78</sup> Romeyer's main writings on this topic are: "Notre science de l'esprit humain," (1923): 32-55; "La doctrine de Saint Thomas sur la vérité," *Archives de philosophie* 3, cah. 2 (1925): 1-54; "Saint Thomas et notre connaissance de l'esprit humain," *Archives de philosophie* 6 (1928): 137-250; "A propos de S. Thomas et notre connaissance de l'esprit humain," *Revue de philosophie* 36 (1929): 551-73.

<sup>79</sup> See Gardeil, "Perception expérimentale," 219-36; "L'habitation de Dieu en nous, et la structure interne de l'âme," *Revue thomiste* 28 (1923): 238-60; *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2 vols (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1927); "Examen de conscience," 156-80; "A propos d'un cahier du R.P. Romeyer," *Revue thomiste* n.s. 12 (1929): 520-32. Leuret notes that Gardeil and Romeyer reached their nearly identical conclusions while working independently; see Simonne Leuret, "Saint Thomas et *Notre science de l'esprit humain*," *Revue thomiste* 28 (1923): 385, n. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Gardeil, "Perception expérimentale," 219: "Saint Thomas, s'inspirant de saint Augustin, mais modifiant ses données pour les mettre en harmonie avec la doctrine aristotélicienne . . ."



immediate and direct “experiential perception” (*perception expérimentale*), though it must always be elicited by an act of knowing the other.

Against these authors and their supporters were ranged Leuret, Garrigou-Lagrange, Peillaube, and Roland-Gosselin, who took issue with various aspects of Romeyer’s and Gardeil’s works.<sup>81</sup> A perusal of the articles spawned by this debate indicates that the real battle was being fought over three tangential questions: 1) Is Aquinas accommodating Aristotle to Augustine, or Augustine to Aristotle? 2) Is God constantly perceived on some level in the human soul? 3) What is the proper object of the human intellect? We cannot address any of these topics here. But the fact that these themes are the real catalysts of the discussion may help to explain why such heated and even vitriolic conflict arose among scholars who were ultimately defending nearly identical views on self-awareness.<sup>82</sup>

In general, all the disputants agree on the psychological structure of the act of self-awareness (that the soul can only perceive its own existence when actualized in knowing

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<sup>81</sup> In chronological order of their appearance: Leuret, “Saint Thomas et *Notre science*,” 368–86; M.-D. Roland-Gosselin, “Review of Romeyer (1923),” *Bulletin thomiste* 1/4 (1924): 113–15; id., “Review of Romeyer (1926),” *Bulletin thomiste* 6/2 (1929): 469–74; Garrigou-Lagrange, “Utrum mens,” 37–54; Peillaube, “Avons-nous expérience du spirituel?” 245–67 and 660–85; Roland-Gosselin, “Peut-on parler d’intuition intellectuelle,” 709–730. The debate seems to have worn itself out by the early 1930s and is summarized and reviewed by Régis Jolivet, “Étude critique: Saint Thomas et notre connaissance de l’esprit humain,” *Revue de philosophie*, n.s., 4 (1933): 295–311.

<sup>82</sup> In fact, despite an incisive criticism of Romeyer’s associated views on the agent intellect and the intelligibility of prime matter, Jolivet nonetheless concedes that “la plupart des thomistes ne feront, je crois, aucune objection sérieuse au P. Romeyer, quant aux vues qu’il expose touchant la vue expérimentale de l’âme en ses actes. Il y a certes entre eux des nuances et le R. P. Roland-Gosselin, par exemple, ne paraît pas accorder au R. P. Gardeil tout ce que celui-ci réclamait dans sa *Structure*. Mais, pour l’essentiel, les thomistes sont d’accord désormais, et le patronage du Docteur Angélique est assez clair . . . pour justifier pleinement cet accord, appelé au surplus par les données de l’analyse psychologique” (“Étude critique,” 304). Jolivet suggests that Romeyer’s controversial doctrine of the intuition of the soul’s essence indicates rather that our perception of the soul’s existence is supported by some essential content, but that it is neither a perception of the soul’s entire quiddity, nor a perception of the spiritual as such. He thus concludes that Romeyer’s claims in this regard are not only much less controversial than previously thought, but even quite reasonable (306–311). In fact, when the matter is put that way, it seems that only Roland-Gosselin, who insists that there can be no such thing as a confused intuition of the soul’s essence or substance, would disagree (“Peut-on parler d’intuition intellectuelle,” 729).

another), though some describe it with greater precision than others. No one argues for innate self-awareness. Nearly all agree that actual self-awareness constitutes an immediate and direct experiential perception of one's own existence;<sup>83</sup> most even accept that it involves some sort of intuition. Often their disagreements can be traced, not to differing views on how self-awareness is structured, but rather to an equivocation on terms such as "immediate," "direct," "intuitive," or "experiential." Indeed, the discussion pays a heavy toll for its failure to establish common terms.

Substantive disagreement, in fact, centers almost exclusively on one point: whereas Romeyer and Gardeil argue that the experiential perception of one's act touches the very being of one's soul, Leuret, Peillaube, Garrigou-Lagrange, and Roland-Gosselin object that this is impossible. Roland-Gosselin goes farthest to insist that I attain cognition of my *self* as the "real principle of my acts" only by inference from my acts; this inference becomes so natural to us that we are deceived into thinking it occurs intuitively.<sup>84</sup> The disagreement turns on what it means for self-awareness to be *per actum*: does the "per" indicate that the act mediates self-awareness, or that it serves as the starting-point whence the soul reasons discursively to its own existence? Or does it simply refer to the fact that nothing can be known except insofar as it is in act?

Here lies the real heart of the problem: namely, how to articulate *the way in which* the act of self-awareness is achieved—a problem that is also central to its intuitive or

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<sup>83</sup> An exception is found in Garrigou-Lagrange, whose position on the matter seems internally inconsistent. Although he initially admits that actual self-awareness is experiential ("Utrum mens," 40), he then goes on to argue that properly speaking, experiential self-knowledge is *per essentiam* and that the soul has no *per essentiam* self-knowledge in this life (54).

<sup>84</sup> See Roland-Gosselin, "Peut-on parler d'intuition intellectuelle," 729–30. This interpretation leaves Thomas open to Christopher Martin's accusation that he cannot account for first-person experience of our own acts ("Self-Knowledge and Cognitive Ascent," 98–99); I will discuss this problem in §C.2.a below.

nonintuitive character. Our second main concern, then, is determining the *mode* of self-awareness is. The problem of the mode of self-awareness can be broken down into two parts: first, what kind of act is it (the nature of the act), and second, how this act takes place (its genesis). In the next section, I will attempt to elucidate this point. In so doing, I hope to ascertain the extent to which self-awareness can be considered to be “intuitive.”

### C. The Mode of Self-Awareness

#### 1. *The Nature of the Act*

I believe that the key to determining what kind of act self-awareness is can be found in Thomas’s frequent choice of verbs of sensation to describe self-awareness (*percipere*, *experiri*). Black suggests that such vocabulary indicates the “vague, inchoate nature [of self-awareness], its lack of any real content.”<sup>85</sup> As we have seen, however, self-awareness does have real essential and existential content; moreover, Thomas does not typically use verbs of sensation to refer to indistinct knowledge. Rather, I believe that Aquinas’s use of *percipere* and other verbs of sensation in this context signals something about the *mode*, and not merely the content, of self-awareness. We begin our inquiry into the mode of self-awareness, therefore, by examining how Thomas generally uses verbs of sensation to refer to intellectual acts, and what significance this may have for self-awareness.

##### *a. Intellectual “vision”*

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<sup>85</sup> Black, “Aquinas’s Critique of Averroes’s Psychology,” 357–58. At n. 17 on p. 358, she adds: “The use of *percipere* here probably reflects the parallel use of *aisthanesthai* in Greek as a general verb of consciousness.”

Thomas uses a variety of verbs to describe self-awareness. Sometimes these are general verbs of intellection, such as *intelligere*, *cognoscere*, and *scire*.<sup>86</sup> But much more often, Thomas uses *percipere* (to perceive), a term borrowed from sensation, which appears in at least twenty-one different texts from eight works,<sup>87</sup> most frequently in *De veritate*—where it is used to refer to self-awareness thirty-nine times in the questions relating to self-knowledge alone (q. 10, aa. 8-10)—but also as late as *De malo*. The verb *experiri* (to experience) also occurs frequently in reference to acts of self-awareness.<sup>88</sup> Thomas even

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<sup>86</sup> For *intelligere*, see *In Sent.* I.1.2.1, ad 2; I.3.4.5; *DV* 10.8; *QDDA* 2.5; *In De an.* III.3; *ST Ia*, 79.6, ad 2. It is interesting that early in his career, Thomas equates intellection with intuition (although we should not assume that he understands the term in the same way as, say, Scotus or Descartes): *In Sent.* I.3.4.1, ad 5 [Mand. 1.114]: “[I]ntelligere et nosse differunt: nosse enim est notitiam rei apud se tenere; intelligere autem dicit intueri.” For *cognoscere*, see *ST Ia*, 111.1, ad 3. For *scire*, see *In Sent.* I.17.1.4, ad 2; *In Sent.* IV.49.3.2; *DV* 10.10, ad 5.

<sup>87</sup> *In Sent.* I.17.1.4; *In Sent.* III.23.1.2; *In Sent.* III.39.1.5.1; *In Sent.* IV.49.3.2; *DV* 10.8–10 and 21.3; *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 1.3; *SCG* 2.75 and 3.46; *ST Ia*, 76.1, 79.4, 82.4, 87.1, 87.2, 87.4, and 93.7, ad 4; *Ia-IIae*, 112.5, and 113.1; *DM* 16.8, ad 7; *De virt.*, 2.1, ad 7; *Quodl.* 8.2.2; *In Ethic.* IX.11. Thomas often uses *percipere* nontechnically with reference to “noticing” something, without specifying whether the perception is sensory or intellectual. When it is used technically to refer to a particular cognitional act, *percipere* most often describes sensation. For instance, in Deferrari’s *Lexicon of St. Thomas Aquinas*, which indexes the vocabulary of the *Summa theologiae* “and selected passages of [Thomas’s] other works,” the literal meaning of the verb “percipere,” consistent with classical Latin usage, is “to get, obtain, receive.” The cognitional senses appear under the figurative meanings: the first meaning listed here pertains to sensation (“to perceive, observe, to obtain knowledge through the senses”); the second meaning pertains to intellection (“to apprehend, with the mind; to recognize the nature of; to comprehend, understand, note”). See Roy J. Deferrari and M. Inviolata Barry, *A Lexicon of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949), s.v. “percipere,” p. 818). An examination of the approximately 1200 occurrences of the various forms of *percipere* in the Thomistic corpus in the *Index Thomisticum* (<http://www.corpusthomicum.org/it/index.age>) bears out this analysis. One should note, however, that although Thomas tends to use *percipere* slightly more often in the context of sensation, its intellectual meaning appears nearly as often; and it is used equally frequently as a general term of cognition

<sup>88</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 2 s.c. and ad 8; *SCG* 2.76; *ST Ia*, 76.1, 79.4, 81.3, 84.7, 89.1, and *Ia-IIae*, 112.5, ad 1 and ad 5; *QDDA* 5 and 15; *DM* 2.3, ad 9, and 3.9, and 16.8, ad 7; *In De an.* I.1. It is worth noting that Thomas repeatedly defends elements of his doctrine of human psychology with reference to our inner “experience” of our own acts. But since the verb *experiri* and the related nouns *experientia* and *experimentum* have a broad array of extended meanings in the realms of internal and external sensation as well as intellection, one has to be extremely cautious in determining whether the term refers to an inner intellectual perception, or whether it refers to the “experience” (usually, *experientia*) or practical wisdom gained over time at the end of a series of experiences (usually, *experimenta*) by creatures possessing memory. The texts listed here refer exclusively to an experience of phenomena which could only be perceived internally and not deduced from sense-observations (for example, that intellectual knowledge is abstractive, as in *QDDA* 5). Note that Thomas does not mean that in perceiving ourselves to act, we recognize that the intellect is engaged in an act of abstraction, but that we can verify our claims about abstraction against the irreducible datum of

occasionally says that the soul enjoys an “intellectual vision” of things in the soul.<sup>89</sup>

Thomas’s usage of verbs borrowed from sense-cognition in this context is too consistent to be accidental.<sup>90</sup> In order to determine what these verbs imply about the modality of an act of self-awareness, we need to investigate whether Thomas’s general theory of cognition manifests any pattern in the use of verbs of sensation to describe intellectual acts. An in-depth examination of this issue is beyond the scope of this dissertation; for our purposes, it will be sufficient to review a few of the main contexts in which verbs of sensation such as *intueri*, *percipere*, and *experiri* appear.

*Divine knowledge.* Thomas describes Divine knowledge in terms of intellectual vision. It is preeminently and exclusively intuitive, because it is essentially contemplative, consisting in one single motionless act whereby God sees (*vidit*) the entirety of the Divine essence and beholds (*intuitur*) all of creation in it, at once.<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, Thomas tends to avoid the term *percipere* to describe God’s knowing, probably because the term

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experience of our own acts. My analysis of this term here, derived from a thorough review of nearly 600 instances of *experiri* and derivative terms throughout the Thomistic corpus, substantially differs from the analysis in Deferrari’s *Lexicon*, s.v. “experientia,” “experimentalis,” “experimentum,” and “experior,” p. 398. Deferrari treats *experimentum* and *experientia* as synonyms, and gives as the primary meaning of *experior* as “to try a thing, either by way of testing it or attempting it”—a meaning which applies in fact only to a very small percentage of instances.

<sup>89</sup> *ST* Ia, 57.1, ad 2 [Leon. 5.69]: “Quaedam vero sunt quae sunt in intellectu vel in anima secundum utrumque esse. Et utrorumque est visio intellectualis.” See also similar comments in *DV* 10.8, ad 2 s.c.

<sup>90</sup> I have omitted texts in which it is unclear whether the verb of sensation refers to intellectual reflexion, such as *In Ethic.* IX.11 [Leon. 47/2.540:99–103]: “In hoc autem quod nos sentimus nos sentire et intelligimus nos intelligere, sentimus et intelligimus nos esse: dictum est enim supra quod esse et vivere hominis principaliter est sentire vel intelligere.” The verb *sentimus* in this text probably refers, not to an intellectual reflexion, but to the activity of the common sense, which, as I noted in the introduction, is aware of the sensations of the other senses (though not aware of itself, unlike the intellect) and which thus serves as the center for sense consciousness.

<sup>91</sup> *SCG* 1.55 [Leon. 13.157]: “Quod est videre ipsam secundum totam virtutem suam, sub qua omnia concluduntur. Deus igitur, videndo essentiam suam, simul omnia intuetur”; and *DV* 2.2. In fact, in nearly fifty of the instances in which Thomas uses the verb *intueri*, he applies it to God’s knowing—significantly more than any other usage of the same term. Thomas notes that terms such as *ratiocinatio*, *discursio*, and *cogitatio* cannot fittingly describe Divine knowing, since they imply change and development (see for instance *In Sent.* I.36.2.1, ad 4; and *ST* Ia, 34.1, ad 2).

etymologically carries a strong connotation of intellectual receptivity.<sup>92</sup> Likewise, he never ascribes to God “experiential” knowledge, because experience implies a temporal succession of cognitive acts.<sup>93</sup>

*Angelic knowledge.* Thomas describes angelic knowledge too as an intuition or vision. Angels beatifically behold (*vident / intuentur*) the divine essence, in which they see whatever God chooses to reveal to them in the Word.<sup>94</sup> Thomas also refers to their natural knowledge as an intellectual “seeing” via impressed species.<sup>95</sup> Angelic knowledge is purely intellectual; consequently, in beholding premises, angels naturally see, instantly and without syllogizing (*statim inspiciunt*), the conclusions that are contained therein.<sup>96</sup>

But since angels are finite created intelligences, Thomas also characterizes their beatific knowledge as a perception. Thus higher angels with more powerful intellects are able to perceive (*percipere*) more of the Divine effects in beholding the Divine essence, and these angels illuminate and instruct the others.<sup>97</sup> Here *percipere* does seem to indicate the

<sup>92</sup> As remarked in note 87 above. Since God’s intellect, being identical with his essence, is eternally in act, He cannot be said to receive forms, a point that Thomas emphasizes for instance in *ST Ia*, 14.2, ad 2. The only instance in which God is said to “perceive” anything is in an objection from *In Sent.* IV.15.4.5.1, arg. 3: “Sed solius Dei est cogitationes cordium et affectiones percipere.”

<sup>93</sup> *In Sent.* I.8.2.3, expos. [Mand. 1.209]: “[Deus] non novit fuisse vel futurum esse, notitia quasi experimentalis, ut scilicet successiones temporum in suo esse experiatur.”

<sup>94</sup> *ST Ia*, 58.1 [Leon. 5.80]: “Sed ad cognitionem Verbi, et eorum quae in Verbo videt, nunquam hoc modo est in potentia: quia semper actu intuetur Verbum, et ea quae in Verbo videt”; *Ia*, 56.2; and *Ia*, 57.5.

<sup>95</sup> *ST Ia*, 56.3 [Leon. 5.67]: “Cognitio autem qua angelus per sua naturalia cognoscit Deum, media est inter has duas; et simulatur illi cognitioni qua videtur res per speciem ab ea acceptam. . . . Unde magis ista cognitio tenet se cum speculari: quia et ipsa natura angelica est quoddam speculum divinam similitudinem repraesentans”; *SCG* 3.91 [Leon. 14.278]: “[Cognitio angelorum] est etiam immobilis: quia non discurrendo ab effectibus in causas, aut e converso, sed simplici intuitu puram veritatem de rebus intuentur.” For the distinction between the angels’ natural knowledge and their beatific knowledge in the Word, see *ST Ia*, 57.5.

<sup>96</sup> See for instance *ST Ia*, 58.3 [Leon. 5.83]: “Si autem statim in ipsa cognitione principii noti [homines] inspicerent quasi notas omnes conclusiones consequentes, in eis discursus locum non haberet. Et hoc est in angelis: quia statim in illis quae primo naturaliter cognoscunt, inspiciunt omnia quaecumque in eis cognosci possunt. . . . Si enim haberent plenitudinem intellectualis luminis, sicut Angeli, statim in primo aspectu principiorum totam virtutem eorum comprehenderent, intuendo quidquid ex eis syllogizari posset.” See also *In Sent.* II.12.1.3, ad 3; *DM* 16.6, ad 1 s.c.

<sup>97</sup> See *In Sent.* II.10.1.1; II.11.2.2; IV.49.2.5, ad 1.

possibility of indistinctness or lack of total comprehension: it is a “seeing-through” which may not attain all the parts contained in a whole.

Angels can also be said to gain experience insofar as they come to know contingent events.<sup>98</sup> Angelic intellects are not naturally able to see future contingents until they occur, achieving real existence (for instance, in knowing “battle,” the angel knows all possible specifications of battles, but not *which* battles will historically be fought). This experience is not gained discursively, but rather is achieved instantaneously when the contingent event takes place.<sup>99</sup> Thomas notes that experience is characterized, first by contact with present sensibles (or, more broadly, any singular), and second, by a discursion in which induction achieves a universal principle from repeated experiences. Thus although angelic knowledge is non-discursive, angels can still be said to have experience insofar as they gain new knowledge by grasping contingent singulars as they come into existence.<sup>100</sup>

*Human knowledge.* Thomas’s uses of the terms *intueri* / *videre*, *percipere*, and *experiri* to refer to human knowing reveal an interesting pattern, consistent with his discussion of Divine and angelic knowledge. First—not surprisingly—Thomas describes

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<sup>98</sup> *ST* Ia, 57.3 [Leon. 5.75]: “Angelicus autem intellectus, et quilibet intellectus creatus, deficit ab aeternitate divina. Unde non potest ab aliquo intellectu creato cognosci futurum, ut est in suo esse”; see also *In Sent.* II.11.2.2.

<sup>99</sup> See *DM* 16.7, ad 12 [Leon. 23.317:370–76]: “[E]xperientia procedit ex sensu in quantum sensus est cognoscitius alicuius presentis; et secundum hoc in demonibus ponitur experientia, non quia sensu aliquid percipiant, set quia cognoscunt aliquid cum fit presens quod ante non cognouerant, per modum predictum.” See also *In Sent.* II.7.2.1, ad 4; *ST* Ia, 64.1, ad 5; and *QDDA* 18, ad 1. Aquinas suggests that this new knowledge is gained by the natural infusion of another natural species, in *ST* Ia, 56.2, ad 4 [Leon. 5.65]: “Unde eiusdem rationis est quod Deus adderet aliquam creaturam universo, et aliquam speciem intelligibilem Angelo.”

<sup>100</sup> *ST* Ia, 58.3, ad 3 [Leon. 5.84]: “[E]xperientia in Angelis et Daemonibus dicitur secundum quandam similitudinem, prout scilicet cognoscunt sensibilia praesentia; tamen absque omni discursu”; cf. *ST* Ia, 54.5, ad 1 [Leon. 5.53–54]: “*Experientia* vero angelis attribui potest per similitudinem cognitorum, etsi non per similitudinem virtutis cognoscitivae. Est enim in nobis experientia, dum singularia per sensum cognoscimus: angeli autem singularia cognoscunt, ut infra patebit, sed non per sensum.”

simple apprehension as an intuition, vision, or perception.<sup>101</sup> The intellect perceives the “form (*ratio*) of a being”<sup>102</sup> by becoming that thing “in every way” in the act of knowledge<sup>103</sup>; it beholds both the essences of material things immaterially and immaterial beings.<sup>104</sup> This act of “beholding” by taking on the form of another is, in fact, simply the act proper to any intellect, whether Divine, angelic, or human. The apprehension of form is also described as an intellectual experience (*experiri*): “The name of ‘experience’ is transferred to intellectual cognition, in the same way as the names of senses themselves, such as ‘sight’ and ‘hearing.’”<sup>105</sup> This implies that the intellect “experiences” in the same way that it “sees,” i.e., in apprehending a form.

Secondly, Thomas also applies verbs of sensation to the knowledge of *per se* known propositions.<sup>106</sup> These are perceived instantaneously without syllogizing (*statim*) because

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<sup>101</sup> For *percipere*, see for instance *ST* IIa-IIae, 45.2, ad 3 [Leon. 8.341]: “[I]ntellectus habet duos actus, scilicet percipere, et iudicare”; and *DV* 28.3, ad 6. For *intueri*, see for instance *In Ethic.* VI.5 [Leon. 47/2.349:60–61]: “[D]icitur autem intellectus ex eo quod intus legit intuendo essentiam rei.” For *videre* and *inspicere*, see *DV* 10.8, ad 2 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.324:477–325:485]: “Sicut enim visione corporali aliquis intuetur ipsum corpus, non ita quod inspiciat aliquam corporis similitudinem, quamvis per aliquam similitudinem corporis inspiciat: ita in visione intellectuali aliquis inspicit ipsam essentiam rei sine hoc quod inspiciat aliquam similitudinem illius rei, quamvis quandoque per aliquam similitudinem illam essentiam inspiciat; quod etiam experimento patet”; see also *DV* 2.3 and 2.6; and *In Sent.* I.38.1.3, ad 4.

<sup>102</sup> *DV* 21.1 [Leon. 22.2/593:183–85]: “Et sic [viz. secundum rationem speciei tantum] ab ente perficitur intellectus, qui percipit rationem entis.”

<sup>103</sup> *In De an.* III.6 [Leon. 45/1.234:297–300]: “Et omnino intellectus in actu est res intellecta, quia sicut res in sui ratione habent materiam vel non habent, sic ab intellectu percipiuntur.”

<sup>104</sup> See *CT* 1.79 [Leon. 42.106:6–10]: “Intelligere enim homini supra alia animalia convenit. Manifestum est enim quod homo solus universalis considerat, et habitudines rerum, et res immateriales, quae solum intelligendo percipiuntur.” In fact, *percipere*, *intueri*, *contemplari*, are frequently used with reference to the acts by which we know the things of God and God Himself: see for instance *SCG* 3.24, 25, 47, and 154.

<sup>105</sup> *DM* 16.1, ad 2 [Leon. 23.283:375–84]: “[E]xperientia proprie ad sensum pertinet. Quamvis enim intellectus non solum cognoscat formas separatas ut Platonici posuerunt set etiam corpora, non tamen intellectus cognoscit ea prout sunt hic et nunc, quod est proprie experiri, set secundum rationem communem: transfertur enim experientie nomen etiam ad intellectualem cognitionem sicut et ipsa nomina sensuum ut uisus et auditus.”

<sup>106</sup> *ST* Ia-IIae, 57.2 [Leon. 6.365]: “Quod autem est per se notum, se habet ut principium; et percipitur statim ab intellectu”; *QDDA* 14, ad 16. Interestingly, Day argues that the term *experiri* in the medieval sense similarly refers to “facts of assertoric evidence, as opposed to demonstrative evidence” (*Intuitive Cognition*, 126). It should be noted, however, that Day makes this comment in the context of discussing Scotus’ theory of intuitive cognition and not in explicit reference to Thomas.



the subject of the proposition so obviously necessarily contains the predicate that even the weak human intellect is able to perceive the predicate in the subject, as is more common in angelic knowledge. Thus in knowing “whole,” we already perceive its relation to a part, and vice versa.<sup>107</sup>

A third, related, type of intellectual “seeing” occurs when two or more entities are known in a single act as falling under a single intention (unified vision).<sup>108</sup> Typically, the human mind lacks the perspicuity to attain this unified vision at the outset. It often can only perceive the full implications of a principle (i.e., perceive the conclusion in the premise, together under a single intention) *after* it has discursively reasoned to the unity between the principle and its conclusion<sup>109</sup>—as in our “perception” of God’s existence by means of the first principles of intellection.<sup>110</sup> In discussing the vision of many-in-one, Thomas does not generally make clear whether a given instance is achieved before or after discursive

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<sup>107</sup> *In Ethic.* VI.5 [Leon. 47/2.349:56–57]: “Cognito enim quid est totum et quid pars statim scitur quod omne totum est maius sua parte”; see also *SCG* 1.10. Of course, one must first conceive “whole” before one can know this *per se* known principle; see *SCG* 1.11. For a discussion of *per se* known principles in Aquinas, see Luca F. Tuninetti, *Per se notum: Die logische Beschaffenheit des Selbstverständlichen im Denken des Thomas von Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), esp. 24–26, and 165–85. Of course, not all *per se* known propositions can be so instantly understood. Thomas distinguishes between principles that are self-evident in themselves and those that are self-evident “to us” (*quoad nos*); see for instance *ST* Ia, 2.1 and I-IIae, 94.2. Objectively, “eine Aussage ist also dann selbstverständlich, wenn das Prädikat zum Begriff des Subjektes gehört oder in der Definition des Subjektes enthalten ist” (*Per se notum*, 25; see also 165–66, where Tuninetti has collected a number of texts on this point, including *DV* 10.12, *DP* 7.2, ad 11; *ST* Ia, 2.1 and 17.3, ad 2; *In Met.* IV.5, and XI.4; *In Post. an.* I.5 and 7; *In Ps.* 52.1; and *Sup. Boet. De ebd.* 1). Subjectively, a proposition is only self-evident to us when we actually *perceive* the predicate contained in the subject. Objectively self-evident principles that are also universally subjectively self-evident appear to be those whose subjects have such simple concepts that no one could fail to notice the predicate contained therein.

<sup>108</sup> *SCG* 1.55 [Leon. 13.157]: “Multa igitur ad quae simul intentio non fertur, non simul intuemur. Quae autem oportet sub una intentione cadere, oportet simul esse intellecta: qui enim comparationem duorum considerat, intentionem ad utrumque dirigit et simul intuetur utrumque”; see also *DV* 8.14.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas uses this facet of human knowing as a foil for angelic knowing: *DM* 16.6, ad 1 s.c. On the same contrast drawn between Divine and human knowledge, see *ST* Ia, 19.5.

<sup>110</sup> *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 1.3, ad 6 [Leon. 50.88:202–4]: “Set tamen eius cognitio [viz., Deum esse] nobis innata esse dicitur in quantum per principia nobis innata de facili percipere possumus Deum esse.”

reasoning (it may depend on the perspicacity of an individual knower,<sup>111</sup> though there must be some multitudes that cannot be seen pre-discursively as one by any human intellect). The use of *percipere* or even *intueri* in such cases, therefore, tells us nothing about the genesis of such acts of knowledge, but merely describes the nature of the intellection in which a knower perceives or intuits many in one.

Fourth and most importantly, Thomas uses the vocabulary of perception and experience to describe intellectual apprehension of an essence or substance manifested in its acts. It is in this context that we find numerous references to the soul's knowledge of its own acts and internal states (in fact, self-awareness possibly constitutes the largest single context in which *percipere* and *experiri* are used to designate acts of intellect). This category is therefore the most significant for our present exploration of the modality of an act of self-awareness.

It is a basic Thomistic axiom that only those things that are in act can be known:

“For nothing is known insofar as it is in potency, but only insofar as it is in act.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Thomas does not rule out the possibility that someone with extraordinary perspicacity might be able to perceive unity-in-multiplicity instantaneously, seeing certain conclusions in premises or certain effects in their causes *without prior discursion*. (This would require instantaneous comprehension of the premise or cause.) See *ST* IIa-IIae, 15.2 [Leon. 8.119]: “Ille ergo dicitur esse acuti sensus circa intelligentiam qui statim ad apprehensionem proprietatis rei, vel etiam effectus, naturam rei comprehendit, et in quantum usque ad minimas condiciones rei considerandas pertingit. Ille autem dicitur esse hebes circa intelligentiam qui ad cognoscendam veritatem rei pertingere non potest nisi per multa ei exposita, et tunc etiam non potest pertingere ad perfecte considerandum omnia quae pertinent ad rei rationem.” Conversely, as mentioned above, some people are not able to perceive even the truth of self-evident principles without prior discursion; see *ST* Ia, 2.1 and Ia-IIae, 94.2.

<sup>112</sup> *ST* Ia, 14.3 [Leon. 4.170]: “Est enim unumquodque cognoscibile secundum modum sui actus: non enim cognoscitur aliquid secundum quod in potentia est, sed secundum quod est in actu, ut dicitur in IX *Metaphys*”; see the principle, “[N]ichil intelligitur nisi secundum quod est in actu” (*In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:91–92]). In a note to the Leonine edition of this text, Gauthier identifies this reference as a very oblique reference to *Met.* IX.10, 1051a29–33. He notes that this principle “Aristoteli saepius attribuit Thomas,” citing *Sup. Boet. De Trin.*, 4.2 [Leon. 50.123:99–102]: “[A]lio modo cognoscitur per formam, per quam habet esse in actu: unumquodque enim cognoscitur secundum quod est in actu et non secundum quod est in potentia, ut dicitur in IX *Metaphysice*”; *In Sent.* IV.49.2.1 [Parma 7/2.1190]: “Res autem quaelibet est intelligibilis secundum id quod habet de actu, non secundum id quod habet de potentia, ut patet in 9 *Metaph.*;

Actuality *is* intelligibility. Taken negatively, this means that whatever is in any way non-existent is to that extent unintelligible.<sup>113</sup> Taken positively, it means that anything known can only be known insofar as it is actualized by some form. *Any* act renders the agent intelligible to some extent, though certain acts have more intelligibility; accidental forms (including immanent and transitive operations), *esse*, substantial form. Even the forms left as clues in a substance's effects make that substance intelligible, though they only manifest the cause's existence, and only as absent; perceiving an effect does not constitute an experience of the cause.

Accordingly, on the level of sensation, the perception of the act *is* a perception of the agent-acting, and vice versa (for instance, if we hear the sound of barking, we are *hearing the dog*; to see the green and brown mottled pattern is to *see the tree*). On the intellectual level, similarly, we first grasp an essence as a unity (even if only an accidental unity) in knowing its acts (accidental forms, including transitive operations). From hearing the dog bark, I abstract the intelligibility “the kind of thing that is able to bark” and from the pain of being singed by a flame, I abstract the intelligibility “the kind of thing that is able to burn.”<sup>114</sup> My first means of approach to the essence is by descriptions of its acts, apprehended directly in the acts themselves. From these descriptions and further experience, I can then reason to the proper essence articulated in a definition. But when the

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hujus signum est, quod oportet formam intelligibilem abstrahere a materia, et omnibus proprietatibus materiae”; *DV* 13.3 [Leon. 22/2.425:218–23]: “Cum enim cognitio de rebus habeatur secundum quod sunt in actu, et non secundum quod sunt in potentia, ut dicitur in IX Metaphysicae, intellectus qui summam cognitionis tenet, proprie immaterialium est, quae sunt maxime in actu”; *ST* Ia, 5.2; *In Perierm.* I.14; *DM* 16.7; and *ST* IIIa, 10.3 (see Leon. 45/1.216, n. 91). I would also add *ST* Ia, 87.2 to this list.

<sup>113</sup> This principle even applies to Divine knowledge of possibles. God is able to see all things that are in his power or that of creatures even if they have never existed, do not exist, and will never exist, because they at least possess actuality to the extent that it is true to say that they are possible. See *ST* Ia, 14.9.

<sup>114</sup> *DV* 10.1 [Leon. 22/2.296:12–14]: “Quia vero rerum essentiae sunt nobis ignotae, virtutes autem earum innotescunt nobis per actus. . . .”

object of intellectual perception is an immaterial individual, the intellect can be said to know, not only its essence, but also its individual substance *qua* agent in its acts. This is precisely what occurs in self-awareness (to be discussed below).

*b. Perception, intuition, experience: non-discursive intellection of ones*

The preceding analysis is by no means exhaustive, but it offers an important insight into the significance of Thomas's use of verbs of sensation such as *intueri*, *percipere*, and *experiri* to describe intellectual acts.<sup>115</sup> All the instances listed above have two features in common. First, in every case, what is intellectually seen or perceived or experienced is a whole, an *unum*. Intellection is always a grasp of a one: "Each thing is intelligible insofar as it is one; whoever does not understand a one, understands nothing."<sup>116</sup> Whenever the intellect is in possession of a whole in an act of intuition or perception or experience, it is at rest. Such acts are fundamentally motionless acts of contemplation, and it is this kind of act that constitutes the perfection of an intellect. It comes as no surprise that simple beings such as angels and God are said to be intuited, perceived, and experienced. But it is extremely telling that Thomas also applies the same vocabulary to apprehension of composites *as one* (effects in causes, conclusions in premises, substances in acts, or states of affairs): "If in one gaze some other thing is seen simultaneously, as when the image of the thing and the thing

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<sup>115</sup> It should be noted, moreover, that Thomas does not *always* use verbs of sensation when discussing the intellectual acts discussed above; often he uses more general terms such as *intelligere*. Nevertheless, when verbs of sensation *are* used to refer to intellectual acts, they consistently appear in the contexts highlighted above.

<sup>116</sup> *DV* 21.3 [Leon. 22/2.598:56–59]: "[U]numquodque autem intelligibile est in quantum est unum; qui enim non intelligit unum, nihil intelligit, ut dicit philosophus in IV Metaph." Cf. also *ST* Ia, 58.2 [Leon. 5.81]: "[S]icut ad unitatem motus requiritur unitas termini, ita ad unitatem operationis requiritur unitas obiecti. . . . Et sic etiam intellectus noster simul intelligit subiectum et praedicatum, prout sunt partes unius propositionis; et duo comparata, secundum quod conveniunt in una comparatione. Ex quo patet quod multa, secundum quod sunt distincta, non possunt simul intelligi; sed secundum quod uniuntur in uno intelligibili, sic simul intelliguntur."

itself are seen simultaneously, this does not make it discursive reasoning.”<sup>117</sup> In fact, whenever Thomas describes a composite as being intuited, perceived, or experienced, he always means that in this act, the intellect is occupied in seeing several parts of the composite included in the intellectual apprehension *all at once* in a single intention, rather than creeping discursively from one part to another.<sup>118</sup> The multiplicity is seen as one, in one glance.

This leads to the second common feature of the acts of intuition, perception, and experience described above. In each of the cases outlined, the acts designated by verbs of sensation can be contrasted with acts of discursive reasoning. Discursion, the third operation that Thomas adds to the two Aristotelian operations of simple apprehension and judgment,<sup>119</sup> pertains to the human intellect alone, on account of the weakness of its gaze.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *ST* Ia, 58.3, ad 1 [Leon. 5.83]: “Si autem in uno inspecto simul aliud inspiciatur, sicut in speculo inspicitur simul imago rei et res; non est propter hoc cognitio discursiva. Et hoc modo cognoscunt angeli res in Verbo.”

<sup>118</sup> *SCG* 1.55 [Leon. 13.157]: “Multa igitur ad quae simul intentio non fertur, non simul intuemur. Quae autem oportet sub una intentione cadere, oportet simul esse intellecta: qui enim comparisonem duorum considerat, intentionem ad utrumque dirigit et simul intuetur utrumque.” See also *ST* Ia, 58.2, ad 1 [Leon. 5.81]: “[I]ntelligere multa ut unum, est quodammodo unum intelligere;” and ad 2 [ibid.]: “[I]ntellectus formatur per intelligibilem speciem quam apud se habet. Et ideo sic potest una specie intelligibili multa simul intelligibilia intueri, sicut unum corpus per unam figuram potest simul multis corporibus assimilari”; *DV* 8.14 [Leon. 22/2.265:214–21]: “Et sic etiam intellectus quando considerat propositionem, considerat multa ut unum; et ideo inquantum sunt unum, simul intelliguntur, dum intelligitur una propositio quae ex eis constat; sed inquantum sunt multa, non possunt simul intelligi, ut scilicet intellectus simul se convertat ad rationes singulorum secundum se intuendas.”

<sup>119</sup> See *In Perierm.* I.1 [Leon. 1\*/1.5:6–14]: “[A]dditur autem et tertia operatio ratiocinandi, secundum quod ratio procedit a notis ad inquisitionem ignotorum. Harum autem operationum prima ordinatur ad secundam: quia non potest esse compositio et divisio nisi simplicium apprehensorum; secunda vero ordinatur ad tertiā, quia videlicet oportet quod ex aliquo vero cognito cui intellectus assenciat procedatur ad certitudinem accipiendam de aliquibus ignotis.” Also, *In Post. an.* I.1 [Leon. 1\*/2.46–5:49]: “Tercius vero actus rationis est secundum id quod est proprium rationis, scilicet discurrere ab uno in aliud, ut per id quod est notum deveniat in cognitionem ignoti.” For discussions of the contrast between intellection and reason see Julien Péghaire, *Intellectus et ratio selon S. Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1936), and Joseph Moreau, *De la connaissance selon S. Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1976), ch. 8.

<sup>120</sup> See *In Sent.* I.25.1.1, ad 4; and Pierre Rousselot, *Intelligence: Sense of Being, Faculty of God*. Trans. Andrew Tallon (Milwaukee, Wisc.: Marquette University Press, 1999), 52–54.

It is the process whereby the intellect proceeds from the more to the less known, from the indistinct to the distinct; it is the operation of learning:

Human intellects attain perfection in the knowledge of truth by a sort of movement and discursion of intellectual operation: namely, when they proceed from one known thing to another. . . . Human souls, which acquire knowledge of truth by a sort of discursion, are called rational. This happens on account of the feebleness of the intellectual light in them.<sup>121</sup>

Discursion, then, is a *movement* from one act of cognition to another. The intellect's initial grasp of a thing is non-discursive, serving as a starting point for discursion. Similarly, the understanding attained at the end of discursion is non-discursive (knowledge of repose).<sup>122</sup> The motion of discursion is therefore limited on both sides by intellection, the restful contemplation of knowledge that has been attained. Perception and intuition can thus be either pre-discursive or post-discursive (though experience seems to be only pre-discursive).

Moreover, it seems that once a known multiplicity is habitually unified in the intellect by discursion, that unity is perceived instantaneously thereafter. For instance, a student of logic might discover the fact of Socrates' mortality by reasoning through the syllogism "All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is mortal." But after he has performed this reasoning, while the habit remains, he will perceive Socrates' mortality as included within the premise "All men are mortal"; he no longer needs to reason thereto. (An angel, of course, would have seen Socrates' mortality from the outset in the premise

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<sup>121</sup> *ST* Ia, 58.3 [Leon. 5.83]: "[Intellectus hominum], per quendam motum et discursum intellectualis operationis perfectionem in cognitione veritatis adipiscuntur; dum scilicet ex uno cognito in aliud cognitum procedunt. . . . Animae vero humanae, quae veritatis notitiam per quendam discursum acquirunt, *rationales* vocantur. – Quod quidem contingit ex debilitate intellectualis luminis in eis." See also *ST* Ia, 79.4 and IIa-IIae, 49.5, ad 2; *SCG* 1.57; *DV* 15.1; *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 6.2.

<sup>122</sup> *ST* IIa-IIae, 180.3 [Leon. 10.426]: "Sic igitur vita contemplativa unum quidem actum habet in quo finaliter perficitur, scilicet contemplationem veritatis, a quo habet unitatem: habet autem multos actus quibus pervenit ad hunc actum finalem. Quorum quidam pertinent ad acceptionem principiorum, ex quibus procedit ad contemplationem veritatis; alii autem pertinent ad deductionem principiorum in veritatem, cuius cognitio inquiritur; ultimus autem completivus actus est ipsa contemplatio veritatis." Compare also *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 6.1 [Leon. 50.162:350–62], where Aquinas contrasts the discursive *ratio* proper to induction, learning, and the natural sciences, with the *intellectus* proper to the metaphysical knowledge of the end which reasoning seeks.

“All men are mortal.”) This shows that discursion is merely a tool by which the human intellect attains deeper insight into a known whole, or discovers a larger whole uniting a number of disparate known “ones.”<sup>123</sup> Once the role of discursion is properly understood in this way, one can make sense of texts in which the same knowledge is attributed to reason *and* is said to be perceived instantaneously<sup>124</sup>: once one has discursively discovered the larger whole uniting two items and grasped their relation, one then non-discursively perceives the one in the other.

One may wonder why Thomas considers verbs of sensation to be appropriate descriptions of non-discursive intellectual acts. The answer, I think, is that sensation (above all, sight) is the paradigmatic instance of non-discursive cognition. In *De sensu et sensato*, in fact, Aristotle explicitly distinguishes sensation and intellection from discursion: “Sensing is not like learning, but contemplation.”<sup>125</sup> Thomas explains the grounds for the comparison:

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<sup>123</sup> *In De div. nom* VII.2, no. 711 [Marietti, 266]: “Est autem considerandum quod in nobis est duplex compositio intellectus: una quidem quae pertinet ad inventionem veritatis, alia vero quae pertinet ad iudicium; inveniendū, quidem, quasi congregantes ex multis ad unum procedimus sive multa dicantur diversa sensibilia per quorum experimentum universalem cognitionem accipimus sive multa dicantur diversa signa ex quibus ratiocinando ad talem veritatem pervenimus. Non solum autem huiusmodi multis et divisibilibus procedimus ad unam intelligibilem veritatem cum primo scientiam acquirimus, sed etiam iam scientiam habentes, in ipsis multis vel divisibilibus per quamdam applicationem consideramus quod in universali cognitione tenemus.”

<sup>124</sup> For instance, see *Quodl.* 8.2.2 [Leon. 25/1.59:117–60:135], where Thomas uses *percipere* to describe both an instantaneous knowledge (perception of the habit of charity in my own acts) and a perception resulting from “conjecture” or reasoning (perception of my neighbor’s charity in certain acts which, we have learned, are characteristic of a charitable man): “Sed secundum alium modum cognoscendi caritatem neque caritas neque aliquis habitus siue potencia *percipitur* a nostro intellectu, nisi per hoc quod actus *percipiuntur*, ut patet per Philosophum in II Ethicorum . . . Sic autem nullus potest cognoscere caritatem nisi caritatem habens, quia actus caritatis et aliarum virtutum praecipue consistunt in motibus interioribus, qui non possunt esse cogniti nisi operanti, nisi quatenus manifestantur ex actibus exterioribus, et sic *per quamdam coniecturam* aliquis non habens caritatem potest *percipere* alium caritatem habere” (emphasis mine). Cf. also *CT* 1.75 [Leon. 42.105:1–5]: “Praedictas autem substantias, quas immateriales diximus, necesse est etiam intellectuales esse. Ex hoc enim aliquid intellectuale est quod immune est a materia, quod ex ipso intelligendi modo percipi potest.”

<sup>125</sup> *De sensu et sensato* 441b22–23, as quoted in Aquinas’s commentary *In De sensu* 9 [Leon. 45/2.52]: “[N]on enim secundum dicere, set secundum speculari est sentire.” The original Greek terms for

That is, it has no similarity to what it is to learn, because in the one who learns, a habit of science is newly generated, but in the one who senses, the sense is not newly generated by a sensible action, but the sense is made operative in act, as happens in one who contemplates in act.<sup>126</sup>

In learning, which occurs via discursion, the intellect progresses by establishing habits of science that then function as stepping stones leading to further acts of intellection. Thomas contrasts this discursive sequence with sensation, which only requires the actualization of the sense power by an actually sensible object. I do not use the sight of a present red color (say, the redness of a present fire engine) to lay down a “habit” of sight which will eventually lead me to see the absent color of blue. If I want to see the color blue, I have to look at something blue *right now*. The absurdity of the notion of discursive sensation highlights the point: sensation, like contemplation, occurs in the instant actualization of the cognitive faculty (sense or intellect) by an object that is present to the cognitive faculty.

To summarize: verbs of sensation such as *percipere*, *intueri*, and *experiri* signify non-discursive acts of the intellect, indicating the act in which the intellect is united with its object (especially present objects). *Intueri* is the broadest of the three, applying to Divine, angelic, and human knowing, and signifies contemplative union with the object of knowledge. *Percipere* has narrower application: suggesting receptivity or partiality, it is only used for angelic and human knowing and most frequently, though not exclusively, appears in contexts in which a multiplicity is perceived as one. It is thus ideally constituted

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these contrasted activities, the one non-discursive and the other clearly discursive, are θεωρεῖν and μαθησθῆναι (see Loeb Classical Library 8 [London: Harvard University Press, 1936]). Oddly, the text given here in the Leonine translates μαθησθῆναι as *dicere*, with *discere* or *deicere* listed as variants. Aquinas apparently read it as *discere*, since this is the term he employs in his commentary on the passage.

<sup>126</sup> *In De sensu* 9 [Leon. 45/2.55:220–56:225]: “[I]d est non habet similitudinem cum eo quod est discere, quia in eo qui addiscit generatur habitus sciencie de nouo, set in eo qui sentit non generatur sensus de nouo per actionem sensibilis, set sensus fit actu operans sicut contingit in eo qui speculatur actu.” Cf. also *In De an.* III.6 [Leon. 45/1.230:42–52], where Thomas draws parallels between simple apprehension of the intellect and sensation.



for describing the way in which the soul knows itself in its acts. *Experiri*, the narrowest of the three, properly indicates that the object is a present singular, and is therefore used only with respect to intellectual cognition originating in the senses, or intellectual cognition of a singular. It is for this reason that Thomas can describe human knowledge of events within the soul as “experiences.”

*c. The non-discursivity of self-awareness*

The use of verbs of sensation to describe self-awareness, therefore, indicates at least that when the intellective soul perceives itself, or experiences its act, or sees that it exists, or perceives that it knows, the act in which it achieves such a perception or experience or vision of its singular acting self is an *intellection*, i.e., it is *non-discursive*. While it is tempting to smuggle some degree of imperceptible discursivity into acts in which one thing is seen in another, it must be emphasized that there is no such thing as a semi-discursive intellection. Every intellection is either the starting point or the terminus of a discursion, and discursion cannot exist in the moment of intellection, any more than motion can persist in its own terminus.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, verbs of sensation are especially appropriate in the context of self-awareness, since the object of self-awareness, like that of sensation, is a present singular.<sup>128</sup> But the intellectual perception of something singular is precisely what happens in self-awareness. So it is not surprising that Thomas often uses terms such as *percipere*, *experiri*, and *videre* to describe intellection of the acts, habits, and events within the soul.

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<sup>127</sup> One might argue that there is some sort of motion involved in intellection, insofar as one thinks about different things, or considers different parts of a known object at different times. But this is simply a matter of attention, not a matter of discursion. Discursion is always specifically an act of *learning something new on the basis of something previously known*.

<sup>128</sup> See *ST* Ia, 54.5, ad 1, cited above in note 100.

Consequently, in an act of self-awareness, the intellect perceives a present singular (its existing and acting self) in a single act lacking discursive motion. When Thomas says that the soul perceives itself in its acts, he is describing the soul's awareness of its act and itself as the agent, perceived together in a single perception of oneself-as-acting. In other words, self-awareness, like any other intellection, is a cognitive union with a whole; if the awareness includes discrete parts, those parts are seen *in the same glance* in the context of the whole to which they belong.<sup>129</sup>

It should be emphasized, however, that the origin of the act is irrelevant to the non-discursive quality of an act of self-awareness. Suppose that self-awareness were reached by a discursive process in which the soul, after perceiving its act, reasoned to its own existence. This discursive process would terminate with the motionless perception of oneself-as-acting, encompassing the agent and the act in a single glance. But the same motionless perception would be had if, in contrast, the soul originally perceived its existence in its act in a single glance without discursion. Regardless of its origin, self-awareness consists in a motionless union of knower and known; but our investigation so far has not revealed an answer as to whether self-awareness originates in a discursive act.<sup>130</sup>

The verbs of sensation by which Thomas describes self-awareness, then, show self-awareness to be a motionless intellection of the knower in the act of knowing. But in order to understand fully the modality of this act, we need to know not only *what kind* of act it is, but also *how* it is achieved. Thus the next section will address how self-awareness fulfils the

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<sup>129</sup> SCG 2.49 [Leon. 13.381]: "Intellectus autem supra seipsum agendo reflectitur: intelligit enim seipsum non solum secundum partem, sed secundum totum. Non est igitur corpus."

<sup>130</sup> This is an important point, since Thomas might otherwise be inconsistent when he says in DV 10.8 that philosophers "perceive" that an intelligible species is immaterial ("perceperunt quod species qua intelligimus, est immaterialis" [Leon 22/2.322:278–80]), a perception that is attained by discursion.

three criteria for intuition identified in §B above (directness, immediacy, and presence).

Interestingly, these criteria align with Thomas's characterization of self-awareness as occurring through an act (*per actum*), through a species (*per speciem*), and through the soul itself (*per seipsam / per praesentiam suam*).<sup>131</sup> Thus we must first determine whether self-awareness is pre-discursive or post-discursive; i.e., whether the directness of self-awareness is impeded by the fact that the soul perceives itself in its acts (§2.a below). Second, we must investigate whether acts of self-awareness are mediated by species (§2.b below). Third, we must comment on the ground of an act of self-awareness, to discover how the singular soul is present to itself in self-awareness (§2.c below).

## 2. *The Genesis of the Act*

### a. *Directness: the pre-discursivity of self-awareness*

In texts such as *DV* 10.8, *ST* Ia, 87.1 and 87.3, and *DM* 6, ad 18, Thomas describes self-awareness as the soul perceiving its existing self through its own act (*per actum*). The designation *per actum* has led Roland-Gosselin to claim that self-awareness is reached by reasoning discursively to one's existing self as the "real principle of one's acts" from a direct perception of one's act. The habitual inference from acts to self becomes so rapid and easy that I am deceived into thinking I intuit myself.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> For *per actum*, *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:221–22]: "[A]nima cognoscitur per actus suos"; for *per speciem*, *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.356]: "[I]ntellectus humanus . . . per eandem speciem intelligitur, sicut per formam suam"; for *per seipsam / per praesentiam suam*, *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: "Ex hoc enim ipso quod percipit se agere, percipit se esse; agit autem per seipsam; unde per seipsam de se cognoscit quod est"; *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: "Et ideo dicitur se cognoscere per suam praesentiam." Thomas also describes self-awareness as occurring *per reflexionem* (*In Sent.* III.23.1.2 [Moos 3.702]: "Et hoc quidem cognoscit homo per modum reflexionis, in quantum scilicet cognoscit se operari quae operatur"), but we will not discuss this point here.

<sup>132</sup> See Roland-Gosselin, "Peut-on parler d'intuition intellectuelle," 714–30, esp. 714–15, 721, and 728–30: "L'individu, la personne qui agit, par sa nature et son existence substantielle donne à ses actes leur

Martin too seems to subscribe to the same interpretation, though not explicitly:

Within Aquinas's account of the mind, the soul's proper actual cognition of itself can, however, it seems to me, be no more than the bare awareness of particular mental acts as occurring, that is to say, no more than an undifferentiated act of intellectual attention. . . . Indeed nothing that Aquinas says shows how my awareness of my act of understanding can be either an awareness that the act is *my* act or that it is an act of *understanding*.<sup>133</sup>

Martin's conclusion that Aquinas cannot account for the first-person dimension of self-awareness relies precisely on the same assumption that Roland-Gosselin makes: namely, that perceiving an act is distinct from perceiving the agent. (I will refer to this assumption hereafter as the "act-only theorem.") Martin, however, correctly sees the further implications: discursive reasoning from the perception of "an act of thinking" can never yield first-person knowledge. From the perception of an act of knowing, I can reason to the existence of *a* thinker, but I could never know that *I* am this thinker. In order to reason to my first-person existence, I would have to start with an act perceived as *mine*. But the perception of an act as *mine* is precisely what the act-only theorem excludes, since this would require perceiving myself, the agent, in the act.

In order to salvage first-person thought and speech, then, we must show that the act-only theorem is false. Additionally, in order to salvage Thomas's theory of self-awareness,

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être et leur nature d'accidents. Ceux-ci ne lui sont pas accolé ou accrochés de l'extérieur. Ils ont avec lui, dans l'être, une unité réelle, sinon absolue. Cependant, la doctrine générale de s. Thomas ne nous permet pas de dire que même dans l'individu doué de l'intelligence, l'ordre de la connaissance soit coextensif à l'ordre ontologique. . . . De ce chef, l'intuition de mon acte d'intelligence ou de mon acte ne m'autorise pas à dire qu'en percevant ces actes je doive percevoir du même coup la substance dont ils émanent, ou mon moi considéré dans son être substantiel (728). . . . [Il s'agit] de limiter l'intuition aux actes du moi, et, à partir de ces expérience multiples, de se former une idée de leur principe réel. . . . L'habitude aidant, la 'perception' du moi substantiel dans ses actes, devient si familière et si rapide qu'elle prend les apparences d'un 'intuitive' véritable (729–30)." He argues, however, that this initial intuition of one's acts is still not a perfect intuition, since the act is intuited only insofar as it is specified by a species that remains dependent on a phantasm (726). Note that his argument is based on the claim that since all knowledge of existence is grounded in knowledge of essence, direct perception of my existence would require me to perceive my essence directly—but the weakness of the human intellect precludes intuition of any essence (729). As is evident from the discussion in §A above, however, this claim results from confusing quidditative knowledge with descriptive or indistinct essential knowledge.

<sup>133</sup> Martin, "Self-Knowledge and Cognitive Ascent," 98–99.

we must show that he does not hold any version of this theorem. Two considerations militate against the validity of the act-only theorem. First, the act-only theorem presupposes that one must reason from perceived acts to the agent in precisely the same way that one reasons from an effect to the existence and characteristics of the cause. But it is a mistake to equate acts with effects. Acts, whether immanent or transitive, inhere in the agent<sup>134</sup> (the former terminating in the agent and the latter terminating in the external effect), whereas effects exist apart from the agent and are produced by a transitive act. Since the metaphysical relation of act to agent is not the same as that of effect to cause, one cannot assume that the perception of an agent through its act can be assimilated to the model whereby a cause is known by reasoning from its effect.

In fact, epistemologically speaking, to perceive an act *is* to perceive the agent. As Lambert explains: “Acts are not independent of subjects, because an act implies a subject; an activity must always belong to or be performed by a subject. So non-inferential self experience must, to some degree, perceive the psychological subject, because the subject is part of the meaning of the act.”<sup>135</sup> Lambert’s comment suggests a response to Roland-Gosselin’s claim that because “the order of knowledge is not coextensive with the ontological order,” the ontological inseparability of act and agent does not translate into an intuition of the agent in the act. In fact, the act insofar as it is an accident *cannot* be

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<sup>134</sup> Note however that there is a debate over whether transitive acts inhere in the subject or only in the recipient. For discussion, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 226–28. For texts suggesting that transitive acts inhere in the recipient, see *DP* 10.1; *In Met.* IX.9; *In Phys* III.4; *In De an* II.16 (see Wippel, 227, n. 103); for texts suggesting that they inhere in the agent, see *SCG* 2.9 and *DP* 8.2 (see Wippel, 227, nn. 104 and 105). Wippel suggests that the solution is simply that a transitive action can be “viewed as a second act which directly inheres in and informs its corresponding operative power,” but that “viewed from the side of the motion which is produced by the acting agent, of course, Thomas can continue to say that action is present in the recipient as in its subject” (228).

<sup>135</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 160.

perceived alone: rather, it is perceived as the act *of a subject*. One sees, not motion, but a moving thing—not red, but a red thing. On the intellectual level, when it is possible to perceive a singular (viz., in the case of immaterial singulars), the same obtains: the acting principle is perceived in its act.

The second argument against the act-only theorem is sheer experience. Simply put, I constantly experience myself—not a third party that I happen to call ‘me,’ but something qualitatively different, which I express by using the first person in speech. In other words, the first person is an irreducible dimension of our experience. Thus if the act-only theorem entails that we cannot have first-person experience, the theorem clearly must be abandoned. In fact, the act-only theorem requires that I do not perceive myself directly, but that I reason to my singular first-person existence from the starting point of my acts. But discursive reasoning invariably leads to the knowledge of the cause in the third-person. To cite the illustration from Perry’s discussion of essential indexicals, if I see a trail of sugar on the floor of the grocery store, I can reason that there is someone making a mess—but just by examining and reasoning from the sugar on the floor, I cannot discover whether I or someone else is that person.<sup>136</sup> In fact, I must already have some independent access to my singular self in order to discursively arrive at the judgment, “*I am making a mess!*” In sum, the only way to avoid the destruction of all first-person thinking and speaking is to have some sort of direct perception of the singular self.

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<sup>136</sup> See John Perry, “The Problem of the Essential Indexical,” *Noûs* 13 (1979): 3–20. Perry notes that when I see a trail of sugar on the floor and conclude “someone is making a mess,” this statement reflects an entirely different mental state from the statement, “*I am making a mess.*” As his discussion is oriented towards philosophy of language, Perry does not discuss the psychological requirements of such a claim.

It is therefore impossible to hold that the singular agent, the “I,” is attained by discursive reasoning from a perception of the act, without confusing immanent acts with distinct effects and denying a key component of basic experience. But does Thomas make this mistake? I argue that he does not: in fact, he clearly rejects the act-only theorem.<sup>137</sup> A first indication that Thomas intends to uphold a direct perception of the singular self in its act is his use of the verb *experiri*, which pertains to “things insofar as they are here and now.”<sup>138</sup> Thomas does not restrict experience only to our own acts, but explicitly extends it to the principle of that act. In *ST* Ia, 76.1, he argues that we experience our acts as belonging to our singular selves: “But if anyone wishes to say that the intellectual soul is not the form of the body, it would be necessary for him to find a way in which this act of understanding (*intelligere*) is the act of this man; for each one experiences that he himself is the one who understands (*intelligit*).”<sup>139</sup> Again, in *ST* Ia-IIae, 112.5, ad 1, Thomas insists that “things that are by their essence in the soul are known by experiential cognition, insofar as a man experiences the intrinsic principles through acts, as when by willing we perceive

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<sup>137</sup> Scholars who explicitly agree with this interpretation of Thomas include Peillaube, “Avons-nous l’expérience du spirituel?” pt. 1, 261; Bernard Lonergan, “Christ as Subject: A Reply,” *Gregorianum* 40 (1959): 258; Marten Hoenen, *Reality and Judgment according to St. Thomas*, trans. Henry F. Tiblier (Chicago: Regnery, 1952), 275–76. Gardeil highlights this point in “Perception expérimentale,” 227: “C’est comme *principe de ses actes* que la réflexion actuelle retrouvera l’âme. Si la connaissance habituelle n’avait pas d’avance ce même objet, la connaissance réflexive ne pourrait pas être regardée comme son actualisation, lui être identique, ni, par suite, bénéficier de la saisie directe et immédiate de la substance de l’âme dont est capable la connaissance habituelle. La conscience pourrait assurer qu’on pense à la source de ses actes; l’âme elle-même ne pourrait témoigner que c’est *soi* qui pense, ni partant que c’est sa propre substance qu’elle saisit actuellement à la source de sa pensée. La connaissance psychologique de l’âme demeurerait phénoménale”; see also 220.

<sup>138</sup> *DM* 16.1, ad 2, cited above in note 105.

<sup>139</sup> *ST* Ia, 76.1 [Leon. 5.209]: “Si quis autem velit dicere animam intellectivam non esse corporis formam, oportet quod inveniatur modum quo ista actio quae est intelligere, sit huius hominis actio: experitur enim unusquisque seipsum esse qui intelligit.”

the will, and life in vital operations.”<sup>140</sup> Here Thomas does not say that I experience *myself*, but only that I experience the powers of the soul. Still, the text indicates that an experience of an act does not stop with the act but also attains within the act the principle thereof. Now, it is impossible to *experience* something at the term of discursive reasoning; the term ‘experience’ precisely describes the initial pre-discursive encounter with the object of knowledge. Consequently if one can be said to experience one’s singular self as the agent of the perceived act, Thomas must be willing to defend a direct perception of the individual self as agent.

Second, certain phrases strongly indicate a direct perception of the acting principle in its acts. For instance, Thomas says that “[the soul] understands itself in perceiving (*percipiendo*) its act,”<sup>141</sup> and that we have scientific knowledge (*scimus*) of our soul’s existence “insofar as we perceive its act,”<sup>142</sup> indicating that the perception of acts necessarily includes information about the agent. Similarly, in his Commentary on the *Ethics*, Thomas claims that “insofar as (*in hoc quod*) we sense that we sense and understand that we understand, we sense and understand that we exist,” since sensation and understanding are precisely the human ways of existing.<sup>143</sup> Here again my perception of my own act of knowing is *identical with* a perception of my own existence; my existence is manifested

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<sup>140</sup> *ST* Ia-IIae, 112.5, ad 1 [Leon. 7.327]: “[I]lla quae sunt per essentiam sui in anima, cognoscuntur experimentaliter cognitione, in quantum homo experitur per actus principia intrinseca: sicut voluntatem percipimus volendo, et vitam in operibus vitae.”

<sup>141</sup> *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 4 [Leon. 5.410]: “Quamvis etiam dici possit quod, percipiendo actum suum, seipsam intelligit quodcumque aliquid intelligit . . .”; *DV* 10.8, ad 5 [Leon. 22/2.323:352–55]: “[O]biectio illa procedit de notitia actuali, secundum quam anima non percipit se esse nisi percipiendo actum suum et obiectum”; see also *DV* 10.8, ad 1 s.c., and *DM* 16.8, ad 7.

<sup>142</sup> *SCG* 3.46, cited in note 2 above.

<sup>143</sup> *In Ethic.* IX.11 [Leon. 47/2.540:99–103]: “In hoc autem quod nos sentimus nos sentire et intelligimus nos intelligere, sentimus et intelligimus nos esse: dictum est enim supra quod esse et vivere hominis principaliter est sentire vel intelligere.”



precisely in my acts of knowing and sensing. One might argue that by describing self-awareness as occurring by the act (*per actum*), Thomas indicates a discursivity by the '*per*.' I argue, however, that the '*per*' does not indicate discursion, but only identifies the means of knowledge, as evidenced by the fact that, as seen earlier, Thomas describes Divine and angelic self-knowledge, which is non-discursive, as occurring *per essentiam*.

Third—and this is perhaps the most important indication that Thomas does not hold the act-only theorem—Thomas frequently describes the perception of an intentional act as a perception of *my* act, already including a reference to a first-person agent. One of the most significant texts in this respect is *De unitate intellectus*: “For it is manifest that this singular man understands: for we would never ask about the intellect unless we understood (*intelligeremus*); nor, when we ask about the intellect, do we ask about any other principle than that by which we understand.”<sup>144</sup> From this text it is clear that in grasping my act of knowing, I cannot help but grasp it as *mine*, which indicates that I have an irreducible basic grasp of *myself*, the principle, in the act. Thomas never says, “I perceive that I know, as a result of perceiving an act of knowing.” Rather, he repeatedly says, “I know that I know” (literally, “I know myself to know,” *intelligo me intelligere*)<sup>145</sup>: and this articulated knowledge of a state of affairs in which act and agent are included is the starting-point, not the goal, of discursion regarding the soul.<sup>146</sup> Thus the perception of an act is not distinct from the perception of the agent. The soul is perceived in its acts, not as God’s existence is

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<sup>144</sup> See *De unit. int.* 3, cited in note 7 above. See also *ST Ia*, 76.1 [Leon. 5.209]: “[E]xperitur enim unusquisque seipsum esse qui intelligit”; *ST Ia*, 79.6, ad 2 [Leon. 5.271]: “[E]t ideo sicut intelligit seipsum intellectus, quamvis ipse sit quidam singularis intellectus, ita intelligit suum intelligere, quod est singularis actus vel in praeterito vel in praesenti vel in futuro existens.”

<sup>145</sup> See all the texts listed in note 8 above.

<sup>146</sup> *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1:216:65–86, esp. 83–86]: “[U]nde et supra Philosophus per ipsum intelligere et per illud quod intelligitur scrutatus est naturam intellectus possibilis: non enim cognoscimus intellectum nostrum nisi per hoc quod intelligimus nos intelligere.”

known by considering the dependent character of the universe, but as a passing train is perceived in the sound of thundering wheels and the blur of colors and shapes speeding past.<sup>147</sup>

In sum, reasoning to the existence and characteristics of something is very different from directly perceiving that existing thing itself—as different as knowing God’s existence through his effects, and beholding him face to face in the beatific vision.<sup>148</sup> The latter contains a dimension of personal familiarity and unshakeable certitude that is above all present in our experience of ourselves. As for Martin’s objection that “nothing Aquinas says shows how my awareness of my act of understanding can be either an awareness that the act is *my* act or that it is an act of *understanding*,” Aquinas would respond by questioning how awareness of an act can possibly be anything other than awareness of the agent. Indeed, if there is really a gap between awareness of an act and awareness of the agent, this gap cannot be bridged by any sort of psychological mechanism in such a way as to differentiate between first- and third-person agents. Thus either there is no gap, or self-knowledge is psychologically impossible. Consequently, we must reject the act-only theorem and conclude that for Aquinas and in reality our direct perception of an intentional act includes a direct perception of the agent, allowing me to describe this act as *my act*, to recognize *that-I-*

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<sup>147</sup> Pedrazzini, *Anima in conscientia sui* (excerpta), 13: “Unde conscientia actuali non solum actus suos, sed et seipsam et essentiam suam ut subjectum illorum cognoscit.”

<sup>148</sup> Lambert too notes this distinction: “Thus the ‘particular knowledge’ we have of the angels and God is really very unlike the particular awareness we have of our own souls; we actually experience the latter, while we can only postulate the existence of the former” (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 97). There is some evidence in Thomas’s texts that we do experience God in our souls at some level; but precisely what this might mean has been a matter of considerable controversy and must be postponed for another occasion.

*know*. Self-awareness is not only non-discursive, but pre-discursive. It thus fulfills the condition of “directness,” as defined above.<sup>149</sup>

*b. The immediacy of self-awareness*

My perception of myself as the principle of my acts is therefore a *direct* perception. But is it also an *immediate* perception—i.e., is it mediated internally by an intelligible species? As we have noted before, the soul cannot perceive its existence unless it is informed and therefore actualized by a species abstracted from the senses. Thus self-awareness can be said to occur just as much *per speciem* as *per actum* since they amount to the same thing. And in at least one text, (Ia, 87.1, ad 3), Thomas even seems to describe self-awareness as occurring *per speciem*. But does this species then mediate self-knowledge? Moreover, once actualized by the species of the known object, does the soul additionally require a species of itself for self-awareness, or is the act of cognitive union with another sufficient?

One can address these problems by interpreting the role of the species in self-awareness, in one of two ways. The single-species theory argues that the only species needed in self-awareness is the species of the known object. The double-species theory maintains that in addition to being informed by the species of the known object, the soul must also be informed by an abstracted species of itself in order even to perceive itself.

The main proponent of the double-species theory is Lambert. He begins with the claim that because anything that is known must be known through a species, thus self-

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<sup>149</sup> As proof against this conclusion, one might adduce the passage from *QDDA* 16, ad 8, [Leon. 24/1.147:397–400], where Thomas notes: “[I]ntellectus possibilis noster intelligit se ipsum non directe, apprehendendo essentiam suam, set per speciem a fantasmatis acceptam.” But this text concerns quidditative self-knowledge, not self-awareness; see discussion of this and other similar texts in Chapter IV, §A.2 (esp. notes 36 and 37).

awareness requires not only the species of the external object, but also a species of the intellect. He describes the process of forming this species:

To start with, the primary intellectual act consists in an understanding of the nature of some object that was first presented to the mind through sense experience. This understanding took place because a singular physical event, or series of such events, made available to the mind sufficient data from which the intellect could abstract intelligible significance. The possible intellect then received this ‘species’ into its own power, from which issued an actual understanding or concept, which is the term or completion of the intellectual act as such. At this point an analogous process, which constitutes secondary self awareness, begins. For just as sensible experience presented to the agent intellect an occasion for its abstractive work, so now the actuation of the possible intellect presents to the active intellect the ‘material’ for self awareness. The active intellect ‘generalizes’ the multitude of individual intellectual acts, and thus fashions a species of the ‘acts’ through which is seen their ‘subject,’ the possible intellect, wherein the secondary species accompanies the intention of whatever sensible object the intellect happens to be conceptualizing at a given moment. The whole process is guided and reinforced by social and educational systems which aid in the construction and refinement of concepts by individual minds.<sup>150</sup>

Lambert admits that Thomas does not put matters this way, but he argues that Thomas ought to have done so in accordance with basic Thomistic metaphysical and epistemological principles.<sup>151</sup> The most significant of these is the Aristotelian dictum that “‘the intellect is known like other things,’ that is, through species . . . [which] seems to demand that, just as we experience sensible objects through a species, so there should be a species of the self in self experience, in order for self perception to be a publicly expressible and defensible form of knowing ourselves.”<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 149.

<sup>151</sup> See Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 150–52. Lambert excludes, however, certain incompatible key principles that he considers philosophically suspect, most importantly, “the view that intelligibility is a property of *things*, and that some things are of themselves more intelligible than others” and “that immateriality is the reason for intelligibility” (144–45).

<sup>152</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 151. See for instance Aristotle *De an.* III.4.430a3, and Thomas, *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1:216:65–86]: “Dicit ergo primo quod intellectus possibilis est intelligibilis non per essenciam suam, set per aliquam speciem intelligibilem, sicut et alia intelligibilia. . . . Species igitur rei intellecte in actu est species ipsius intellectus, et sic per eam se ipsum intelligere potest”; *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3; *DV* 10.8; *SCG* 2.98 and 3.46; *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 3, and 87.1, s.c.; *QDDA* 3, ad 4, and 16, ad 8. As noted in Chapter I, *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 alone interprets “in the same way” to mean “by the light of the agent intellect.”

Not only is this interpretation compatible with—and even required by—

Thomistic principles, but according to Lambert it is also defended by Thomas in at least four texts:

- 1) *DP* 9.5: “Just as when one understands something other than oneself, one forms a concept of that thing, which is signified by a term; in the same way, when one understands oneself, one forms a concept of oneself, which can be expressed in a term.”
- 2) *DV* 4.2: “When the mind understands itself, its conception is not the mind itself, but something expressed by the awareness (*notitia*) of the mind.”
- 3) *DV* 10.9, ad 7: “In order that something be known, it is necessary that there be some likeness of it in the mind, especially if it is not conjoined to the mind through its essence as the object of cognition.”
- 4) *ST* Ia, 87.3, ad 2: “The act by which the intellect understands a stone is other than the act by which it understands that it understands a stone, and so forth.” On this text, Lambert comments: “Since acts are defined by their species or objects, this statement would mean that there are distinct species for knowing the object and for knowing one’s awareness of the object.”<sup>153</sup>

Consequently, Lambert concludes that the double-species interpretation is the more genuinely “Thomistic,” since it is sometimes upheld by Thomas himself and moreover is mandated by the principles of Thomas’s broader theory of knowledge.

But the texts that Lambert cites in support of a double-species thesis do not support this thesis at all. In fact, the first two texts (*De pot.* 9.5 and *DV* 4.2) refer, not to abstraction, but to concept-formation. Indeed, Lambert seems to confuse species with concepts when he describes the intellect as *forming* a species of itself in a process “guided and reinforced by social and educational systems” (see above, at note 150). Species are not subjectively

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<sup>153</sup> *DP* 9.5 [Marietti, 236]: “Sicut enim cum intelligit aliud a se, format conceptum illius rei quae voce significatur, ita cum intelligit se ipsum, format conceptum sui, quod voce etiam potest exprimere”; *DV* 4.2 [22/1.124:120–22]: “[Q]uando mens intelligit se ipsam, eius conceptio non est ipsa mens, sed aliquid expressum a notitia mentis”; *DV* 10.9, ad 7 [Leon. 22/2.330:318–21]: “[O]portet, ad hoc quod aliquid cognoscatur, esse aliquam similitudinem eius in mente, maxime si per essentiam suam non coniungatur menti ut cognitionis obiectum”; *ST* Ia, 87.3, ad 2 [Leon. 5.361]: “Unde alius est actus quo intellectus intelligit lapidem, et alius est actus quo intelligit se intelligere lapidem, et sic inde.” See Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 138–39.

constructed, but rather abstracted from the given. Concepts, sometimes called expressed species in the Thomistic tradition, are produced *after* the initial reception of the intelligible species (impressed species), as the intellect's subjective understanding of an object. Consequently, Lambert's appeal to these first two texts proves only that the intellect produces a concept of itself, not an impressed species.

The third text (*DV* 10.9, ad 7) likewise cannot support Lambert's claim. For one thing, in the reply to the tenth objection of the same question (see note 154 below), Aquinas clearly states that the species through which the intellect knows itself is simply the species of the known object. It seems hardly likely that Aquinas would have been so confused on the number of species involved in self-awareness that he could maintain two contradictory views within a single set of responses. For another thing, the general principle of cognition that Thomas is presenting in ad 7 (the intellect is perfected by receiving a species of its object into itself) has a unique application in self-awareness given the nature of the intellect, as I shall discuss in a moment. And regarding the fourth text, acts are distinguished by their *objects*, for Thomas, not by their species. What is at stake in this text, therefore, is simply a shift of attention from the external entity as object of the knowing act to oneself as object. Since, as noted above, the species of the external entity is the species of the intellect, there is no need to claim that this shift of attention requires a change of species.

Furthermore, the double-species thesis is explicitly contradicted by texts in which Thomas clearly states that self-awareness does not require the soul to form a species of itself:

- 1) *DV* 10.8, ad s.c. 2: "For when we know the soul, we do not form for ourselves some likeness of the soul that we behold, as occurs in the vision of the imagination; but we

consider the very essence of the soul. Still, this is not grounds for excluding that that vision be through some species.

2) *DV* 10.8, ad s.c. 5: “The soul is not known through another species abstracted from itself, but through the species of its object, which also becomes the form of [the intellect] insofar as it is understanding-in-act.”

3) *DV* 10.9, ad 4: “A habit is not known by the soul through some species of it abstracted from the senses, but through species of those things that are known through the habit; insofar as other things are known, the habit too is known as the principle of cognition of those things.”

4) *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 3: “The human intellect, which is rendered into act by the species of the understood thing, is understood through that same species, as through its form.”

5) *QDDA* 3, ad 4: “But the possible intellect is said to be intelligible like other intelligibles, because it understands itself through the intelligible species of other intelligibles.”

6) *In De an.* III.3: “Therefore [Aristotle] says that the possible intellect *is intelligible* not through its essence, but through some intelligible species, *just as* also other *intelligibles*. . . . Therefore the species of the thing understood in act (*rei intellecte in actu*) is the species of the intellect itself, and thus through it, [the intellect] can understand itself.”<sup>154</sup>

In addition, some texts make the same point about quidditative self-knowledge, stating that the soul attains quidditative self-knowledge by investigating the nature of a species abstracted from an external object, without need for a species of the intellect itself.<sup>155</sup> Since self-awareness is the starting-point from which the intellect discursively attains quidditative

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<sup>154</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 2 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.325:485–91]: “Cum enim intelligimus animam, non confingimus nobis aliquod animae simulacrum quod intueamur, sicut in visione imaginaria accidebat; sed ipsam essentiam animae consideramus. Non tamen ex hoc excluditur quin ista visio sit per aliquam speciem”; *DV* 10.8, ad 5 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.325:504–7]: “[A]nima non cognoscitur per aliam speciem abstractam a se, sed per speciem obiecti sui, quae etiam fit forma eius secundum quod est intelligens actu”; *DV* 10.9, ad 4 [Leon. 22/2.329:298–330:303]: “[H]abitus non cognoscitur ab anima per aliquam eius speciem a sensu abstractam, sed per species eorum quae per habitum cognoscuntur; in hoc ipso quod alia cognoscuntur, et habitus cognoscitur ut principium cognitionis eorum” (for similarly explicit comments, see also 10.9, ad 10 and 2 ad s.c.); *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.356]: “Et ideo intellectus humanus, qui fit in actu per speciem rei intellectae, per eandem speciem intelligitur, sicut per formam suam”; *QDDA* 3, ad 4 [Leon. 24/1.28:338–41]: “Set intellectus possibilis dicitur intelligibilis sicut et alia intelligibilia, quia per speciem intelligibilem intelligibilium aliorum se intelligit”; *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1:216:65–86]: “Dicit ergo primo quod intellectus possibilis *est intelligibilis* non per essentiam suam, set per aliquam speciem intelligibilem, *sicut* et alia *intelligibilia*. . . . Species igitur rei intellecte in actu est species ipsius intellectus, et sic per eam se ipsum intelligere potest” (see also *ST* Ia, 85.2, ad 1).

<sup>155</sup> Cf. *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3; *DV* 10.8, ad 5 s.c. and 9 s.c.; *DV* 10.9, ad 4 and 10; *SCG* 3.46; *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 3; *QDDA* 3, ad 4, and 16, ad 8; *In De an.* III.3—all discussed in Ch. IV, §A.3, and cited there in note 52.

knowledge about itself, it is difficult to see how quidditative knowledge could dispense with a species of the intellect, if self-awareness required one.

Finally, all these considerations indicate that the greatest care is needed for correctly interpreting the way in which Thomas takes Aristotle's principle, "The intellect knows itself like other things (*sicut et alia*), i.e., through a species."<sup>156</sup> Notice that in no case does Thomas take this principle to indicate that there is a species of the soul itself in self-awareness. Rather, because of the unique structure of the human intellect, it must mean something different for self-awareness to occur "through a species" than it does for knowledge of an extramental to occur "through a species." The intellect has no form of its own: its form is whatever it happens to be knowing at the time.<sup>157</sup> Thus a species of the known object is a species of the intellect at the moment of knowing: we will see in Chapter III, §C that this is why every act of knowledge is transparent to the intellect and therefore includes self-awareness. As the text cited above from *In De an.* III.3 shows, the principle that the intellect knows itself through a species, just as it knows other things, must be taken in the sense that "the species of the thing understood in act (*rei intellecte in actu*) is the

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<sup>156</sup> In Gauthier's edition of Moerbeke's translation, *De anima* 430a3 reads: "Et ipse [intellectus] autem intelligibilis est sicut intelligibilia" [Leon. 45/1.214]; for the Aristotelian context, see Ch. I, §A.2. In commenting on this text in *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:65–68] Thomas states somewhat unclearly: "Dicit ergo primo quod intellectus possibilis est intelligibilis non per essenciam suam, set per aliquam speciem intelligibilem, *sicut et alia intelligibilia*," though a clarification about the identity of this species follows a few lines later, as cited above in note 154. Whenever Thomas quotes 430a3, he takes Aristotle's "in the same way" (*sicut et alia*) to mean "by means of a species"; see also *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3; *DV* 10.8, ad 6; *ST* Ia, 87.1; *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 3; *QDDA*, aa. 3, ad 4, and 16, ad 8. (*In Sent.* I.3.4.5 provides a notable exception, where "in the same way" is taken to mean "by means of the light of the agent intellect"; see Chapter I.). Note that this principle applies equally to self-awareness or to quidditative self-knowledge, though in slightly different ways (for its application to quidditative self-knowledge, see Chapter IV). Only in two cases does Thomas explicitly interpret the text as referring to quidditative self-knowledge: *DV* 10.8, ad 6, and *SCG* 3.46.

<sup>157</sup> *ST* Ia, 85.2, ad 1 [Leon. 5.334]: "[I]ntellectum est in intelligente per suam similitudinem. Et per hunc modum dicitur quod intellectum in actu est intellectus in actu, inquantum similitudo rei intellectae est forma intellectus."



species of the intellect itself, and thus through it, [the intellect] can understand itself.”<sup>158</sup>

The intellect cannot help but know itself in knowing its object because the informing species is, in virtue of its presence in the intellect, already a species *of the intellect at that moment*.

As we will see in Chapter IV, §A.3, this interpretation governs quidditative self-knowledge *per speciem* also.

The double-species theory, then, cannot be defended insofar as it lacks textual support and explicitly contradicts a number of texts. Moreover, as articulated by Lambert, it confuses key points in Thomas’s general theory of cognition. We must conclude that Thomas upholds a single-species model of self-awareness: the species of the known object is the only species needed for self-awareness.<sup>159</sup>

But a question still remains as to what role this single species of the known object plays in self-awareness. Does it mediate my perception of my singular self, just as it mediates my knowledge of the external object?

Now, it is important to note that a species has two roles: one as the form of the knowing intellect and one as the image (similitude) of the known object.<sup>160</sup> These two functions are bracketed together in *ST* Ia, 55.1, ad 2: “The intellect-in-act is said to be the intellected-in-act, not because the substance of the intellect is the similitude by which it knows [as it would be for God], but because that similitude is its form.”<sup>161</sup> Regarding the

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<sup>158</sup> *In De an.* III.3, at 430a2 [Leon. 45/1:216:80–86]: “Species igitur rei intellecte in actu est species ipsius intellectus, et sic per eam se ipsum intelligere potest.” See Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 158–59.

<sup>159</sup> For authors who uphold the single-species interpretation of Aquinas, see Romeyer, “Notre science de l’esprit humain” (1923), 37; Kennedy, “The Soul’s Knowledge of Itself,” 33; Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 156–63.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. also *DV* 10.8, ad 2 s.c., cited above in note 154, where Thomas explains that intellectual vision can occur through a species of a known object without necessitating a likeness of the soul.

<sup>161</sup> *ST* Ia, 55.1, ad 2 [Leon. 5.54]: “Intellectus in actu dicitur intellectum in actu, non quod substantia intellectus sit ipsa similitudo per quam intelligit, sed quia illa similitudo est forma eius.”

first, the informing species *is the form or actuality of the intellect in the act of understanding* to such an extent that to know one's species is to know one's act of knowing: "The intelligible species is that by which the intellect understands, not that which it understands, except by reflexion, insofar as it understands that it understands, and that which it understands (*intelligit se intelligere et id quod intelligit*)."<sup>162</sup> By giving the intellect a form, the intelligible species informing the intellect makes the intellect intelligible to itself; this species thus mediates self-awareness only if the act can be considered to mediate self-awareness, and if mediation is defined as "rendering intelligible."

That the species does not mediate knowledge in its role as actuality of the intellect is indicated by the fact that Divine knowledge, the highest and most properly intuitive type of knowledge, can even be said to occur through a species that is identical with the Divine essence.<sup>163</sup> The Divine essence serves as a species because it is that whereby the Divine intellect is knowing-in-act (in other words, the Divine essence *is* the Divine intellect, which *is* the Divine act of knowing). Clearly God's knowledge is not any less immediate for taking place through his essence as through a species. Insofar as it is the form or actuality of the intellect, a species does not mediate knowledge at all, but rather it is the act in which intellect-in-act and intelligible-in-act are one.

In their second role, however, species make some extramental object present to the intellect by similitude (a similitude which becomes the actuality of the intellect). When an object is foreign to the very essence of an intellect, so to speak, the species "imports" that object's form into the intellect, making it intelligible-in-act. But insofar as the species is a

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<sup>162</sup> *QDDA* 2, ad 5 [Leon. 24/1.19:289–20:392]: "Species enim intelligibilis est quo intellectus intelligit, non id quod intelligit, nisi per reflexionem in quantum intelligit se intelligere et id quod intelligit."

<sup>163</sup> See *ST* Ia, 14.2.

similitude of the known object whereby that object is made present to the intellect, it (perhaps) mediates knowledge.<sup>164</sup>

Armed with these considerations, we can now answer the question regarding the immediacy of self-awareness. I argue that in human self-awareness, the species of the known object does not constitute a “similitude” or mediating “likeness” of the singular self in any meaningful way.<sup>165</sup> While the species grants vicarious presence of material beings to the intellect, it performs no such function in self-awareness. Rather, in functioning as the form of the intellect-in-act, enabling the intellect to know some extramental object, the species grants the intellect precisely the form the intellect lacks for its own intelligibility-in-act. The species of, say, a tree, thus gives actuality to the intellect in two distinct ways by informing the intellect. On the one hand, it gives the intellect the actuality of a knower, so that it knows the tree in act. But this actuality of being-a-tree-knower also constitutes the intellect’s form: like form giving actuality to matter, the actuality imparted by the species makes the intellect itself intelligible-in-act.<sup>166</sup> There is no need to *represent* the intellect to

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<sup>164</sup> I say “perhaps,” because Dewan has argued quite convincingly that it is misleading to describe the species, even *qua* similitude, as a medium (“Immediate Knowledge,” 392–404). He points out that *qua* similitude, the species does not stand between the object and the intellect, and it most certainly does not constitute some intermediate terminus, like a mirror. Rather, it stands “at the origin” of understanding, imparting the object’s form intentionally to the intellect, like a gas fire heating the water in a kettle (see especially 399–402). Thus he concludes that even abstractive knowledge is, for Thomas, immediate. Roland-Gosselin, too, argues that for Thomas, species do not mediate general abstractive knowledge: rather, mediacy only obtains in situations wherein the soul comes to know one object *x* through another object *y* (i.e., when we come to know a politician by looking at his picture in the newspaper); see “Peut-on parler d’intuition intellectuelle,” 719–20. Since this position could be a matter of some controversy, I prefer not to make my argument for the immediacy of self-awareness depend upon it; thus I grant for the sake of argument that the species *qua* similitude could be called a medium, to show that even if it were a medium, self-awareness would remain immediate. See also Grégoire, “Notes sur les termes,” 402, n. 2.

<sup>165</sup> For one thing, the intellect is immaterial and not able to be represented. On this point, see *ST* Ia, 56.2, ad 3, where Thomas distinguishes between species as likeness, and species as intentional existence; the species by which Gabriel knows Michael is not a likeness of Michael, but only the intentional being of Michael.

<sup>166</sup> *SCG* 2.98 [Leon. 13.580]: “Nihil autem cognoscitur secundum quod est potentia tantum, sed secundum quod est actu: unde et forma est principium cognitionis rei quae per eam fit actu; similiter autem

itself; simply, the the informing species provides the intellect with actual intelligibility, thus triggering self-awareness. Self-awareness is therefore “without any logical or psychological intermediary. Here, knowing is being itself (*Le connaître ici est l'être même*).”<sup>167</sup>

The role of the species in human self-awareness can here be profitably compared to the role of the Divine essence in Divine self-knowledge. Because the Divine essence is already in act, it is in some sense its own species; i.e., the Divine essence is itself the means by which God knows himself. Once the human intellect is actualized by a species from without, however, precisely the same thing happens. It knows itself through its own actualizing form, which is the species of the known object. Thus the difference between Divine and human self-knowledge is not epistemological (i.e., as though one were immediate and the other were mediated by a species), but metaphysical. Both the Divine and human intellects know themselves through their own actualized being, but whereas the Divine intellect is already essentially in act, the human intellect needs to be actualized by a species from outside. Thus God knows himself *per essentiam*, and I know myself *per speciem*, but both God's and my acts of self-knowledge are immediate.<sup>168</sup>

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potentia cognoscitiva fit actu cognoscens per speciem aliquam. Intellectus igitur possibilis noster non cognoscit seipsum nisi per speciem intelligibilem, qua fit actu in esse intelligibili: et propter hoc dicit Aristoteles, in III *de Anima*, quod *est cognoscibilis sicut et alia*, scilicet per species a phantasmatibus acceptas, sicut per formas proprias.”

<sup>167</sup> Romeyer, “Notre science de l'esprit humain” (1923), 44, n. 3: “[ . . . un mode de connaître immédiate] sans intermédiaire logique ni psychologique. Le connaître ici est l'être même.”

<sup>168</sup> One might object by pointing to the following text from *DV* 10.8 [22/2.322:270–75]: “Unde mens nostra non potest se intelligere ita quod seipsam immediate apprehendat; sed ex hoc quod apprehendit alia, devenit in suam cognitionem; sicut et natura materiae primae cognoscitur ex hoc ipso quod est talium formarum receptiva.” This comment, however, appears in the context of a discussion of quidditative self-knowledge, not self-awareness.

To summarize, then: by informing the intellect, the species gives the intellect a “shape,” actualizing it so that it is intelligible. Since the human intellect is fundamentally passive, its reception of an outside species “lights it up,” so to speak, so that it becomes actual and therefore intelligible to itself: for nothing is understood except insofar as it is in act.<sup>169</sup> There is nothing in this situation that can be described as a mediation.

*c. The presence of the soul to itself in an act of self-awareness*

This brings us to the last criterion for intuition—the soul’s presence to itself—and Thomas’s last description of the mode of an act of self-awareness, *per seipsam/per suam praesentiam* (a usage introduced in *SCG* 3.46 and *ST* Ia, 87.1). As I argued in the conclusion to Chapter I, because of the unique role played by the species of the known object in self-awareness, there is a perfectly legitimate sense in which the intellect can be said to perceive itself through itself (*per seipsam*). It needs to be actualized by the species, true: but since the species *is* the very form of the intellect, the intellect, once actualized, knows itself through itself.

In fact, it is precisely because the soul perceives itself through itself that its existence is a matter of such unshakeable certitude. Thomas explains in *ST* Ia-IIae, 112.5 that to know something through oneself (*per seipsam*) is to know it with certitude,

for one can only have certitude about something, if its proper principle can be discerned; for in this way certitude is had of demonstrative conclusions through indemonstrable universal principles; but no one could know scientifically (*scire*) that he has scientific knowledge of some conclusion, if he were ignorant of the principle.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> For a description of the intellect’s “lighting up” by receiving intelligibles, see *DV* 8.6 [Leon. 22/2.238:139–42]: “Sicut ergo corpus lucidum lucet quando est lux actu in ipso, ita intellectus intelligit omne illud quod est actu intelligibile in ipso.”

<sup>170</sup> *ST* Ia-IIae, 112.5 [Leon. 7.325]: “Alio modo homo cognoscit aliquid per seipsum, et hoc certitudinaliter. . . . Certitudo enim non potest haberi de aliquo, nisi possit diiudicari per proprium principium: sic enim certitudo habetur de conclusionibus demonstrativis per indemonstrabilia universalia principia; nullus autem posset scire se habere scientiam alicuius conclusionis, si principium ignoraret.”

In grasping the principle of a fact, one achieves certitude regarding that fact. And anything that is known through oneself must be known with certitude, because to know something through oneself is already to know the principle. (The reason is that one could only know something through oneself if one contained the principle within oneself, as God knows creatures through himself as their principle.) Therefore Thomas concludes that I cannot know with certitude that I possess grace, since God is the principle of grace. But I *do* know my own acts and existence with certitude, because I experience their principle, myself, within myself: “[T]hose things that are in the soul through its essence are known by experiential cognition, inasmuch as man experiences through acts [their] intrinsic principles, as when we perceive the will in willing, and life in vital operations.”<sup>171</sup> The soul, then, knows itself in some sense through itself, because once it is “lit up” by an act, it grasps itself immediately and directly through its own actualized self, with the same certitude that belongs to the grasp of first principles.

The fact that the actualized soul knows itself with complete certitude *per seipsam* helps to tie up a few loose ends in Thomas’s discussion of self-awareness. For one thing, it shows that the soul knows itself, not at a distance, but as directly present to itself in the act of knowing. This is especially evident in Thomas’s characterization of self-awareness in *ST* Ia, 87.1 as occurring *per praesentiam suam* (which amounts to the same thing as knowledge *per seipsam*). As we shall see in Chapter III, §B, the “presence” from which an act of self-awareness springs is the habitual self-awareness mentioned in *DV* 10.8. The soul is always already present to itself; it never needs to be made present to itself because it knows itself

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<sup>171</sup> *ST* Ia-IIae, 112.5, ad 1, cited above in note 140.

habitually. Thus self-awareness satisfies intuition's third criteria: that the object of intuition be present.

Moreover, the fact that self-awareness occurs *per seipsam / per praesentiam suam* suggests an answer to Martin's accusation that "there is nothing in Aquinas' proper cognition [viz., self-awareness] which can count as knowledge properly speaking."<sup>172</sup> If 'knowledge' is here taken in the sense of Aristotelian science, then Martin is perfectly right: for Aquinas, the soul does not know its existence as a conclusion drawn from prior principles. Rather, the soul knows its existence as though it were an indemonstrable first principle, because it knows itself through itself. It cannot prove its own existence; but it does not need to, any more than it needs to prove the principle of non-contradiction. But if 'knowledge' is here taken in the sense of certitude, then the charge is false, because Aquinas insists that the soul perceives itself with unshakeable evidence. Nor can it be claimed that Aquinas does not explain *how* the soul perceives itself with such certitude: his insistence that the soul knows its own existence *per seipsam*, in fact, provides the only explanation possible. If Thomas had argued that self-awareness were mediated by a species, or reached at the end of an inference, one might have doubts about his ability to explain its certitude. But since the intellect, once actualized, knows itself through itself directly in an unmediated grasp of itself as principle of its acts, it makes sense that the soul's knowledge of itself through itself must be of the highest certitude.

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<sup>172</sup> Martin, "Self-Knowledge and Cognitive Ascent," 104.

Finally, the *per seipsam* character of self-awareness indicates that self-awareness “necessarily accompanies every direct and intentional act.”<sup>173</sup> When the intellect is informed by a species, the only obstacle to self-awareness—namely, the fundamental passivity of the intellect—is removed, so that the intellect knows itself through itself. When actualized by a species, it is made intelligible-in-act. In this instant, it would be wrong to say that the intellect merely *can* know itself. Rather, it *must* know itself, since to be intelligible-in-act is necessarily to be intellected-in-act. I shall return to this important point in Chapter III, §C.

#### D. Concluding Comments

For Thomas, then, self-awareness is an *indistinct intuition* of one’s singular soul in its acts. As Jolivet puts it:

It seems that there is no valid reason to restrict the usage of the term *vision* or that of the coextensive term *intuition* in the intellectual realm, to those cases alone where the object of intellection is perceived with perfect clarity. In intuition, properly speaking, there can be and are degrees. . . . It can happen that the object is only perceived as it is in itself confusedly: this is the case with the soul’s perception of itself, on account of the intervention of the foreign species, by which the soul is rendered intelligible-in-act—which explains why intuition is inadequate for determining the nature of the soul.<sup>174</sup>

*Indistinct content.* The content of an act of self-awareness is one’s singular existing self. One’s singular existence is grasped by judgment (“I am”), and a corresponding essential content is concurrently provided by judgment and indistinct essential apprehension

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<sup>173</sup> Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 107: “Voilà donc la plus élémentaire conscience de soi qu’on puisse constater, laquelle accompagne nécessairement tout acte direct et intentionnel . . . ”

<sup>174</sup> Régis Jolivet, “L’intuition intellectuel et le problème de la métaphysique,” *Archives de philosophie* 11 (1934): 10: “Il n’y a dès lors, semble-t-il, aucune raison valable de restreindre, dans le domaine intellectuel, l’usage du terme de *vision*, ni de celui d’*intuition* qui lui est coextensif, aux seuls cas où l’objet d’intelligence est perçu dans une clarté parfaite. Dans l’intuition proprement dite, il peut y avoir et il y a de fait des degrés. . . . Il peut arriver que l’objet de soit perçu tel qu’il est en lui-même que confusément: c’est le cas de la perception de l’âme par elle-même, à cause du truchement indispensable de l’espèce étrangère par laquelle l’âme devient en acte intelligible,—ce qui explique que l’intuition ne suffise pas, quant à la détermination de la nature de l’âme.”



(“a being” or “an existent”). To this there may be added some descriptive content based on the act in which one catches oneself—thus one might know oneself in self-awareness also as “a living thing,” “a knower,” “a patient person.” Such knowledge, however, is merely the experiential foundation for quidditative knowledge of the soul, which can only be attained by prescinding from one’s experience of one’s own singular soul in its changing acts, and reasoning discursively about the nature of those acts in order to discover the common nature of the soul.

*Intuitive mode.* By now, the answer to the burning question of the intuitivity of self-awareness is obvious. Self-awareness fulfils all three of the conditions for Lalande’s definition of intuition: it is direct (i.e., pre-discursive), immediate (i.e., lacking a mediating species), and directed towards a concretely present entity. The importance of defining these terms precisely can hardly be emphasized strongly enough. Of course, if one wishes to offer a different definition of intuition, or to define directness, immediacy, or presence in some other way, one could claim that Thomas’s self-awareness is not intuitive. On occasion, self-awareness has been called “indirect” or “mediate” simply because it depends on the actualization of the intellect by an abstracted species and is therefore not permanent, *a priori*, or innate, in what is often taken to be an Augustinian sense.<sup>175</sup> But in such cases, the difference is purely terminological. If one accepts Lalande’s definition of ‘intuition’ and agrees to contrast directness with discursivity and immediacy with abstracted similitudes,

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<sup>175</sup> Peillaube labels self-awareness as “indirect” apparently because it involves reflexion, which seems to me to be a very extended and unhelpful use of the term (“Avons-nous l’expérience du spirituel?” pt. 2, 661–62). See also Still, “Aquinas’s Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 26; Kennedy, “The Soul’s Knowledge of Itself,” 33; Gardeil, “Perception expérimentale,” 226; Lambert, “Habitual Knowledge,” 13; Reichmann, “The ‘Cogito’ in Thomas and Descartes,” 347. Putallaz too says Thomas has a theory of indirect self-knowledge, seeming to mean by this that the soul doesn’t have permanent knowledge without any need for actualization from without (in other words, direct here would be something like God’s knowledge). See his discussion of Matthew of Aquasparta in *Connaissance de soi*, 38–39.

the inescapable conclusion is that for Thomas, self-awareness is genuinely an intuition of the singular self.

I should stress, however, that in describing Thomistic self-awareness as an intuition of the singular self, I am not ascribing to Thomas any sort of permanent innate self-knowledge, as though an unborn infant could perceive its singular self before it developed properly functioning senses. Like all knowledge, self-awareness depends on the senses (though it depends on the senses only for the actualization of the intellect). Thus Thomas would in no way subscribe to Avicenna's "Flying Man" thought experiment: our intellect is entirely passive and cannot be intelligibly present to itself until it is formed and actualized by a foreign form. "It is precisely the union of object and subject that *constitutes* my actual consciousness. To suppose that we could destroy one or other of these poles of consciousness, or to suppose simply that we can separate one from the other, is actually to destroy consciousness."<sup>176</sup>

To conclude, then: Thomas's self-awareness is no Cartesian intuition of self prior to all experience and independent of sensation. Rather, it is a fully relational self-awareness in which the soul knows itself together with the external object: "Every cognition by which the intellect cognizes those things that are in the soul is founded upon the fact that it knows its object, to which a phantasm corresponds."<sup>177</sup> Indeed, the fact that the soul is aware of itself only in the context of perceiving objects of sense answers a final concern expressed by Roland-Gosselin: How can the soul's perception of itself be *my* knowledge of *myself*, if the

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<sup>176</sup> Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Epistemology*, trans. Lawrence Moonan (Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1970) 94.

<sup>177</sup> *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 5 [Moos 3.704]: "[S]icut dictum est, tota cognitio qua cognoscit intellectus ea quae sunt in anima, fundatur super hoc quod cognoscit objectum suum, quod habet phantasma sibi correspondens."

“I” for Thomas is not identified with the soul, but rather “designates the real person . . . the whole concrete individual substance, soul and body”?<sup>178</sup> Thomas surmounts this difficulty with his insistence that the actualization in which the intellect is made present to itself *is*, in fact, the intelligible actuality of its sensed object. In self-awareness, the soul catches itself in the act of taking on a form gathered from the senses, a process that requires the collaboration of both body and soul.<sup>179</sup> The acts of the human self proceed from body and soul together, and self-awareness is no exception. Self-awareness is never an awareness of the soul as alone, encased within itself; it is always an awareness of the soul as embodied, engaged in a dynamic relationship with the rest of creation.

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<sup>178</sup> Roland-Gosselin, “Peut-on parler d’intuition intellectuelle,” 727.

<sup>179</sup> Pedrazzini, *Anima in conscientia sui* (excerpta), 11: “Inde tandem est quod corporis sui non quamcumque notitiam, sed veram conscientiam habet subiectum rationale; quod corpus amat non impulsu naturae ut in brutis evenit, sed per extensionem illius dilectionis, qua anima ipsa se spiritualiter diligit; nec ex sola lege naturae vel caeco instinctu a corpore progrediuntur actiones in commodum et conservationem existientiae corporalis, sed imperantur a libera voluntate quae intellectum consequitur.”

## CHAPTER III

### HABITUAL SELF-AWARENESS: THE MEANING OF SELFHOOD

#### Introduction

To the act of self-awareness, there corresponds the curious habitual self-awareness that is explicitly mentioned only in two texts: *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 3–4.<sup>1</sup> Only *DV* 10.8 presents a lengthy analysis:

Therefore with respect to the first type of cognition [i.e., that the soul exists], a distinction must be made, because something can be known either habitually or actually . . . With respect to habitual cognition, I say this: that the soul sees itself through its essence, namely from the very fact that its essence is present to it, it is able (*potens*) to go forth into an act of cognition of its own self; just as someone, because he has a habit of some science, from the very presence of that habit, is able to perceive those things that fall under that habit. But in order that the soul perceive that it exists and attend to what is occurring within it, no habit is required; but for this only the essence of the soul is required, which is present to the mind: for from it [viz., the essence], acts proceed, in which it is actually perceived.<sup>2</sup>

This text, together with the replies to objections 1, 9, 11, 1 s.c., and 4 s.c., sketches a very perplexing portrait of habitual self-awareness. (1) Habitual self-awareness stands in a relationship to actual self-awareness that is analogous to the relationship between a habit and

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<sup>1</sup> Lambert suggests that oblique references to habitual self-awareness are found in *DV* 10.2, ad 5, which refers to “the soul’s presence to itself” and *DV* 8.14, ad 6, which refers to “interior memory” (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 111). To these I would add *SCG* 3.46 and *ST* Ia, 87.1, which, as I have argued in the conclusion to Chapter I, hint at habitual self-awareness, though Lambert disagrees (see *ibid*, 111–13). A parallel type of knowledge, habitual knowledge of habits, is described in *DV* 10.9 [Leon. 22/2.329:238–49]: “Sed quantum ad habitualement cognitionem, habitus mentis per seipsos cognosci dicuntur. Illud enim facit habitualiter cognosci aliquid, ex quo aliquis efficitur potens progredi in actum cognitionis eius rei quae habitualiter cognosci dicitur. Ex hoc autem ipso quod habitus per essentiam suam sunt in mente, mens potest progredi ad actualiter percipiendum habitus in se esse, in quantum per habitus quos habet, potest prodire in actus, in quibus habitus actualiter percipiuntur.” I do not, however, include *ST* Ia, 87.2 (suggested by Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 93, n. 73); rather, this article examines the quite different topic of how we are aware of our habits such as faith, justice, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:234–322:246]: “Quantum igitur ad primam cognitionem [an est anima] pertinet, distinguendum est, quia cognoscere aliquid est habitu et actu. . . . Sed quantum ad habitualement cognitionem, sic dico, quod anima per essentiam suam se videt, id est ex hoc ipso quod essentia sua est sibi praesens est potens exire in actum cognitionis sui ipsius; sicut aliquis ex hoc quod habet habitum alicuius scientiae, ex ipsa praesentia habitus, est potens percipere illa quae subsunt illi habitui. Ad hoc autem quod percipiat anima se esse, et quid in seipsa agatur attendat, non requiritur aliquis habitus; sed ad hoc sufficit sola essentia animae, quae menti est praesens: ex ea enim actus progrediuntur, in quibus actualiter ipsa percipitur.”

its corresponding operation. (2) Yet it is not an acquired habit accidental to the soul, but rather belongs to the very essence of the soul itself. (3) Habitual self-awareness therefore consists in the soul's presence to itself, pre-dating all acts originating in the senses.<sup>3</sup> (4) The soul is therefore said to "see itself through its essence" perpetually in habitual self-awareness.<sup>4</sup> (5) The soul nevertheless can only perceive itself *actually* when it "considers other things" (i.e., in its acts, as discussed in Chapter II).<sup>5</sup>

These five characteristics are not easily reconciled. How can habitual self-awareness be "habitual," when it is neither acquired nor accidental? From this perspective, it is hard to differentiate habitual self-awareness from potency, or first act. On the other hand, what does it mean for the soul to "see itself" habitually through its essence? What kind of phenomenological experience corresponds to a habitual vision of self? From this perspective, it can be hard to differentiate habitual self-awareness from a confused implicit self-awareness.

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<sup>3</sup> DV 10.8, ad 1 [Leon. 22/2.323:325–34]: "Sed essentia sua sibi innata est, ut non eam necesse habeat a phantasmatibus acquirere; sicut nec materiae essentia acquiritur ab agente naturali, sed solum eius forma, quae ita comparatur ad materiam naturalem sicut forma intelligibilis ad materiam sensibilem, ut Commentator dicit in III de anima. Et ideo mens antequam a phantasmatibus abstrahat, sui notitiam habitualement habet, quae possit percipere se esse." Thomas, following Augustine, describes this as a kind of self-memory; see ST Ia, 93.7, ad 3 [Leon. 5.409]: "Sed quando sine cogitatione sunt, ad solam memoriam pertinent; quae nihil est aliud, secundum [Augustinum], quam habitualis retentio notitiae et amoris."

<sup>4</sup> DV 10.8, ad 11 [Leon. 22/2.323:392–99]: "[S]icut non oportet ut semper intelligatur in actu, cuius notitia habitualiter habetur per aliquas species in intellectu existentes; ita etiam non oportet quod semper intelligatur actualiter ipsa mens, cuius cognitio inest nobis habitualiter, ex hoc quod ipsa eius essentia intellectui nostro est praesens"; and see ST Ia, 93.7, ad 4 [Leon. 5.409–410]: "[A]liquis respondere posset per hoc quod Augustinus dicit XIV de Trin., quod mens semper sui meminit, semper se intelligit et amat. Quod quidam sic intelligunt, quasi animae adsit actualis intelligentia et amor sui ipsius. Sed hunc intellectum excludit per hoc quod subdit, quod non semper se cogitat discretam ab his quae non sunt quod ipsa. Et sic patet quod anima semper intelligit et amat se, non actualiter, sed habitualiter."

<sup>5</sup> DV 10.8, ad 1 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.324:441–49]: "[V]erbum Augustini est intelligendum quod mens seipsam per seipsam cognoscit, quod ex ipsa mente est ei unde possit in actum prodire, quo se actualiter cognoscat percipiendo se esse; sicut etiam ex specie habitualiter in mente retenta inest menti ut possit actualiter rem illam considerare. Sed qualis est natura ipsius mentis, mens non potest percipere nisi ex consideratione obiecti sui, ut dictum est"; and ad 4 s.c. [325:500–503]: "[A]nima est sibi ipsi praesens ut intelligibilis, id est ut intelligi possit; non autem ut per seipsam intelligatur, sed ex obiecto suo, ut dictum est."

Habitual self-awareness therefore offers two pitfalls of interpretation, depending on whether one construes it as more or less potential or actual. At one extreme are the interpretations that construe the soul's presence to itself in habitual self-awareness as a sort of vague or implicit self-awareness underlying all cognitive acts. For instance, Pierre Faucon de Boylesve states: "The *cogito* becomes aware of itself as a *sum* whose sole presence is revelatory and initiates a habitual knowledge. One sole condition suffices for the *cogito* to have consciousness of the underlying *sum*: *sola essentia animae, quae menti est praesens*. This revelation requires neither eidetic mediation nor phenomenological distance. What we have here is a primordial revelation, anterior to the process of eidetic abstraction."<sup>6</sup> Here habitual self-awareness seems to be some sort of basic ongoing intuition that yields the "I" in "I think." Along similar lines, Goehring holds that habitual self-awareness—or, as he calls it, "fundamental self-awareness"—"is always functioning in me, although I needn't always be fully conscious of it or attempt to have a second-order understanding of my own mental acts."<sup>7</sup> For these authors, habitual self-awareness is construed as a subconscious perpetual self-awareness that serves to provide continuity within one's experience.<sup>8</sup> The appeal of this view is attested by the fact that some authors, although clearly insisting that habitual self-awareness is in no way a state of actual cognition, still describe habitual self-awareness as a sort of consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Pierre Faucon de Boylesve, *Être et savoir: étude du fondement de l'intelligibilité dans la pensée médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1985), 169: "Le *cogito* s'avère à soi-même tel un *sum* dont la seule présence est révélatrice et instaure une connaissance habituelle. Une seule condition suffit pour que le *cogito* ait conscience du *sum* qui le supporte: *sola essentia animae, quae menti est praesens*"; see also 170ff.

<sup>7</sup> Goehring, "Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness," 12.

<sup>8</sup> See for instance Goehring, "Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness," 12.

<sup>9</sup> Thus Gardeil, though emphasizing the purely habitual character of habitual self-awareness, still spends some time describing how it is "immediate" and "direct," terms which seem to me more appropriate for describing actual than habitual knowledge ("Perception expérimentale," 225–27).

At the opposite extreme are those authors who, in their zeal to avoid permanent self-intuition, treat the soul's presence to itself as bearing no cognitive weight at all. Habitual self-awareness is reduced to what is effectively a pure potency, with lip-service paid to its status as habit.<sup>10</sup> Or, it is reduced to an ontological state that Thomas is said to have described in terms of habitual knowledge merely to satisfy inconvenient Augustinian texts.<sup>11</sup>

Neither of these alternatives is acceptable. Regarding the first, as I have emphasized in the previous two chapters, the human soul is the lowest of the intellects, comparable to prime matter. Thus the intellect's habitual self-awareness cannot translate into an operation of self-awareness until the intellect is actualized by the form of an external object. Regarding the second, Thomas's decision to describe this type of self-awareness as *habitual* cannot be merely a sop to Augustine, since the principles on which it is based are intrinsic to Thomas's views on knowledge and the nature of the intellect. The soul's self-presence, then, must be analogous to a genuine habit, balanced precariously somewhere between operation and pure potency.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom*, 129: "The soul's habitual cognition of itself as singular is the presence of the soul to itself. It is prior to specific acts of an actual understanding of itself as potency is prior to actualization." Lambert too, at one point, describes habitual self-awareness as a "mere possibility" (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 107); he seems to hold that the difference between potential and habitual knowledge is merely quantitative: see for instance his claim that habitual self-awareness is just a capacity for perceiving oneself, "in the strong sense that self perception is a *proximate* possibility" (106). Fetz, *Ontologie der Innerlichkeit*, likewise says that habitual self-awareness refers to the soul's being able to know itself: "Daß die Seele aufgrund ihrer Selbstgegenwart als der habituellen Erkenntnis ihrer selbst fähig ist, sich selbst zu erkennen . . ." (150).

<sup>11</sup> See for instance Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 114–15.

<sup>12</sup> For authors who seem to have a clear notion of what this balance entails, see Romeyer, "Connaissance de l'esprit humain" (1928), 57: "[La connaissance habituelle] constitue, non point une perception à l'état d'acte, une saisie même obscure de l'esprit en son essence même, en son essence non encore révélée par et dans ses actes accidentels, mais tout simplement l'aptitude innée à l'autoperception actuelle, le germe nécessaire, ineffablement riche et noble d'où elle s'éclore, à partir duquel elle pourra indéfiniment s'approfondir"; Deborah J. Brown, "Aquinas' Missing Flying Man," *Sophia* 40 (2001): 23: "The distinction

Both errors derive from an insufficient understanding of what an intellectual habit is and the role that habitual self-awareness plays in Thomas's overall theory of the soul's self-knowledge. Indeed, although habitual self-awareness has received much attention, the principles that undergird it and the context in which it appears have seldom been examined at any length.<sup>13</sup> Although ultimately Thomas holds that habitual self-awareness is not a habit (i.e. an accident in the category of quality) but belongs essentially to the soul, he describes it by analogy to habit. In order to make this analogy clear, then, in the first part of this chapter I will examine Thomas's general theory of habits and show how intellectual habits and memory involve an intellectual presence and an order towards an operation. In the second part of the chapter I will apply these principles to explain what it means for the soul's essence to be analogous to a habit for self-awareness, and how this "habit" is like and unlike other habits. I will also examine the much-commented-upon fate of Thomas's notion of habitual self-awareness in writings after *De veritate*.

Finally, in the third section of the chapter I will address a closely related problem, one which has appeared in various forms in the previous two chapters and whose treatment I have postponed up to this point—whether Aquinas accounts for the distinction between implicit (or nonintentional) and explicit (or intentional) self-awareness. So far, this problem

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between actual and habitual singular self-knowledge allows that the soul's knowledge of its own existence is prior to sensory experience as *dispositional knowledge* only or as a habit. A habit is intermediate between potency and act. It is not merely potential knowledge because the soul is not in a state of complete ignorance, awaiting a form of itself in order to actually know itself. But neither is it actual knowledge because the soul does not know itself actually before it is actualized through the abstraction of species from sensible images"; and of course Putallaz, in an extended analysis in *Le sens de la réflexion*, 92–100. Less precise but still accurate are Ruane, "Self-Knowledge and the Spirituality of the Soul," 427, and Gaetani, "Come l'anima conosca se stesa," 466.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, see the brief summaries of Thomas's theory of habitual knowledge in Lambert, "Habitual Self-Knowledge," 2–6 and the more developed version in his *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 100–104; and in Brown, "Aquinas's Missing Flying Man," 22–28. Even Putallaz offers only a few brief (but valuable) reflections on ontological presence (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 97–100).



has manifested itself in various permutations: namely, in Augustine's *se nosse* or *memoria sui*; in the difficulty of reconciling certain texts on actual self-awareness; and in the role of reflexion in self-awareness. But this problem is above all relevant to habitual self-awareness, since the latter has often been associated with implicit self-awareness. In this section, then, I will attempt to draw the threads of all these themes together by analyzing implicit and explicit self-awareness.

## **A. The Presence of Habits**

### ***1. An Exploration of Presence***

Since Thomas describes habitual self-awareness in terms of the soul's presence to itself, we can begin by investigating what he means by 'presence.' The lack of a distinction between ontological and cognitive presence is striking in Thomas; he always defines presence in terms of a sensate or intellectual knower, and repeatedly associates it with vision. Examination of a few texts shows in what way presence is always cognitive. In *In Sent.* I.3.4.5, Thomas defines intellection (*intelligere*) as "the intellect's simple vision of the intelligible that is present to it . . . But insofar as intellection is said to be nothing other than a vision, which is nothing other than the presence of an intelligible to the intellect in any way whatsoever, thus the soul always understands itself and God indeterminately."<sup>14</sup> He here cites two ways of being present that could constitute an intellection. In one way, something can be present to the soul's intellectual gaze as object (*in ratione obiecti*), which I take to mean that attention is turned towards that thing as the term of the act of intellection.

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<sup>14</sup> *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 [Mand. 1.122]: "Intelligere autem dicit nihil aliud quam simplicem intuitum intellectus in id quod sibi est praesens intelligibile. . . . Sed secundum quod intelligere nihil aliud dicit quam intuitum, qui nihil aliud est quam praesentia intelligibilis ad intellectum quocumque modo, sic anima semper intelligit se et Deum <Parma add. indeterminate [6.43]>, et consequitur quidam amor indeterminatus."

On account of the weakness of the power of the human intellect, the presence of something to the intellect as object always requires a similitude.<sup>15</sup> In another way, the principle of the knowing act is also present “as the means of the knowing” (*in ratione medii cognoscendi*)—such as the light of the agent intellect or intelligible species, which are seen without being attended to.<sup>16</sup> While Thomas does not here specify whether there are additional types of presence that could constitute intellection, his definition is broad enough to cover any others that might arise.

According to the outline of presence given here, then, presence can be taken in the broader sense as a presence “in any way whatsoever,” yielding some sort of non-attentive vision or intellection; or in the narrower sense as a presence “in the mode of an object” via a similitude, yielding attentive cognition. An essence already present to the intellect in the broader sense is made present in the narrower sense by a conversion to the relevant phantasm (a point that will be discussed at more length in §2.b below).<sup>17</sup> This means that *x*’s presence to the soul in the broad sense always constitutes an intellection of *x*, but *does not necessarily constitute an explicit consideration of x as object of thought*.

So far, then, we have distinguished consideration of a thing as object of thought from other ways in which things can be present to the intellect. One might wonder, however:

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<sup>15</sup> *In Sent.* I.17.1.4, ad 4 [Mand. 1.404]: “[A]d hoc quod aliquid cognoscatur ab anima, non sufficit quod sit sibi praesens quocumque modo, sed in ratione objecti. Intellectui autem nostro nihil est secundum statum viae praesens ut objectum, nisi per aliquam similitudinem ipsius, vel suo effectui acceptam: quia per effectus devenimus in causas. Et ideo ipsam animam et potentias ejus et habitus ejus non cognoscimus nisi per actus, qui cognoscuntur per objecta. Nisi largo modo velimus loqui de cognitione, ut Augustinus loquitur, secundum quod intelligere nihil aliud est quam praesentialiter intellectui quocumque modo adesse.” Note that here Thomas restricts cognition to those things that are present as object of the knowing act, rather than just in any way whatsoever, from which I gather that cognition most properly indicates explicit consideration.

<sup>16</sup> *In Sent.* I.3.4.5, cited below in note 149. For more discussion of this text, see Ch. I, §B.1, and below, §C.2.b.

<sup>17</sup> See for instance *SCG* 2.77 [Leon. 13.488]: “Et has quidem determinatas naturas rerum sensibilium praesentant nobis phantasmata.”

What is the status of these other items that are merely present to the intellect? A preliminary answer can be found in *ST Ia*, 8.3, which, while considering how God is in all other things, outlines three ways in which something can be said to “be in” another. First, by one’s power, as a king is “in the whole kingdom through his power, though not by presence.” Second, by presence: “Something is said to be in all things that are in its view (*prospectus*), by its presence; just as all things that are in some house are said to be present to someone who nevertheless is not according to his substance in any given part of the house.” Third, one can be “in” another “as in the place where one has one’s substance.”<sup>18</sup> Thomas returns to the second way in ad 2: “Something can be said to be present to someone insofar as it is subject to his gaze, which, nevertheless, is at a distance from it according to his substance.”<sup>19</sup>

What is fascinating in this definition of presence is the fact that objects *throughout a whole house* are said to be present to, or open to the gaze of one who dwells in the house, regardless of his location within the house. Presence (consistent with the broader sense of presence above) here thus appears as a readiness to be known; it seems to include even things that are only habitually known, which is consistent with Thomas’s comment elsewhere that vision can be either actual or habitual.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, I cannot always be thinking of the objects in my apartment, or even of all the objects in my desk, but they are still

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<sup>18</sup> *ST Ia*, 8.3 [Leon. 4.87]: “Rex enim dicitur esse in toto regno suo per suam potentiam, licet non sit ubique praesens. Per praesentiam vero suam, dicitur aliquid esse in omnibus quae in prospectu ipsius sunt; sicut omnia quae sunt in aliqua domo, dicuntur esse praesentia alicui, qui tamen non est secundum substantiam suam in qualibet parte domus. Secundum vero substantiam vel essentiam, dicitur aliquid esse in loco in quo eius substantia habetur.”

<sup>19</sup> *ST Ia*, 8.3, ad 2 [Leon. 4.87]: “[A]liquid potest dici praesens alicui, inquantum subiacet eius conspectui, quod tamen distat ab eo secundum suam substantiam, ut dictum est. Et ideo oportuit duos modos poni, scilicet per essentiam, et praesentiam.”

<sup>20</sup> *DV* 12.1, ad 11 [Leon. 22/2.369:341–44]: “[V]idere, secundum philosophum dupliciter dicitur: scilicet habitu, et actu; unde et visio actum et habitum nominare potest.”

present to me in the sense that I am able to think about them without having to figure out what they are, and use them without having to look for them. With impressive precision, in applying these principles to God Thomas is careful not to equate the divine inherence in all things by presence with divine omniscience: he says that God “is in all things by presence, insofar as all things are laid bare and open to his eyes.”<sup>21</sup> Presence is defined in terms of a field of vision, rather than in terms of actual cognition (even though for God, to have something within one’s field of vision is to know it in act).

Given Thomas’s understanding of presence as being within one’s field of vision, encompassing both habitual and actual knowing, it now becomes clear that when he says in *DV* 10.8 that the soul habitually “sees itself” through its essence because the essence of the soul is “present to the mind,” the juxtaposition of presence with vision is entirely consistent with his general understanding of presence. From the example just discussed in *Ia*, 8.3, it is clear that in order to be present (in a broad sense), a thing does not necessarily have to be actually seen; rather, all that is necessary is for it to be ready-to-be-seen; which is precisely the case with habitual knowledge. Here Thomas gives us a glimpse into a way in which something can be intellectually present or “seen,” but not explicitly considered: presence, or intellection, or vision, may be habitual or actual.<sup>22</sup> So far, then, we know that intellection or presence-to-the-intellect in the broad sense includes (1) things that are known as objects

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<sup>21</sup> *ST Ia*, 8.3 [Leon. 4.87]: “Sic ergo est in omnibus per potentiam, inquantum omnia eius potestati subduntur. Est per praesentiam in omnibus, inquantum omnia nuda sunt et aperta oculis eius. Est in omnibus per essentiam, inquantum adest omnibus ut causa essendi, sicut dictum est.”

<sup>22</sup> This coheres with Thomas’s claim that a sense-power can only be informed by something present: *ST Ia*, 79.6, ad 2 [Leon. 5.271]: “Quae quidem duo simul coniunguntur in parte sensitiva, quae est apprehensiva alicuius per hoc quod immutatur a praesenti sensibili: unde simul animal memoratur se prius sensisse in praeterito, et se sensisse quoddam praeteritum sensibile.” Obviously, if presence constitutes the actual informing, it makes no sense to say that the sense-powers are informed by “present things.” An object is present to the sense, then, not insofar as it *is* seen, but insofar as it is ready to be seen.

through their similitudes (explicitly considered), as well as (2) things that are known only habitually and (3) things that are known as the means of knowing (*in ratione medii cognoscendi*; see *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 above). It is clear that (2) cannot be assimilated to (3), since habitual knowledge includes a number of things that are not known as the means of knowing something else (for instance, I habitually know the pen in my desk, not as a means of knowing the plates in my cupboard, but just in itself). It remains to be seen, however whether (3) can be assimilated to (2): is everything that is known as a means of knowledge known habitually? This problem will be considered in §C below.

To return to the notion of habitual intellectual presence, it is not clear what this readiness-for-vision means. What distinguishes it from a pure potency? In the example of the house from *ST* Ia, 8.3, why are only items within the house present to its inmate? What about objects in the garden? This raises the problem of how to define the special kind of potency that characterizes habit. As Arnou notes, one must not construe a habit as a partial act that has been temporarily halted at some arbitrary point in its actualization.<sup>23</sup> Rather, it is a qualitatively different sort of state—an act with respect to potency, and a potency with respect to act. In order to gain a better purchase on what a “habitual vision” may be, then, I will briefly review Thomas’s theory of habits.

## ***2. Intellectual Habits as a Kind of Presence***

### *a. Thomas’s doctrine on habits*

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<sup>23</sup> René Arnou notes that in the metaphors one uses for habits, one must avoid giving the impression that a habit is “un simple développement d’une même connaissance en deux états différents, mais dans la même ligne” (*L’homme a-t-il le pouvoir de connaître la vérité? Réponse de Saint Thomas: La connaissance par habitus* [Rome: Presses de L’Université Grégorienne, 1970], 19).

In his discussion of habits in *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 49, Thomas defines habit as a mode of being whereby “some thing is said in some way to be (*se habere*) in itself or towards another . . . according to some quality.”<sup>24</sup> “Habit and disposition” constitute the first species of quality,<sup>25</sup> providing a subject’s determination with respect to its own nature. Habits and dispositions order a nature towards a form that is proper to it according to its end; and they are good or bad insofar as they so order the nature well or badly to its end.<sup>26</sup> In attempting to isolate the difference between habits and dispositions, Thomas notes that disposition is sometimes taken less properly as the genus of habit. More properly, however, dispositions can be placed in the same species as habit, as imperfect and unstable habits, or disposition and habit can be distinguished as two distinct subspecies of the first species of quality. Either way, dispositions are properly distinguished from habits insofar as dispositions are fleeting and habits are more permanent, “difficult to change.”<sup>27</sup>

The treatise on habits in *ST Ia-IIae*, then, presents habit as the mode of being whereby a subject is oriented to its perfection in some specific act proper to its nature, a

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<sup>24</sup> *ST Ia-IIae*, 49.1 [Leon. 6.309]: “Si autem sumatur habere prout res aliqua dicitur quodam modo se habere in seipsa vel ad aliud; cum iste modus se habendi sit secundum aliquam qualitatem, hoc modo habitus quaedam qualitas est.” This is, of course, different from the category of habit: “The ‘having’ that is at stake here is not the having of friends, or money, or clothes, but rather the state or condition of a being disposed to act in one way or another. Habits in this sense dispose our powers of acting” (Joseph J. Romano, “Between Being and Nothingness: The Relevancy of Thomistic Habit,” *The Thomist* 58 [1994]: 427).

<sup>25</sup> The category of quality is divided into four species according to the various modes and determinations of a subject; see *ST Ia-IIae*, 49.2 [Leon. 6.310–11], and the more detailed *In Met.* V.16, nos. 987–9 [Marietti, 262–63].

<sup>26</sup> *ST Ia-IIae*, 49.2 [Leon. 6.311]: “Sed modus et determinatio subiecti in ordine ad naturam rei, pertinet ad primam speciem qualitatis, quae est habitus et dispositio . . . Unde in V *Metaphys.* Philosophus definit habitum, quod est *dispositio secundum quam aliquis disponitur bene vel male*” (see also ad 1, where Thomas explains that only those qualities that have some relation to the nature *qua* end and can therefore be described as “fitting or unfitting” can be dispositions and habits).

<sup>27</sup> *ST Ia-IIae*, 49.2, ad 3 [Leon. 6.311]: “[I]sta differentia, *difficile mobile*, non diversificat habitum ab aliis speciebus qualitatis, sed a dispositione. . . . Ex quo patet quod nomen habitus diuturnitatem quandam importat; non autem nomen dispositionis.”

mode of being that has become virtually permanent.<sup>28</sup> Such modes of being are restricted to entities that are in potency to a natural perfection that is attained by free action: in other words, habits perfect finite rational powers for operation. Thomas explains that habits only belong to those powers that are both “acting and acted upon (*agentes et actae*) . . . because they are not determined to one.”<sup>29</sup> These are the rational powers of intellect and will. Such powers are neither purely active (containing within themselves everything they need to act), nor purely passive (unlike the senses, which are, so to speak, “coerced” by the present sensible object). Indeed, the human powers of intellect and will are the principles of their own acts: no object can compel me to know or will it.<sup>30</sup> Yet in order for me to know or will, I must be knowing or willing *something*; therefore the operation of intellect and will additionally requires the presence of some object, such that the power and its object are co-causes of the act.

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<sup>28</sup> *ST Ia-IIae*, 54.2 [Leon. 6.342]: “[H]abitus et est forma quaedam, et est habitus. . . . Habitus autem importat ordinem ad aliquid. Omnia autem quae dicuntur secundum ordinem ad aliquid, distinguuntur secundum distinctionem eorum ad quae dicuntur”; see also *Ia-IIae*, 54.1, ad 3, and 54.4. Inagaki, in fact, argues that to define habit as the intermediate state between act and potency is Scotistic or Suarezian, and that we should not read this view into Thomas: “Aquinas does not deny that habitus can be related to acts or operations. Since habitus is related essentially to the nature itself of a thing, if the nature is further related to operation or something to be achieved through operation, then habitus will be related to operation. . . . The decisive point is that the relationship to *potentia* (active power), and to acts, does not belong to the very concept of habitus; but it is rather the relationship to the nature of a thing, that is, human nature itself, that belongs to the very concept of habitus” (B.R. Inagaki, “*Habitus and natura* in Aquinas,” in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John F. Wippel [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987], 168).

<sup>29</sup> *De virt.* 1.1 [Marietti, 709]: “Potentiae vero illae sunt *agentes et actae* quae ita moventur a suis activis, quod tamen per eas non determinantur ad unum; sed in eis est agere, sicut vires aliquo modo rationales.” Note that angels too can have habits, to the extent that they are in potency to knowing and loving God; see *ST Ia-IIae*, 50.6. Sensitive powers, however, can be said to have habits only insofar as they are commanded by reason: “Secundum vero quod [vires sensitivae] operantur ex imperio rationis, sic ad diversa ordinari possunt. Et sic possunt in eis esse aliqui habitus, quibus bene aut male ad aliquid disponuntur” (*ST Ia-IIae*, 50.3 [Leon. 6.319]).

<sup>30</sup> Except in the beatific vision, wherein the will necessarily loves God; see *ST Ia*, 82.2.

According, habits are described as occupying a middle position between potency and act.<sup>31</sup> This does not mean that habit is a watered-down operation; rather, it is a distinct form that is “in act insofar as it is a quality” and “in potency with respect to the operation; whence habit is said to be first act, and operation, second act.”<sup>32</sup> When a rational power is perfected by a habit, then, it is actualized so as to be “completed for acting,” i.e., the habit bestows an act or perfection (first act) that readies the power for its operation (second act). Aquinas suggests the analogy of a piece of wet wood that must be dried out in order to receive the form of fire.<sup>33</sup> One might also suggest the analogy of a runner’s body, which, being well-toned by exercise, has a certain form or perfection ordered towards the act of running; it lacks no perfection that would be conducive to running. (Note that the accidental forms of “being-dry” and “being-well-toned” are acts distinct from those to which they are ordered, namely, “burning” and “running.”) In a striking phrase, Aquinas describes the role of a good—i.e., virtuous—habit: “A virtue is a disposition of the perfect to the best.”<sup>34</sup> A

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<sup>31</sup> *DV* 10.2, ad 4 [Leon. 22/2.302:200–202]: “[Q]uandoque vero est imperfecte in actu eius scilicet quodammodo medio inter puram potentiam et purum actum”; *In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.209:46–50]: “[C]um enim intellectus actu intelligit, species intelligibiles sunt in ipso secundum actum perfectum, cum autem habet habitum sciencie, sunt species in intellectu medio modo inter potentiam puram et actum purum”; *ST* Ia, 79.6, ad 3, cited in note 61 below; and *SCG* 1.56.

<sup>32</sup> *ST* Ia-IIae, 49.3, ad 1 [Leon. 6.312]: “[H]abitus est actus quidam, inquantum est qualitas, et secundum hoc potest esse principium operationis. Sed est in potentia per respectum ad operationem. Unde habitus dicitur *actus primus*, et operatio *actus secundus*.” This appears to be a more refined way of stating how habits straddle act and potency.

<sup>33</sup> *ST* Ia-IIae, 51.3 [Leon. 6.328]: “Unde videmus quod, quia ignis non potest statim vincere suum combustibile, non statim inflammat ipsum, sed paulatim abiicit contrarias dispositiones, ut sic totaliter vincens ipsum, similitudinem suam ipsi imprimat”; see Inagaki, “*Habitus* and *natura* in Aquinas,” 171.

<sup>34</sup> *De virt.* 1.1 [Marietti, 708]: “Inde est quod virtus bonum facit habentem, et opus eius reddit bonum, ut dicitur in II *Ethic.*; et per hunc etiam modum patet quod est dispositio perfecti ad optimum”; see also *ST* Ia-IIae, 49.2 [Leon. 6.311]: “[D]icit enim philosophus, in VII *Physic.*, loquens de habitibus animae et corporis, quod sunt *dispositiones quaedam perfecti ad optimum; dico autem perfecti, quod est dispositum secundum naturam*.” H. Renard interprets the *dispositio perfecti ad optimum* to mean that virtue disposes the perfect (i.e., “a creature that possesses the most perfect kind of life—rational life”) to the best (i.e., “a more perfect action according to [man’s] nature and end”); see “The Habits in the System of St. Thomas,” *Gregorianum* 29 (1948): 93. I would argue, however, that Aquinas is here indicating the perfective function of a habit; possessing a virtuous habit, man has attained a perfection of being; but he attains the highest perfection (*optimum*) when this



habit perfects a power by giving it the highest actuality that this power can attain on its own before operation, which requires the contribution of the object.<sup>35</sup> For this reason, habit is like a second nature or a more complete nature<sup>36</sup>: it grants a higher ability, a more perfect state of being. “Unlike the animals whose upper limits of development are established by their physical and instinctive natures, a human being *can* perfect himself in proportion to the habits that he develops.”<sup>37</sup>

Because habit is a “second nature,” it grants to the corresponding act the characteristics of a natural act, i.e., consistency, facility, and pleasantness.<sup>38</sup> Of these three, the facility of exercise originating from a habit is perhaps the most striking of its

being is translated into a virtuous operation. This is borne out by *In Phys.* VII.6 [Leon. 2.342–43], where Thomas explains at length why “virtus est perfectio quaedam.” In fact, in *ST Ia-IIae*, 52.1, ad 2 [Leon. 6.331], Thomas notes that “habitus quidem perfectio est: non tamen talis perfectio quae sit terminus sui subiecti, puta dans ei esse specificum.” Thus habit offers, not the perfection of being a particular thing, nor the perfection of attaining one’s final end, but the perfection of being formed so as to engage in one’s operation at will.

<sup>35</sup> *De virt.* 1.1, ad 6 [Marietti, 709]: “[V]irtus dicitur ultimum potentiae, quia designat potentiae complementum.” Habits are simple forms and are therefore not subject to increase or diminution in themselves; see *ST Ia-IIae*, 53.2, ad 1. Still, they are susceptible of degrees insofar as certain habits (such as habits of science) may extend to more or fewer objects; or insofar as the subject may participate more or less intensely in the form imparted by the habit; see *ST Ia-IIae*, 52.1 and 52.2.

<sup>36</sup> *ST Ia-IIae*, 53.1, ad 1 [Leon. 6.338]: “[S]icut dicitur in VII *Ethic.*, habitus similitudinem habet naturae, deficit tamen ab ipsa. Et ideo, cum natura rei nullo modo removeatur ab ipsa, habitus difficile removetur”; *DV* 24.12, ad 9 s.c. [Leon. 22/3.656–59]: “Habitus . . . sicut quaedam natura operatur in habente: unde necessitas quae ex habitu est reducitur ad naturalem inclinationem”; *In Phys.* VII.6 [Leon. 2.342]: “Quod etiam probat per hoc, quia tunc est aliquid maxime secundum naturam, quando naturae virtutem habet; virtus enim naturae est signum completionis naturae: cum autem aliquid habet complete suam naturam, tunc dicitur esse perfectum”; see also *ST Ia-IIae*, 56.5.

<sup>37</sup> Romano, “Between Being and Nothingness,” 428.

<sup>38</sup> See *De virt.* 1.1 [Marietti, 709]: “Ex his etiam potest patere quod habitus virtutum ad *tria* indigemus. *Primo* ut sit uniformitas in sua operatione; ea enim quae ex sola operatione dependent, facile immutantur, nisi secundum aliquam inclinationem habitualement fuerint stabilita. *Secundo* ut operatio perfecta in promptu habeatur. Nisi enim potentia rationalis per habitum aliquo modo inclinetur ad unum, oportebit semper, cum necesse fuerit operari, praecedere inquisitionem de operatione; sicut patet de eo qui vult considerare nondum habens scientiae habitum, et qui vult secundum virtutem agere habitu virtutis carens. . . . *Tertio* ut delectabiliter perfecta operatio compleatur. Quod quidem fit per habitum; qui cum sit per modum cuiusdam naturae, operationem sibi propriam quasi naturalem reddit, et per consequens delectabilem. Nam convenientia est delectationis causa.” See also *De virt.* 1.1, ad 13 [Marietti, 710], as well as *DV* 20.2 [Leon. 22/2.575:111–118]: “Tunc vero recipitur per modum habitus quando illud receptum efficitur quasi connaturale recipienti; et inde est quod habitus a Philosopho dicitur qualitas difficile mobilis; inde est etiam quod operationes ex habitu procedentes delectabiles sunt et in promptu habentur et faciliter exercentur, quia sunt quasi connaturales effectae.” These three features have sometimes been mistaken for a definition of habit, as in Castiello, “Psychology of Habit,” 8.

experienced characteristics: “[A habit is necessary] so that a perfect operation may be easily had. For unless a rational potency is inclined to one [act] through habit in some way, when it must act, an inquiry must precede the act; as is evident in one who wishes to consider while he does not have the habit of science.”<sup>39</sup> An agent who does not possess the relevant habit cannot know or do what he wants, when he wants, but must first engage in an “inquiry” (*inquisitio*), which likely indicates reasoning with respect to knowledge, or the struggle of moral weakness with respect to action.<sup>40</sup>

This phenomenological description corresponds with a definition of habit in *De virt.* 1.1, which Aquinas borrows from Averroes: namely that habits are “those things according to which someone can act when he wishes, as the Commentator says in III *De Anima*.”<sup>41</sup> When discussing why animals cannot have true habits, Aquinas stresses this point, noting that the will’s mastery over the exercise of the habit belongs to the *ratio* or essence of a habit.<sup>42</sup> This requirement has sometimes been taken to indicate that an essential

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<sup>39</sup> *De virt.* 1.1, cited in note 38 above. Other texts in which the facility of exercise of habits is discussed include *In Sent.* III.14.1.2, 23.1.1, and 33.1.1; DV 10.9 (see Inagaki, “*Habitus* and *natura* in Aquinas,” 162).

<sup>40</sup> For a similar observation, see DV 24.12 [Leon. 22/3.716:339–51]: “Ab habitu enim est magis operatio, quanto minus est ex praemeditatione: praemanifesta enim, id est praecognita, aliquis praeeligit ex ratione et cogitatione sine habitu; sed repentina sunt secundum habitum. Nec hoc est intelligendum quod operatio secundum habitum virtutis possit esse omnino absque deliberatione, cum virtus sit habitus electivus; sed quia habenti habitum iam est in eius electione finis determinatus; unde quandocumque aliquid occurrit ut conveniens illi fini, statim eligitur, nisi ex aliqua attentiori et maiori deliberatione impediatur.”

<sup>41</sup> *De virt.* 1.1 [Marietti, 709]: “. . . habitus, secundum quos potest quis agere cum voluerit ut dicit Commentator in III *de Anima*”; see also *In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.209:25–31]; DV 12.1, ad 1; ST Ia-IIae, 63.2, ad 2; ST IIa-IIae, q. 171; and the texts cited below in note 51. See Averroes, *Commentarium magnum In De anima* III, com. 18 [ed. Stuart, 438:26–29]: “Hec enim est diffinitio habitus, scilicet ut habens habitum intelligat per ipsum illud quod est sibi proprium ex se et quando voluerit, absque eo quod indigeat in hoc aliquo extrinseco.”

<sup>42</sup> ST Ia-IIae, 50.3, ad 2 [Leon. 6.319]: “Deficit [in animalibus] tamen ratio habitus quantum ad usum voluntatis, quia non habent dominium utendi vel non utendi, quod videtur ad rationem habitus pertinere.” Facility of exercise, then, which was mentioned as a “connatural effect” of a habit in DV 20.2 (see note 38 above), proceeds from the fact that the act of the will alone is required in order to complete all the subjective conditions for operation; and this in turn proceeds from the fact that the actualization provided by a habit

characteristic of a habit is that the will's choice is sufficient for attaining the corresponding act.<sup>43</sup>

The principle that habits can be exercised whenever the agent wishes, however, must be taken in context. Aquinas does not mean that nothing else is needed for operation except that the will will. Rather, nothing else but volition is needed *on the part of the agent*; but other external circumstances must be actualized before the will can be fulfilled in an operation. This only makes sense, since no matter how perfectly I possess the habit of generosity, I cannot perform a generous act if I am penniless and in solitary confinement.

Indeed, in the text from *De virt.* 1.1 mentioned above, Aquinas softens the impact of the Averroist definition by following it up with a quote from Augustine precisely to this effect: "And Augustine says that habit is that by which someone acts *when the time is favorable* (emphasis mine)."<sup>44</sup> In *DV* 24.4, ad 1, he further distinguishes two ways in which something can be said to occur with facility: "In one way by the removal of an impediment; in another way by bringing assistance. The facility therefore that pertains to habit is through bringing assistance: for a habit inclines a power to act."<sup>45</sup> A habit does not remove all obstacles to the act, but rather perfects the agent so that, when external conditions are right, the will can choose to act or not. The satisfaction of the relevant external conditions,

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creates a "second nature" according to which the operation corresponding to the habit becomes connatural to the agent, so that the agent can naturally (viz., spontaneously) engage in it.

<sup>43</sup> Lambert, for instance, suggests that "one only has to will the event in order to exercise" a habit ("Habitual Knowledge," 11).

<sup>44</sup> *De virt.* 1.1 [Marietti, 709]: "Et Augustinus in lib. *de Bono Coniugali* dicit, quod habitus est quo quis agit, cum tempus affuerit"; the Augustinian text (*De bono coniugali* 21.25 [CSEL 41.219:17–19]) in question reads: "Ipse est enim habitus, quo aliquid agitur, cum opus est; cum autem non agitur, potest agi, sed non opus est."

<sup>45</sup> *DV* 24.4, ad 1 [Leon. 22/3.691:190–95]: "[A]liquid dicitur esse facile dupliciter: uno modo propter remotionem impedimenti; alio modo propter appositionem adiutorii. Facilitas igitur pertinens ad habitum est per adiutorii appositionem: nam habitus inclinat potentiam ad actum."

however, is not the co-cause of the exercise; rather, it simply constitutes the removal of all obstacles to the subject's free exercise of its habit (like lifting the brake when the car is idling), for "the act entirely arises from the habit."<sup>46</sup>

It is imperative to emphasize that *the same applies to the exercise of cognitive habits*. In fact, it is quite tempting to view cognitive habits as a partial, vague, or unconscious knowledge. And because species are the means of actual knowing, it is especially tempting to view the habitual conservation of species in intellectual memory as a vague subconscious knowing.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, the difference between habitual and actual knowledge may seem to be merely a subjective difference of attention, rather than an objective difference distinguishing two distinct perfections.<sup>48</sup>

But cognitive habits are not subconscious operations any more than moral habits are. Cognitive habits too are forms that perfect a rational power (the possible intellect), ordered towards an operation relative to human nature (consideration of a given form). "[Speculative intellectual habits] can indeed be called virtues insofar they grant facility for good operation, which is the consideration of the truth (for this is the good work of the intellect)."<sup>49</sup> A cognitive habit, then, is a quality "by which one is able to consider even when one is not considering."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> DV 12.1, ad 1 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.369:354–370:355]: "... actus totaliter ab habitu oritur."

<sup>47</sup> Such considerations account, I believe, for the common tendency described above of interpreting habitual self-awareness as an inchoate or implicit self-awareness.

<sup>48</sup> One should note that it is traditionally held that immanent operations fall within the category of quality, though this is not explicitly stated anywhere in Thomas's texts. For discussion, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 226–8, and the texts cited in his n. 102. Wippel notes that Joseph Owens is somewhat hesitant to follow this tradition; see Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Milwaukee, Wisc.: Bruce Publishing Co., 1963), 194–95, 197–98, 202.

<sup>49</sup> ST Ia-IIae, 57.1 [Leon. 6.364]: "[Habitus intellectuales speculativi] possunt quidem dici virtutes inquantum faciunt facultatem bonae operationis, quae est consideratio veri (hoc enim est bonum opus intellectus) . . . Ex hoc enim quod aliquis habet habitum scientiae speculativae . . . fit potens speculari verum in

This habitual “ability to consider” means that cognitive habits can be exercised “whenever one wills.”<sup>51</sup> Still, no habit, cognitive or affective, can be exercised by the will completely independently of external circumstances, since the human will is simply not powerful enough to remove each and every obstacle to exercise. Indeed, as noted in *De virt.* 1.1 above, the powers of the human soul are acting and acted upon (*agentes et actae*)<sup>52</sup>: their operation depends not only on their own causal initiative, but also on the causality of their objects. Thus (for humans in this life) the acquisition of an intellectual habit initially requires the presence of some object to the senses, generating a phantasm from whence the intelligible object can be abstracted. And these habits can be exercised *only* when the imagination presents the phantasm again. Thus the presentation of a phantasm is always the condition for actual consideration, “not only in receiving science for the first time, but also when using science that has already been acquired.”<sup>53</sup>

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his quorum habet scientiam”; and *In Phys.* VII.6 [Leon. 2.344], where Aquinas repeatedly refers to *consideratio* as the proper act of the intellect and as the exercise or “use” of a cognitive habit.

<sup>50</sup> *ST Ia-IIae*, 50.4 [Leon. 6.321]: “Ipse ergo intellectus possibilis est in quo est habitus scientiae quo potest considerare etiam cum non considerat.”

<sup>51</sup> See for instance *DV* 20.2 [Leon. 22/2.576:123–36]: “[I]ntellectiva autem pars est domina sui actus, et ideo competit ei habere promptitudinem ad actus, ut possit operari cum libet”; *DV* 10.9 [Leon. 22/2.329:240–43]: “Illud enim facit habitualiter cognosci aliquid, ex quo aliquis efficitur potens progredi in actum cognitionis eius rei quae habitualiter cognosci dicitur”; *In De an.* II.11 [Leon. 45/1.111:48 – 42]: “[Q]ui habet habitum sciencie, dicitur potens quia cum vult potest *considerare*, nisi aliquid extrinsecum per accidens impediat, puta uel occupatio exterior uel aliqua indispositio ex parte corporis”; *In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.209:25–31]: “Nam ante quam haberet habitum sciencie, qui est primus actus, non poterat operari cum vellet, sed oportebat, quod ab altero reduceretur in actum, set quando iam habet habitum sciencie, qui est actus primus, potest cum uoluerit procedere in actum secundum, quod est operatio”; *ST Ia*, 107.1 [Leon. 5.488]: “Manifestum est autem quod de primo gradu [viz., habitus] in secundum [viz., consideratio / conceptio] transfertur intelligibile per imperium voluntatis, unde in definitione habitus dicitur, quo quis utitur cum voluerit. . . .”; *ST Ia*, 57.4 [Leon. 5.76]: “Manifestum est autem quod ex sola voluntate dependet quod aliquis actu aliqua consideret: quia cum aliquis habet habitum scientiae, vel species intelligibiles in eo existentes, utitur eis cum vult”; *ST Ia*, 79.6 [Leon. 5.270]: “Ex hoc ergo quod recipit species intelligibilium [habitualiter], habet quod possit operari cum voluerit”; *ST Ia-IIae*, 57.1, cited in note 49 above; and the other texts listed above in note 41.

<sup>52</sup> See text cited above in note 29.

<sup>53</sup> *ST Ia*, 84.7 [Leon. 5.325]: “Unde manifestum est quod ad hoc quod intellectus actu intelligat, non solum accipiendo scientiam de novo, sed etiam utendo scientia iam acquisita, requiritur actus imaginationis et

Because knowing is an immanent operation, however, there is a notable difference in the exercise of affective and cognitive habits. While the presentation of a phantasm does constitute an “external condition” insofar as the imagination is a distinct faculty from the intellect, it is not external to the human psychological structure taken as a whole.<sup>54</sup> Thus, since the will moves the other powers of the soul,<sup>55</sup> it can move the imagination to present the relevant phantasm. Consequently, the will has the exercise of a cognitive habit almost entirely within its power, except in one respect: the bodily organ of imagination must retain its integrity. If this organ is damaged, the imagination may present the wrong phantasms or no phantasms at all, and the will is powerless to overcome this obstacle.<sup>56</sup> Otherwise, as long as an intact imaginative faculty continues to supply the

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ceterarum virtutum.” Cf. also Ia, 89.1. Interestingly, in Ia, 89.5, Thomas argues that because the habit maximally disposes the intellect to turn to the phantasms in actual consideration of something, there is a corresponding disposition on the part of the imagination towards presenting that phantasm. Arnou uses this principle as justification for suggesting that the exercise of a cognitive habit is completely within the will’s power, because no habit exists unless all external obstacles are also removed: “Mais comme en acte de connaître le sujet et l’objet ne font qu’un, il n’y a vraiment disposition complète à cet acte que si toutes les conditions sont réalisées et du côté du sujet et du côté de l’objet” (*Le pouvoir de connaître la vérité*, 147). This reading is not, however, justified by the texts that we have just examined; moreover, it would require that the very existence of a habit is dependent on external circumstances, as though I were to lose my habit of grammar while under anaesthesia.

<sup>54</sup> That is to say, although the acquisition of a habit requires the presence of an external object to the senses in order to generate a phantasm, because the imagination is able to store phantasms, cognitive habits can then be exercised independently of conditions external to the human soul. See DV 12.7, ad 5 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.393:261–67]: “[Q]uod ex hoc ipso quod visio intellectualis et imaginaria dignior est corporali, secundum eas cognoscimus non solum praesentia, sed etiam absentia, cum visione corporali solummodo praesentia cernantur; et ideo in imaginatione et intellectu reservantur species rerum, non autem in sensu.”

<sup>55</sup> DV 22.12 [Leon. 22/3.642:111–15]: “[I]psa voluntas, cum fertur super potentias animae, fertur in eas ut in res quasdam quibus convenit motus et operatio, et inclinatur unamquamque in propriam operationem”; SCG 1.55 [Leon. 13.157]: “[A]ppetitus enim alias potentias in actum movet in agentibus per voluntatem”; ST Ia-IIae, 9.1 [Leon. 6.74]: “Et ideo ex hac parte voluntas movet alias potentias animae ad suos actus, utimur enim aliis potentiis cum volumus. Nam fines et perfectiones omnium aliarum potentiarum comprehenduntur sub obiecto voluntatis, sicut quaedam particularia bona”; see also ST Ia, 82.4, ad 1 [Leon. 5.303]: “Ex his ergo apparet ratio quare hae potentiae suis actibus invicem se includunt: quia intellectus intelligit voluntatem velle, et voluntas vult intellectum intelligere.”

<sup>56</sup> ST Ia, 84.7 [Leon. 5.325]: “Videmus enim quod, impedito actu virtutis imaginativae per laesionem organi, ut in phreneticis; et similiter impedito actu memorativae virtutis, ut in lethargicis; impeditur homo ab intelligendo in actu etiam ea quorum scientiam praecepit”; and see *In De an.* II.11, cited above in note 51. The exercise of cognitive habits is still possible in the next life, however, even though the soul has been

intellect with phantasms, someone imprisoned in a dark dungeon (or perhaps even someone in certain types of comas) can exercise his cognitive habits solely by an act of will.

*b. Intellectual memory*

Since the ultimate goal of this chapter is to elucidate habitual self-awareness, it may be helpful here to add a clarification concerning a special kind of habitual knowledge—the conservation of species in intellectual memory, to which habitual self-awareness is sometimes compared. Intellectual memory, as a power of the soul, is identical with the possible intellect.<sup>57</sup> For Thomas, once a species is received into the possible intellect, it remains there quasi-permanently, even when not actively employed in consideration.<sup>58</sup> Informing the intellect, the species perfects the intellect so that it can consider the corresponding nature at will.<sup>59</sup> The species is thus a quasi-permanent quality inhering in the intellect that disposes the intellect to its natural operation of consideration—and this is the same description that we have seen Thomas give regarding cognitive habits. Though Thomas never explicitly calls the species a habit, he does say that it is “habitually retained” in the mind,<sup>60</sup> and the intellect informed with species that it is not currently using for actual

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separated from its organ of imagination, because it then operates according to the intellectual mode of a separate substance; see *ST* Ia, 89.6.

<sup>57</sup> See *ST* Ia, 79.7 [Leon. 5.273]: “Unde patet quod memoria non est alia potentia ab intellectu, ad rationem enim potentiae passivae pertinet conservare, sicut et recipere”; as well as 79.5, and *DV* 10.2.

<sup>58</sup> *ST* Ia, 79.6 [Leon. 5.270]: “Intellectus autem est magis stabilis naturae et immobilis, quam materia corporalis. Si ergo materia corporalis formas quas recipit, non solum tenet dum per eas agit in actu, sed etiam postquam agere per eas cessaverit; multo fortius intellectus immobiliter et inamissibiliter recipit species intelligibiles”; and an identical argument in *DV* 10.2. Compare *ST* Ia-IIae, 49.2, ad 3 [Leon. 6.311]: “[N]omen habitus diuturnitatem quandam importat.”

<sup>59</sup> *ST* Ia, 79.6 [Leon. 5.270]: “Ex hoc ergo quod recipit species intelligibilium, habet quod possit operari cum voluerit, non autem quod semper operetur: quia et tunc est quodammodo in potentia, licet aliter quam ante intelligere; eo scilicet modo quo sciens in habitu est in potentia ad considerandum in actu”; cf. also *DV* 10.2 and 10.8, ad 11.

<sup>60</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 1 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.324:445–47]: “[E]x specie habitualiter in mente retenta inest menti ut possit actualiter rem illam considerare.”

consideration is said to be “in a habitual state” (*in habitu*) or “habitually knowing.”<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, he notes that the species themselves are the formal elements of a habit of science,<sup>62</sup> and that “when someone has a habit of science, the species are in the intellect in a middle way between pure potency and pure act.”<sup>63</sup> Thus either the species are habits, or they are had by the intellect in the manner of habits or as the formal components of habits.

Now, since knowledge is the union of knower and known, and since for human beings this knowledge always requires a species, the claim that a species can be present in the intellect without causing actual knowledge might seem perplexing. But Thomas explains that in addition to being present in the intellect, the species also has to be *used* “as befits the things of which they are the species, which [things] are natures existing in particulars.”<sup>64</sup> This “fitting use,” in fact, involves the same conversion to the phantasms that

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<sup>61</sup> *ST Ia*, 79.6, ad 3 [Leon. 5.271]: “[S]pecies intelligibilis aliquando est in intellectu in potentia tantum, et tunc dicitur intellectus esse in potentia. Aliquando autem secundum ultimam completionem actus, et tunc intelligit actu. Aliquando medio modo se habet inter potentiam et actum, et tunc dicitur esse intellectus in habitu. Et secundum hunc modum intellectus conservat species, etiam quando actu non intelligit”; *ST Ia*, 79.7, ad 2 [Leon. 5.273]: “[M]emoriā [Augustinus] accipit pro habituali animae retentione, intelligentiam autem pro actu intellectus, voluntatem autem pro actu voluntatis”; and ad 3: “[I]ntelligentia oritur ex memoria, sicut actus ex habitu. Et hoc modo etiam aequatur ei; non autem sicut potentia potentiae”; *DV* 10.2, ad 4 [Leon. 22/2.302:200–204]: “[Q]uandoque vero est imperfecte in actu [speciei], scilicet quodam modo medio inter puram potentiam et purum actum, et hoc est habitualiter cognoscere.”

<sup>62</sup> *ST Ia-IIae*, 67.2 [Leon. 6.439]: “Unde quantum ad ipsa phantasmata, quae sunt quasi materialia in virtutibus intellectualibus, virtutes intellectuales destruuntur, destructo corpore: sed quantum ad species intelligibiles, quae sunt in intellectu possibili, virtutes intellectuales manent. Species autem se habent in virtutibus intellectualibus sicut formales. Unde intellectuales virtutes manent post hanc vitam, quantum ad id quod est formale in eis, non autem quantum ad id quod est materiale.” In *DV* 10.2, Thomas reports with apparent approbation the view of those who hold that “[S]pecies intelligibiles in intellectu possibili remanent post actuale considerationem, et harum ordinatio est habitus scientiae” [Leon. 22/2.301:175–79].

<sup>63</sup> *In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.209:48–50]: “[C]um autem habet habitum scientie, sunt species in intellectu medio modo inter potentiam puram et actum purum.”

<sup>64</sup> See *ST Ia*, 84.7, ad 1 [Leon. 5.325]: “[S]pecies conservatae in intellectu possibili, in eo existunt habitualiter quando actu non intelligit, sicut supra dictum est. Unde ad hoc quod intelligamus in actu, non sufficit ipsa conservatio specierum; sed oportet quod eis utamur secundum quod convenit rebus quarum sunt species, quae sunt naturae in particularibus existentes.” See also *DV* 10.2, ad 7 [Leon. 22/2.302:216–30]: “[N]ulla potentia potest aliquid cognoscere nisi convertendo se ad obiectum suum . . . quantumcumque aliquam speciem intelligibilem apud se intellectus habeat, nunquam tamen actu aliquid considerat secundum illam speciem, nisi convertendo se ad phantasma. Et ideo, sicut intellectus noster secundum statum viae indiget phantasmatis ad actu considerandum antequam accipiat habitum, ita et postquam acceperit.”



is required in exercising all cognitive habits. Still, it is particularly tempting to view the conserved species as including some subliminal actual knowledge of the relevant objects. *DV* 10.2, ad 4, lends itself to this interpretation: just because a species is present in the intellect, “it does not follow that [something] always is understood according to that species, but only when the possible intellect is perfectly rendered into the act of the species; sometimes, however, [the intellect] is imperfectly in the act of the species, namely in some middle way between pure potency and pure act. And this is to know habitually.”<sup>65</sup> It certainly seems here as though the intellect is partially actualized by a conserved species, and that this actualization is merely completed in the actual consideration of an object through the same species in conjunction with the phantasm.

Indeed, the conserved species does constitute a partial actualization, but not a partial *operation*. Habit, as a form, is ordered towards the form of operation, and therefore it cannot be the same form as the form of operation; otherwise it would be ordered towards itself, and any less-than-perfect operation would be a habit. Thus the species perfects the intellect in three ways. First (from an ontological perspective), it inheres in the possible intellect as a quality inheres in another quality. Second (from a cognitive perspective), as *stored*, its simple presence in the intellect does not achieve actual knowing but only orders the intellect thereto. It subjectively perfects the intellect in readiness for actual consideration, by granting it a likeness to the known object (its form), but not a union with

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<sup>65</sup> *DV* 10.2, ad 4 [Leon. 22/2.302:196–206]: “Nec tamen sequitur quod semper intelligatur secundum illam speciem, sed solum quando intellectus possibilis perfecte fit in actu illius speciei. Quandoque vero est imperfecte in actu eius scilicet quodammodo medio inter puram potentiam et purum actum. Et hoc est habitualiter cognoscere: et de hoc modo cognitionis reducitur in actum perfectum per voluntatem, quae, secundum Anselmum, est motor omnium virium.” See also *ST* Ia, 107.1 [Leon. 5.488], where Thomas clarifies: “Intelligibile autem est in intellectu tripliciter, primo quidem, habitualiter, vel secundum memoriam, ut Augustinus dicit; secundo autem, ut in actu consideratum vel conceptum; tertio, ut ad aliud relatum.”

the object, which is the nature *in the particular*. At this point, “the perfect” has not yet become “the best.”<sup>66</sup> This, then, is what it means to “know habitually” through a conserved species. Third (again from a cognitive perspective), as *used in actual consideration*, the species perfects the intellect in a different way in conjunction with the phantasm illuminated by the agent intellect. Here the species mediates an immanent operation, granting union with the object, so that the intellect gazes upon its object. This act of consideration is the ultimately perfect act of the intellect because it is in potency to no other act: it is the “final completion of act” or “final perfection” of the intellect,<sup>67</sup> in which attention is deliberately turned towards something so that the intellect may behold it as its object.

Thus the possession of a cognitive habit (including habitually conserved species) does render the corresponding object present to the intellect. This presence, however, is not one that actualizes the soul in operation, but a qualitatively different type of presence that arises from the soul’s subjective state of perfection, in which it is ordered towards the operation by the habit. To return to *ST Ia*, 8.3, where Thomas argues that items throughout a whole house are “present” to a dweller, wherever in the house he might be, it is now clear that this presence is not grounded in the *objective proximity of the objects to the dweller* (otherwise it would seem that the the boundaries of presence are arbitrarily drawn to exclude items just outside the house). Rather, the presence of the objects is grounded in the *dweller’s subjective readiness to use them because he has familiarized himself with them*. Because of the habit that orders me to the previously-known objects in my environment, a habit commonly called familiarity, the plates in the cupboard are present to me even when

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. the texts cited above in note 34.

<sup>67</sup> See *ST Ia*, 79.6, ad 3, cited in note 61 above, as well as the texts cited above in note 35, and *SCG* 1.56 [Leon. 13.162]: “Intellectus habitualiter tantum cognoscens non est in sua ultima perfectione.”

the cupboard door is shut: and this is the reason that I always “know where they are” or “know right where to find them.” This knowledge is not an actual consideration, but a habit, a cognitive ordering of the soul towards the plates that allows me to reach for them whenever I want them without engaging in a search (*inquisitio*), and indeed without even necessarily thinking about them. (The situation is, of course, quite different when I am trying to make dinner in an unfamiliar kitchen.)

## **B. Habitual Self-Awareness as Ontological Identity**

### ***1. Why Habitual Self-Awareness is Habitual***

#### *a. A perfective disposition*

Having outlined Thomas’s views on habits, we can now see that Thomas’s description of habitual self-awareness in *DV* 10.8 is not nearly as peculiar as it may at first appear. When Thomas explains that the soul “sees itself through its essence” because “from the fact that its essence is present to it, it is capable of going forth (*potens exire*) into the act of cognition of itself,” he is simply applying principles from his general theory of habitual knowledge. Indeed, one of the ways in which something can be “present” to the intellect in the broad sense is just that it be habitually known (i.e., subjectively familiar). So when Thomas says that the soul “sees itself through its essence” insofar as “its essence is present to itself,” he does not mean that the soul actually sees itself. Nor does he mean that the soul is in a state of absolute potency to self-awareness. Rather, in accordance with the nature of all habitual knowledge, in habitual self-awareness the soul is actualized so as to be ready to engage in the operation of self-awareness whenever conditions permit. The soul’s self-presence therefore constitutes a familiarity with oneself, a habitual self-awareness that

grants permanent readiness for actual self-awareness. The soul's essence is always within its own range of vision or intellectual reach, though it is not always known—just as the items in my desk drawer are available to be used because I am familiar with their location, though I am not always using them.

Thus habitual self-awareness falls between sheer act and sheer potency in exactly the same way as habits of knowledge do. As an act, it is not a quantitatively reduced version of the operation of actual self-awareness, but rather a state of actualization that is qualitatively distinct from, and in potency to, the operation. As a potency with respect to the actual operation of self-awareness, it is the kind of relative potency that constitutes subjective “readiness” for knowledge, not the sheer potency that precedes learning.<sup>68</sup>

In fact, the soul has *never* had the experience of learning about itself for the first time. According to Thomas, following Augustine, habitual self-awareness constitutes a permanent “memory of self”<sup>69</sup> that predates any actualization by sense-data.<sup>70</sup> The soul

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<sup>68</sup> For the distinction between the potency that precedes learning and the potency of habitual knowledge, see *In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.208, at 429b5–9]: “Cum autem sic singula fiat ut sciens, dicitur qui secundum actum. Hoc autem confestim accidit cum possit operari per se ipsum. Est quidem igitur et tunc potencia quodam modo, non tamen similiter et ante addiscere aut inuenire.

<sup>69</sup> *DV* 8.14, ad 6 [Leon. 22/2.265:247–57]: “[S]icut Augustinus exponit seipsum in XV De Trinitate, hoc quod dixerat in X libro quod ‘mens nostra semper sui meminit, semper se intelligit, semper se vult,’ ad interiorem memoriam est referendum. Unde anima nostra non semper actualiter se intelligit; sed mens angeli semper actualiter se intelligit; quod ideo contingit quia mens angeli intelligit se per essentiam suam, qua semper informatur, mens autem nostra forte intelligit quodammodo per intentionem.” Note that “intentio” here probably should be taken to mean “species,” since it is contrasted here with knowledge *per essentiam*. The Augustinian text in question is actually *De Trin.* 14.6.6 [CCSL 50A.432]: “Sed quoniam entem semper sui meminisse semperque se ipsam intellegere et amare, quamvis non semper se cogitare discretam ab eis quae non sunt quod ipsa est . . .” Aquinas here interprets Augustine’s *memoria* in the sense of intellectual retention, not the power of recall; though Arnou, *Le pouvoir de connaître la vérité*, 125, argues for Augustine, *memoria* is merely the power of recall.

<sup>70</sup> *DV* 10.2, ad 5 [Leon. 22/2.302:207–214]: “[M]ens est ad imaginem praecipue secundum quod fertur in Deum et in se ipsam; ipsa autem est sibi praesens et similiter Deus antequam aliqua species a sensibilibus accipiantur. Et praeterea mens non dicitur habere vim memorativam ex hoc quod aliquid actu teneat sed ex hoc quod est potens tenere.”

“always understands itself and loves itself, not actually, but habitually,”<sup>71</sup> in the sense of having always been familiar with itself. Phenomenologically, our experience of actualizing self-awareness is very similar to that of recalling a memory. Actual self-awareness is never the experience of learning something *new*—rather, I encounter my soul in its acts as something already familiar to me. My own existence is something that I had “known all along”—not as actually considering it, but as being habitually disposed towards such consideration. Habitual self-awareness thus grants a perpetual “familiarity” with oneself.

Habitual self-awareness is therefore the soul’s *familiarity* with itself (a characteristic pertaining to itself as knower), rather than the soul’s *availability* to be known (a characteristic pertaining to itself as known or intelligible). As the perfect disposition of the soul *qua* knower, habitual self-awareness is “the state of having all the internal mechanisms for actual knowledge in place.”<sup>72</sup> In habitual self-awareness, the soul is actualized to the extent that, *qua* knower, it fulfills all the conditions for self-awareness; it is only the essential passivity of the soul *qua* known that prevents actual self-awareness from occurring *per essentiam*. Thomas makes precisely this point in *DV* 24.4, ad 14: “Knowledge and love can be compared to the mind in two ways: one way, as to the one loving and knowing; and so they do not exceed the mind itself . . . In another way they can be compared to the mind as to the one loved and known; and in this way they exceed the mind.”<sup>73</sup> As knower, the soul is perfectly disposed for self-knowledge, such that its self-knowledge and self-love in

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<sup>71</sup> *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 4 [Leon. 5.410]: “Et sic patet quod anima semper intelligit et amat se, non actualiter, sed habitualiter.”

<sup>72</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 111.

<sup>73</sup> *DV* 24.4, ad 14 [Leon. 22/3.692:297–302]: “[N]otitia et amor dupliciter possunt comparari ad mentem. Uno modo ut ad amantem et cognoscentem; et sic ipsam mentem non excedunt, nec recedunt ab aliorum accidentium similitudine. Alio modo possunt comparari ad mentem ut ad amatam et cognitam; et sic excedunt mentem.”

no way exceed its abilities (just as a generous man has a capacity for a generous act in a different way from a stingy man's capacity for the same act). But as known, the soul is essentially unintelligible; hence actual self-awareness depends on the soul's actualization by a species abstracted from sense. Thus the perfect subjective disposition of the soul by habitual self-awareness is consistent with Thomas's insistence that the obstacle to actual self-awareness lies on the side of the soul *as known*.<sup>74</sup>

*b. The problem of exercise*

With respect to its exercise,<sup>75</sup> habitual self-awareness continues to follow the principles established in Thomas's general theory of habitual knowledge, though it is also here that we find one of the greatest interpretive problems in Thomas's theory of self-knowledge. As mentioned above, a habit, as "second nature," lends to its corresponding act the three characteristics of a natural act: consistency, pleasantness, and facility.<sup>76</sup> These characteristics are all found in actual self-awareness. For instance, actual self-awareness is consistent, occurring in each and every act of knowing. Just as heavy bodies always fall when not impeded, and just as a generous man always acts with generosity whenever money is concerned, so too the soul is always aware of its individual self whenever it is actualized

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<sup>74</sup> On this point see Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 78–85; and McKian, "The Metaphysics of Introspection," 97. On the passivity of the soul as known, see for instance *In De an.* III.4 [Leon. 45/1.216:65–68]: "[I]ntellectus possibilis est intelligibilis non per essenciam suam sed per aliquam speciem intelligibilem, sicut et alia *intelligibilia*"; *ST Ia*, 87.1 [Leon. 5.355]: "Intellectus . . . in sua essentia consideratus . . . habet virtutem ut intelligat, non autem ut intelligatur, nisi secundum quod fit actu . . . per species a sensibilibus rebus abstracta." Thus I disagree with Lambert's description of habitual self-awareness as a habitual intelligibility rather than a habitual intellection (Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 109; cf. 106). The same error appears in Ruane, "Self-Knowledge and the Spirituality of the Soul," 425; and Gardeil, "Examen de conscience," 161ff., and "Perception expérimentale," 223–24 (the latter being thoroughly critiqued by Putallaz in the text just mentioned).

<sup>75</sup> To avoid confusion, it must be remembered that the "exercise" of a habit means the actualization of the power in the corresponding operation; the "exercise of habitual self-awareness" is not "engagement in habitual self-awareness," but the actualization of the intellect in the operation of actual self-awareness.

<sup>76</sup> See the texts cited in note 38 above.

in sensation or intellection. Actual self-awareness is also pleasant. Commenting on *Nic. Ethic.* 9.9, Thomas points out: “And thus it is evident that because to live is choiceworthy—above all to those good men to whom it is good and delightful to exist—also it is delightful to them to perceive that they sense and understand; because together with this they feel in themselves that which in itself is good for them, namely existing and living; and in this they delight.”<sup>77</sup> Natural acts are delightful, because through them one fulfils one’s nature and attains one’s end. Thus acts proceeding from second nature, i.e., habit, are likewise pleasant. Self-awareness, indeed, is even more natural than the acts proceeding from habits since it springs from the soul’s own self-presence and not from some acquired habit (see §2 below); it is thus maximally pleasant.

Facility, too, belongs to actual self-awareness, in that one perceives one’s own existence without searching for it,<sup>78</sup> i.e., directly. Of course, although objects known through habits are known directly, typically the habit itself must be acquired through reasoning. But because habitual self-awareness is the soul’s very self-presence and therefore does not have to be acquired, there was no point at which one had to learn about one’s own existence in order to develop a habit for perceiving it. Consequently actual self-awareness can only be direct.

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<sup>77</sup> *In Ethic.* IX.11 [Leon. 47/2.540:109–113]: “[Q]uod autem aliquis sentiat bonum esse in se ipso est delectabile. Et sic patet quod cum vivere sit eligibile et maxime bonis quibus est bonum esse et delectabile, quod etiam percipere se sentire et intelligere est eis delectabile, quia simul cum hoc sentiunt id quod est eis secundum se bonum, scilicet esse et vivere, et in hoc delectantur.”

<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Thomas contrasts actual self-awareness frequently with the laboriously-achieved knowledge of one’s own essence: see for instance *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 87.1.

From the perspective of the directness of actual self-awareness, then, the facility of exercising habitual self-awareness is indisputable.<sup>79</sup> But from the perspective of the habit's exercise, this facility conceals one of the major problems associated with Thomas's view of habitual self-awareness: how exactly *is* habitual self-awareness exercised, and is it really exercised "at will"? As we have seen Thomas repeatedly emphasize, facility of exercise consists in the fact that the habituated soul can exercise the habit spontaneously, "whenever it wishes," a principle evoked in the assertion of *DV* 10.8 that "from the fact that its essence is present to it, [the soul] is capable of going forth into an act of knowing itself."<sup>80</sup> Yet Thomas insists that the soul cannot engage in actual self-awareness before being actualized by an abstracted species.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, if habitual self-awareness rendered the soul capable of knowing itself at will, it ought to be able to engage spontaneously in an act of self-awareness without waiting for input from the senses. Thus Thomas appears to be caught on the horns of a dilemma: if habitual self-awareness cannot be exercised at will, it is not habitual; but if it can be exercised at will, actual self-awareness does not depend on the intellect's actualization by the senses. The first option threatens the directness of actual self-awareness. The second option entails that self-awareness occur *per essentiam*, a position that Aquinas repeatedly rejects.

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<sup>79</sup> Lambert, indeed, takes facility to be an important reason that habitual self-awareness is described as a habit at all (see "Habitual Knowledge," 11). Still takes this point much farther (and in my opinion much too far) to suggest that the experience of facility is the *only* connection between habitual self-awareness and other habits: "The rationale for terming it 'habitual' lies no doubt in the analogy between it and acquired habits, which allow one possessing them to pass easily into acts of these habits" (see "Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge," 33).

<sup>80</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:234–41]: "Sed quantum ad habitualement cognitionem, sic dico, quod anima per essentiam suam se videt, id est ex hoc ipso quod essentia sua est sibi praesens est potens exire in actum cognitionis sui ipsius; sicut aliquis ex hoc quod habet habitum alicuius scientiae, ex ipsa praesentia habitus, est potens percipere illa quae subsunt illi habitui."

<sup>81</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 4 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.325:500–503]: "[A]nima est sibi ipsi praesens ut intelligibilis, id est ut intelligi possit; non autem ut per seipsam intelligatur, sed ex objecto suo, ut dictum est."



This aporia, not surprisingly, gives rise to various conflicting interpretations regarding the exercise of habitual self-awareness.<sup>82</sup> Yet to my knowledge, only Deborah Brown's article "Aquinas's Missing Flying Man" has thoroughly examined the problem with attention to its implications. Brown points out that it seems inconsistent for Aquinas to maintain that cognitive habits are exercised by the will, that the human soul has habitual self-awareness, and that the human soul *cannot exercise this habitual awareness without being actualized by species gleaned from sensations*.<sup>83</sup> By way of solution, Brown notes that for Aquinas, self-awareness is a second-order act, dependent upon first-order acts directed towards the world.<sup>84</sup> She therefore concludes that habitual self-awareness can be exercised at will whenever the conditions are ripe for a second-order act, i.e., only when a first-order act is present.

But while Brown's identification of the problem is right on target, her solution only repeats the problem she identifies. It answers the question "Why is self-awareness additionally dependent on the intellect's actualization by a species of something else?" by merely restating that it *is* thus dependent, in the vocabulary of first-order vs. second-order

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<sup>82</sup> For instance, Lambert argues that habitual self-awareness is less easily exercised than ordinary habits, since its exercise relies on external stimuli and not just on an act of the will: "The 'ability of entering into' experience of the soul is really a *proximate* ability, which has at hand all the materials for knowledge and needs only a simple external stimulus" ("Habitual Knowledge," 11; see Brown's critique in "Aquinas's Missing Flying Man," 25. Note, however, that in the parallel passage on p. 108 of ch. 5 of his book *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, which is heavily based on the earlier article, Lambert omits the mention of external stimuli in order to draw a parallel between the exercise of ordinary habits by will, and the exercise of habitual self-awareness by "an act of consciousness," thus minimizing the implied contrast that Brown had identified in his earlier discussion of the topic). McKian, conversely, claims that the exercise of habitual self-awareness is more spontaneous than that of other habits, due to the "naturally necessary presence of the soul to its faculty of intellect" ("The Metaphysics of Introspection," 104).

<sup>83</sup> See Brown, "Aquinas's Missing Flying Man," 24–26.

<sup>84</sup> "It is through being aware of its first order acts, made possible by the essence of the soul which has as one of its powers habitual knowledge of itself, that the soul is at the same time aware of itself. *But second order acts presuppose the existence of first order acts*. Hence there can be no actual knowledge of the soul prior to knowledge of objects through intelligible species" (Brown, "Aquinas's Missing Flying Man," 26).

acts. Her solution fails to account for the role of the will in the exercise of habitual self-awareness: if the will does play a role, what is it? And if not, why is the will excluded from this exercise alone?

In order to answer these more fundamental questions, we need to analyze the psychological structure that underlies the exercise of habitual self-awareness. This will make it possible, I believe, to offer a different solution: namely, that self-awareness is exercised at two distinct levels. At the first, it is exercised naturally and spontaneously, and at the second, it is exercised by a conscious decision of the will. In order to make this clear, I will begin my analysis by clarifying why the will is uniquely positioned in the exercise of self-awareness and suggesting a parallel with a natural habit that likewise seems to be exercised at two levels.

*Spontaneous exercise and the role of the will.* As noted above, the exercise of a cognitive habit is entirely in the will's power (assuming an undamaged organ of imagination), because the will is able to move all the powers of the soul.<sup>85</sup> Thus when I choose to think about photosynthesis, what happens is that my will moves my intellect to consider this phenomenon, while (or perhaps by) moving my imagination to present the relevant phantasms. But why do I decide to think about photosynthesis? For Thomas, the decision by which the will moves the intellect to consider something is itself motivated by the intellect. While the interrelationship of will and intellect according to Thomas is far too complex to address here, his mature position can be summarized briefly as follows: while the will is what moves the intellect finally and efficiently to its proper operation of considering an object, the will itself is formally moved by the good presented by the

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<sup>85</sup> See note 55 above.

intellect.<sup>86</sup> What this means for the exercise of a cognitive habit is that when the will commands the intellect to consider an object, it does so only because the intellect has perceived such a consideration to be good and therefore desirable (for instance, in studying for a botany exam, I realize that I should review photosynthesis; my intellect thus presents the consideration of photosynthesis as a good, and the will then moves my intellect to consider it).

Now, in order to exercise habitual self-awareness, the will would have to move the intellect to consider itself (which would involve moving the imagination to present some phantasm for abstraction, so that the intellect could be actualized). But the will cannot issue such a command unless it is motivated by a good perceived by the intellect. In other words, the intellect must *already be in the act of perceiving that good* in order for the will to be active. But as we have repeatedly emphasized, *whenever the intellect is in act, it is already perceiving itself*.<sup>87</sup> Thus it would seem that the act of the will is superfluous in exercising

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<sup>86</sup> There has been considerable discussion among scholars of whether Thomas held this position continuously throughout his life, or whether he only adopted it after the Condemnations of 1270. Odin Lottin, “Liberté humaine et motion divine de S. Thomas d’Aquin à la condamnation de 1277,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 7 (1935), for instance, argued that *DV* evinces intellectual determinism, with the intellect exercising both formal and finality causality on the will (55–56), and that Thomas offers a radically different and more voluntarist theory in *DM*, where intellect exercises only formal causality (162–63). Others have argued that there was no significant development; rather, Thomas only shifted the perspective and terminology of his discussion of free decision; see David M. Gallagher, “Thomas Aquinas on the Causes of Human Choice” (doctoral dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1988), 302–5; and Daniel Westberg, “Did Aquinas Change His Mind on the Will?” *The Thomist* 58 (1994): 41–60, who offers an excellent summary of the historical debate and a solution emphasizing the continuity of Thomas’s doctrine. For some of the relevant texts, see *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3 [Moos 3.704]; *In Sent.* IV.17.1.3.3 [Moos 4.841]; *DV* 22.12 [Leon. 22/3.642:76–117]; *ST* Ia, 82.4, ad 1 [Leon. 5.303]; *ST* Ia-IIae, 9.1 [Leon. 6.74]; *DM* 6, ad 18 [Leon. 23.152:645–52].

<sup>87</sup> See for instance the discussion in Ch. II, §C.2.a. See also *ST* Ia, 111.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.516]: “[E]x parte rei intellectae . . . quicumque intelligit vel illuminatur, cognoscit se intelligere vel illuminari; quia cognoscit rem sibi esse manifestam”; *DV* 8.6 [Leon. 22/2.238:139–42]: “Sicut ergo corpus lucidum lucet quando est lux actu in ipso, ita intellectus intelligit omne illud quod est actu intelligibile in ipso” (the context of the article suggests that the intellect becomes intelligible by intellection); *DV* 10.8, ad 10 s.c., cited below in note 154; *DV* 18.1, ad 10, cited below in note 151; and *In Ethic.* III.3 [Leon. 47/1.127:165–67]: “[M]anifestum est, quod non potest ignorare quis sit operans, quia sic ignoraret se ipsum, quod est impossibile”; *ST* Ia, 14.2,

self-awareness; the habit is automatically exercised whenever the intellect knows anything, thus preempting exercise by the will. Still, experience rebels at this conclusion. We *do* experience the ability to think about ourselves at will; for instance, while writing this chapter I can decide to stop and reflect on my own self-knowledge to see if Thomas's account adequately explains it.

Instead of trying to explain the will out of the exercise of habitual self-awareness, I think a better answer would be to posit two levels at which habitual self-awareness is exercised. This implies, of course, a distinction between implicit and explicit (or nonintentional and intentional) self-awareness. I will offer further arguments for this distinction in section C; for now I merely focus on showing that this is the best way to explain how habitual self-awareness is and is not exercised at will. Indeed, this model is precisely the one Thomas uses to explain the exercise of the habit of first principles.

*Comparison to the habit of first principles.*<sup>88</sup> The natural habit of "intellection of first principles" presents similar difficulties regarding voluntary exercise. In discussing the habit of intellection, Thomas repeatedly says that it is actualized *statim* (a word that refers

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ad 3 [Leon. 4.169]: "Et sic intelligit seipsum per speciem intelligibilem, sicut et alia: manifestum est enim quod ex eo quod cognoscit intelligibile, intelligit ipsum suum intelligere, et per actum cognoscit potentiam intellectivam"; and *ST Ia*, 87.1 [Leon. 5.355–56]: "[C]onsequens est ut sic seipsum intelligat intellectus noster, secundum quod fit actu per species a sensibilibus abstractas per lumen intellectus agentis, quod est actus ipsorum intelligibilium, et eis mediantibus intellectus possibilis"; *ST Ia*, 93.7, ad 4 [Leon. 5.410], for instance: "Quamvis etiam dici possit quod, percipiendo actum suum, seipsam intelligit quandocumque aliquid intelligit." Thomas makes a similar point with respect to loving one's own love: "Sed amor etiam ex ratione propriae speciei habet quod supra se reflectatur, quia est spontaneus motus amantis in amatum; unde ex hoc ipso quod amat aliquis, amat se amare" (*ST IIa-IIae*, 25.2 [Leon. 8.199]; see also *In Sent.* I.17.1.4).

<sup>88</sup> Putallaz offers a detailed and very helpful analysis of the habit of first principles in *Le sens de la réflexion*, 135–42. (He does not, however, note any similarities with habitual self-awareness, but addresses it instead in the context of the judgment of one's nature, to be discussed in Chapter IV.) For other discussions of this habit of first principles, see Péghaire, *Intellectus et ratio*, 192–96; and Leon Spruit, *Species intelligibilis: From Perception to Knowledge* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 167: "This *lumen* [of the agent intellect] is an innate capacity which does not entail *actual* cognition of first principles; for this reason, the latter are usually referred to by Thomas as *indita* rather than as *innata*. Since the first principles virtually include all possible knowledge, however, the (possible) intellect knows all things potentially."

both to instantaneity in time, as well as to lack of discursion; it is normally translated

“immediately,” though it actually corresponds to the term “directly” as defined in Chapter II,

§B):

What is *per se* known is had as a principle; and it is perceived directly (*statim*) by the intellect. And therefore the habit perfecting the intellect for the consideration of this truth is called ‘intellection,’ which is the habit of principles (Ia-IIae, 57.2).<sup>89</sup>

‘Intellection’ . . . is a habit by which man, from the power of the light of the agent intellect naturally knows indemonstrable principles . . . For principles of this sort are directly (*statim*) known when their terms are known. For when it is known what a whole and what a part are, it is instantly known that every whole is greater than its part.” . . . And thus the cognition of principles that directly (*statim*) become known when the quiddity of the terms is known is fittingly named *intellectus* (*In VI Ethic.*).<sup>90</sup>

According to Thomas, *per se* known principles are grasped together with their terms, *statim*.

One cannot help knowing that the whole is greater than its part, as soon as one has grasped the terms ‘whole’ and ‘part.’ This is why first principles are said to be “naturally known.”<sup>91</sup>

The apprehension of the terms ‘whole’ and ‘part’ already constitutes a grasp of the principle.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *ST* Ia-IIae, 57.2 [Leon. 6.365]: “Quod autem est per se notum, se habet ut principium; et percipitur statim ab intellectu. Et ideo habitus perficiens intellectum ad huiusmodi veri considerationem, vocatur *intellectus*, qui est habitus principiorum.”

<sup>90</sup> *In Ethic.* VI.5 [Leon. 47/2.349:50–63]: “Accipitur autem hic intellectus . . . pro habitu quodam quo homo ex virtute luminis intellectus agentis naturaliter cognoscit principia indemonstrabilia. Et satis congruit nomen: huiusmodi enim principia statim cognoscuntur cognitis terminis, cognito enim quid est totum et quid pars statim scitur quod omne totum est maius sua parte; dicitur autem intellectus ex eo quod intus legit intuendo essentiam rei. . . . et sic convenienter cognitio principiorum quae statim innotescunt cognito quod quid est circa terminos intellectus nominatur.” See also *In De an.* II.11 [Leon. 45/1.113:229–34]: “[H]omo enim per lumen intellectus agentis statim cognoscit actu prima principia naturaliter cognita et, dum ex eis conclusiones elicit, per hoc quod actu scit uenit in actualem cognitionem eorum quae potencia sciebat.”

<sup>91</sup> *ST* Ia-IIe, 58.4: “Per intellectum enim cognoscuntur principia naturaliter nota.”

<sup>92</sup> Of course, not all first principles are as subjectively obvious as “*Omne totum est maius sua parte*” or “*Quae uni et eidem sunt aequalia, sibi invicem sunt aequalia.*” As Thomas points out in *ST* Ia-IIae, 94.2 [Leon. 7.169], though some principles are self-evident in themselves to everyone, such as the latter principles, others, though self-evident in themselves, sometimes can only be attained by reasoning by the less well-educated: “Quaedam vero propositiones sunt per se notae solis sapientibus, qui terminos propositionum intelligunt quid significant: sicut intelligendi quod angelus non est corpus, per se notum est quod non est circumscriptive in loco, quod non est manifestum rudibus, qui hoc non capiunt.” Another classic example is the existence of God, which is self-evident in itself but not self-evident to any human being, due to our lack of understanding of the terms: see *ST* Ia, 2.1. Tuninetti provides a helpful summary of Thomas’s doctrine on this point in *Per se notum*, see especially 24–26.

Yet this natural, direct grasp of the principle does not preclude my choosing later on to think about the principle. In the text above from Ia-IIae, 57.2, Thomas does seem to distinguish the “direct perception” (*statim*) of the principle in its terms from the “consideration of this truth,” to which the habit is ultimately ordered. The habit of intellection perfects the intellect so that in grasping the terms, it cannot help but grasp the principle “every whole is greater than its parts.” But experience shows that although we grasped ‘whole’ and ‘part’ early in childhood, we do not “consider” the principle “every whole is greater than its parts” until we learn to articulate it, perhaps in high school or even in college, in a math or philosophy class. At that point, the consideration of the principle seems to be merely the articulation of what we had already known before. But the habit for intellection was not itself a knowledge of this principle; rather, it merely disposed the intellect to know this principle.

Thus the exercise of the habit of intellection occurs at two levels: first, its ordering makes possible a grasp of first principles every time their terms are grasped. At this level, the intellect instantly and spontaneously perceives a principle in its terms, without considering it explicitly. Second, the habit’s ordering also makes possible a consideration of these first principles; yet because the intellect spontaneously appropriates the principle while grasping its terms, by the time the intellect considers the principle explicitly, it has already “known” the principle in the first way for a long time. It is this second level, active consideration, that constitutes the ultimate goal of the habit of intellection (*viz.*, it is the act properly corresponding to the habit), even though the order provided by the habit already yields another, earlier operation.

*Facility as spontaneity (first moment of self-awareness).* The exercise of habitual self-awareness, I would argue, follows the same pattern as the natural habit of intellection. Before a child's intellect is informed for the first time by a species of a sensed object, the intellect is formless, but ready to perceive itself (habitually self-aware). Then in the instant in which the intellect is first formed by a species, it spontaneously perceives itself directly and immediately, for as an immaterial being, it takes on the form of another as its own form, and therefore cannot help but perceive itself in perceiving the other. At this first level of self-awareness, habitual self-awareness is exercised spontaneously: the intellect's subjective disposition for self-awareness is fulfilled in the instant that the intellect becomes intelligible. In other words, the soul exercises habitual self-awareness whenever the conditions for exercise (presentation of a phantasm) are fulfilled, without waiting for the will to move the other powers of the soul in order to satisfy these conditions. Since the presentation of *any* phantasm will serve for actual self-awareness, the soul must be self-aware even before any act of the will is even possible. Thus whenever I know *anything*, I am already actually self-aware in some sense.

But since it is the will that directs attention,<sup>93</sup> this spontaneous self-awareness cannot be an attentive *consideration* of oneself. Rather, the soul's attention is focused on the object to which the actualizing species belongs (say, the sunset); actual self-awareness simply comes along, unnoticed, with that act of knowing. Thus at this first level, self-awareness

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<sup>93</sup> See texts cited above in note 55. Still, it is possible for the soul's attention to be dragged about by the other powers: see *ST Ia-IIae*, 77.2, where Thomas notes that the passions, or conditions of the body such as sleep or drunkenness, or infirmity, can all capture the soul's attention if not held firmly in check. I shall not, however, address this point here.

occurs spontaneously; it is not habitual, but actual; yet it is not an attentive consideration. (For now, I merely state these distinctions but will offer further explanation in §C below).

A further point of clarification: because the self-awareness spontaneously achieved at this level occurs within the context of an outer-directed act, it may appear that the object of this act constitutes an external condition for the exercise of habitual self-awareness. In a way this is true, and in a way false. This object is indeed the condition of knowing, but not *qua* external: only *qua* actualizing the intellect.<sup>94</sup> It just so happens that the species whereby the intellect is actualized (setting aside supernaturally infused species) must have been derived from a phantasm, which in turn relies for its content on extramental objects of sense. But even if all extramental objects are annihilated half-way through my bodily life, the conditions for self-awareness can still be fulfilled. I can still think of the vanished universe by means of stored species in conjunction with presented phantasms: and self-awareness necessarily occurs alongside this actual consideration. Thus the exercise of habitual self-awareness, even at this first level, does not require some additional condition *external to the structure of human psychology* to be fulfilled beyond the will's decision (except insofar as the contents of the phantasm must at some point have originated in the sensation of some external object). Rather, as in the exercise of any cognitive habit, the proximate condition

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<sup>94</sup> Compare here with Still's claim: "That it can return to its own act is owing to the presence of the soul's essence to the mind, but inasmuch as the impetus for his initial self-cognitive act arises from the mind's concern with the world, it is more properly thought of as arising from an extramental source than from an intramental source, like the essence of the soul" ("Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge," 34). If by this Still means that self-awareness is dependent on knowing an object outside oneself, that is true. But if he means by this that a given act of self-awareness must be elicited by some external object *right now*, I must disagree, for the reasons given above.



for exercising habitual self-awareness is the actualization of the intellect by the relevant species in conjunction with the relevant phantasm.

*Facility as voluntary exercise (second moment of self-awareness).* A second level of self-awareness is attained when my will, in pursuit of a good perceived as such by my intellect, decides to exercise habitual self-awareness so as to *consider* my individual existing self in my acts. For instance, while watching a sunset, I might turn my attention to myself, savoring my own experience of the sunset. Thus at the first level, I might say, “The sunset is beautiful!” (a perception necessarily including an unnoticed self-awareness)—but at the second level, I might say, “I can’t believe I am here in Florida watching this beautiful sunset!” This shift in attention is governed by the will, desiring the good of a heightened pleasure in perception. Or later on, someone might ask me how I liked Florida; in order to respond, my will directs the intellect to consider myself as the subject of a remembered act, and I respond, “I enjoyed the sunset the most.”

Thus habitual self-awareness, like the habit of intellection of first principles, is exercised at two levels. Thomas seems to imply these two levels of exercise in *DV* 10.8, when he states that habitual self-awareness is that whereby the soul both “perceives itself to exist” (first level) and “attends to what occurs within itself”<sup>95</sup> (second level). At the first level, it is exercised spontaneously whenever the intellect is actualized in an operation directed towards an external object; perception of oneself as subject constitutes an unnoticed part of the other-directed operation. At the second level, it is exercised by the will to consider one’s singular self. Habitual self-awareness is most properly ordered towards this

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<sup>95</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:241–322:246]: “Ad hoc autem quod percipiat anima se esse, et quid in seipsa agatur attendat, non requiritur aliquis habitus; sed ad hoc sufficit sola essentia animae, quae menti est praesens: ex ea enim actus progrediuntur, in quibus actualiter ipsa percipitur.”

actual consideration, since consideration of something as the object of knowledge is the most complete way of actually knowing it. But because of the unique structure of self-awareness (because actualization by any species is a necessary and sufficient condition for the intellect's intelligibility), the soul cannot even will to consider itself actually without having already perceived itself implicitly in the act of understanding that motivates the will's decision, as well as in the act of willing its attention to self-awareness.

As we shall see, the distinction between these two levels of actual self-awareness (which I shall equate with a distinction between nonintentional and intentional, or implicit and explicit, self-awareness) is quite controversial. But it also sheds light on several problems, including Thomas's interpretation of Augustine's troublesome "self-familiarity" (*se nosse*), the reflexivity of self-awareness, and apparent contradictions in the texts concerning the number of acts belonging to self-awareness. I shall explore more problems associated with this distinction, and offer further justification for my position, in §C below.

## **2. *Why Habitual Self-Awareness is not a Habit***

So far, we have seen that Aquinas's description of habitual self-awareness remains true to his general theory of habits. Habitual self-awareness is a "self-vision" or "presence of oneself to oneself" in the sense that it perfects the intellect for operation, rendering the intellect subjectively ready to know itself. Its exercise is consistent, pleasant, and easy; moreover, it can be exercised at will (though it is already exercised implicitly in advance of volition in every intellectual act, similarly to the habit of first principles). Thus, as Romeyer puts it:

One can conclude that Aquinas made a fortunate decision in choosing to compare our soul's innate disposition to know itself experientially throughout the course of its spiritual activity to an acquired cognitive *habitus*. This disposition is, as it were, an original and essential

capital, which would never yield a return were it not stimulated by an understanding of external objects. Our soul only awakes to itself when it opens its eyes upon the outside world, but it is truly to *itself* that it awakes, and to which it is *habitually disposed by nature to awake*.<sup>96</sup>

What makes habitual self-awareness so intriguing and perplexing, however, is that whereas other habits are accidental qualities added to the soul, habitual self-awareness is no accident. Rather, it belongs to the soul *substantially*.<sup>97</sup> In other words, habitual self-awareness is identical to all other types of habitual knowledge in every respect—except in being a habit, i.e., a species of quality, an accidental form. (This is probably why Thomas always says that it is habitual, but never calls it a *habit*.<sup>98</sup>)

From this one should not conclude, however, that habitual self-awareness is only described as habitual insofar as it bears some superficial resemblance to acquired habits.<sup>99</sup> Rather, there is a genuine analogy (in the sense of a real ontological kinship, not a metaphorical similarity) between habitual self-awareness and habits of knowledge. Habitual self-awareness involves precisely the same ordered perfection, the same subjective actualization and readiness for operation, that is granted by a habit. The difference is that

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<sup>96</sup> Romeyer, “Connaissance de l’esprit humain,” (1928), 59: “Il est juste de conclure que l’Aquinat a eu le choix heureux en comparant à un *habitus* acquis de l’intelligence cette disposition innée de notre âme à se connaître d’expérience au fur et à mesure du déroulement de son activité spirituelle. C’est une sorte de capital originel et essentiel, qui d’ailleurs resterait à jamais improductif n’était le stimulus d’une intellection d’objets extérieurs. Notre esprit ne s’éveille à soi qu’en ouvrant les yeux sur le dehors, mais c’est bien à soi qu’il s’éveille, et donc, qu’il est *par nature habilité à s’éveiller*.”

<sup>97</sup> DV 10.8, ad 14 [Leon. 22/2.324:419–25]: “[N]otitia qua anima seipsam novit non est in genere accidentis quantum ad id quo habitualiter cognoscitur, sed solum quantum ad actum cognitionis qui est accidens quoddam; unde etiam Augustinus dicit quod notitia substantialiter inest menti, in IX *De Trinitate*, secundum quod mens novit se ipsam”; see *De Trin.* 9.4.5 [CCSL 50.298]: “Quamobrem non amor et cognitio tamquam in subiecto insunt menti, sed substantialiter etiam ista sunt sicut ipsa mens.”

<sup>98</sup> DV 10.8, cited in note 80 above.

<sup>99</sup> See Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 108: “Clearly, habitual knowledge of the soul is ‘habitual knowledge’ by no more than an analogy. Yet there remain enough points of similarity between habitual knowledge of the soul and the paradigm to make it, at least on Aquinas’s terms, a strong analogy.” Still highlights facility as the basis for the analogy: “The rationale for terming it ‘habitual’ lies no doubt in the analogy between it and acquired habits, which allow one possessing them to pass easily into acts of these habits” (“Aquinas’s Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 33); he adds that “besides foiling intuitive self-knowledge [by which he means actual self-awareness through one’s essence], habitual self-knowledge makes little other positive contribution” (40).

the intellect does not possess this ordering towards self-awareness as a superadded accidental form; rather, it *naturally and essentially* has all the internal order or actualization that it needs for perceiving itself. The relationship of habitual self-awareness to habits in general is therefore analogous: although it does not belong to the category of quality, it constitutes a parallel to habit in the category of substance, having “the intelligibility of a habit,” or “standing in the place of a habit.”<sup>100</sup>

But what exactly does this all mean? It is interesting that Thomas never directly says that habitual self-awareness *is* the essence of the soul. But he does say that the essence of the soul plays the same role in originating the act of self-awareness as a habit plays in originating its corresponding act: “But in order that the soul perceive that it exists and attend to what is occurring in itself, no habit is required; but for this the mere essence of the soul is sufficient, which is present to the mind.”<sup>101</sup> The act of using grammar springs from the habit of grammar rather than from the essence of the soul, because by itself, the soul is not essentially disposed to use grammar (although it essentially has a potency for using grammar). In contrast, the act of self-awareness springs from the soul’s very essence as its principle, not from a superadded habit. “From the mind itself it has something whence it

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<sup>100</sup> See *In Sent.* I.3.5.1, ad 1 [Mand. 1.124]: “[U]nde si aliqua species esset quae in se haberet lumen [intellectus agentis], illud haberet rationem habitus, quantum pertinet ad hoc quod esset principium actus. Ita dico, quod quando ab anima cognoscitur aliquid quod est in ipsa non per sui similitudinem, sed per suam essentiam, ipsa essentia rei cognitae est loco habitus. Unde dico, quod ipsa essentia animae, prout est mota a seipsa, habet rationem habitus.” Ironically, habits are sometimes described by analogy with the essence of the soul as a sort of “second nature” (see especially *ST* Ia-IIae, 49.2, ad 3 [Leon. 6.311]: “[N]omen habitus diuturnitatem quandam importat”). Conversely, in the discussion of habitual self-awareness, we see a permanent readiness for self-awareness, which belongs to the essence of the soul, being described by analogy to a habit!

<sup>101</sup> *DV* 10.8, Latin text cited in note 95 above.

can go forth into the act in which it actually knows itself by perceiving that it exists.”<sup>102</sup>

This essential “something” whereby the mind is essentially prepared to engage in actual self-awareness is, interestingly, its presence-to-self—which is precisely its habitual self-awareness.

Thus when Aquinas says in *DV* 10.8 that “in order for the soul to perceive that it exists . . . no habit is required; but for this the essence of the soul alone suffices,” he means that habitual self-awareness is not a *superadded accidental form*, but that it is an essential ordering to self-awareness, rightfully belonging to the soul’s essence,<sup>103</sup> just as rationality belongs to the human essence.<sup>104</sup> Because the soul is an intellectual being and is therefore present to itself, its essence stands in the same relation to the act of self-awareness as a the habit of grammar stands to the exercise of grammar.<sup>105</sup> And thus actual self-awareness is connatural to the soul and proceeds naturally therefrom.<sup>106</sup> This essential readiness for self-awareness is different from the intellectual soul’s sheer potency to the forms of material objects. Before I acquire the form of an object, I am not subjectively perfected for that

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<sup>102</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 1 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.324:443–47]: “[E]x ipsa mente est ei unde possit in actum prodire quo se actualiter cognoscat percipiendo se esse; sicut etiam ex specie habitualiter in mente retenta inest menti ut possit actualiter rem illam considerare.”

<sup>103</sup> Lambert suggests the same interpretation of this text; see *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 109.

<sup>104</sup> *Quodl.* 7.1.4 [Leon. 25/1.15:22–35]: “[N]oticia quatuor modis accipi potest: primo, pro ipsa natura cognoscitiua; secundo, pro potencia cognitiua; tercio, pro habitu cognoscitiuo; quarto, pro ipso cognitionis actu. . . . Loquendo ergo de noticia primo modo accepta, constat quod non est in substantia mentis sicut accidens in subiecto, set essencialiter et substantialiter, sicut dicitur quod rationale est in uiuo, et uiuum in ente.” Note that *notitia* is explicitly associated with habitual self-awareness in *DV* 10.8, ad 14, cited above in note 97.

<sup>105</sup> See *DV* 10.8, cited above in note 80; and ad 1 s.c., cited above in note 102, as well as *DV* 10.8, ad 11 [Leon. 22/2.323:395–99]: “[I]ta etiam non oportet quod semper intelligatur actualiter ipsa mens, cuius cognitio inest nobis habitualiter, ex hoc quod ipsa eius essentia intellectui nostro est praesens.”

<sup>106</sup> The reason habits are characterized by facility of exercise is that they make the corresponding operation connatural to the agent: see *ST* Ia-IIae, 58.4 [Leon. 6.376]: “[O]portet quod perficiatur per aliquos habitus secundum quos fiat quodammodo homini connaturale recte iudicare de fine”; and *DV* 20.2, cited in note 38 above. See Barry Miller, *Knowledge Through Affective Connaturality* (doctoral dissertation, Pontifical University Angelicum, 1959), 175–90.

form; but before I become actually self-aware, I am subjectively perfected for perceiving myself—indeed, this perfection belongs to the very essence of my soul, insofar as it is an intellectual being and is identical with itself. I *learn* about external objects, but I am already familiar with my own existence, because I am identical with myself.

These observations clarify the reason for which Thomas agrees that the soul is habitually self-aware *per essentiam*.<sup>107</sup> Since the Divine essence is essentially its act of knowing, God knows himself *per essentiam* actually. In contrast, the human soul is essentially *disposed* to know itself; so it only knows itself *per essentiam* habitually.<sup>108</sup> In other words, the soul's essence, what-it-means-to-be-a-soul, includes all the conditions for actual self-awareness on the part of the knower, but not all the conditions for actual self-awareness on the part of the known (due to its essential potency to form). Consequently its essence does not include actual self-awareness. Interestingly enough, this means that if the soul can be said to know itself *per essentiam*,<sup>109</sup> this can only mean that the essence of the soul is the principle of the act of self-awareness just as a habit would be the principle for its corresponding act.<sup>110</sup> It cannot mean that the soul essentially fulfils all the subjective and objective conditions for self-awareness (as does the Divine essence), for its actual self-awareness is indeed an accident distinct from its essence.

In other words, the form or actualization or readiness-for-operation that would otherwise be granted by an accidental habit belongs to the soul *essentially*, in virtue of the

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<sup>107</sup> DV 10.8, cited above in note 80.

<sup>108</sup> DV 10.8, ad 2 [Leon. 22/2.323:340–41]: “[A]nima per essentiam suam cognoscitur in habitu.”

<sup>109</sup> See for instance the formulation at the end of the corpus of DV 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:311–13]: “[M]ens nostra cognoscit se ipsam quodam modo per essentiam suam, ut Augustinus dicit.”

<sup>110</sup> As Lambert points out: “No medium stands between the soul and its essence; since the soul is knower and known, the only entity involved in habitual knowledge, the soul knows itself habitually by its essence. Its essence is the proximate source of the soul's power to enter upon natural knowledge of itself” (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 107).

soul's presence to itself. The soul's essence is the principle that enables the soul to enter spontaneously into actual self-awareness, "just as" a habit of geometry makes it possible to enter spontaneously into consideration of a triangle<sup>111</sup>; the soul habitually knows itself "on account of" its presence to itself.<sup>112</sup> I conclude, then, that while it would be going too far to say that the essence of the soul *is* habitual self-awareness (since the soul's essence includes more than this), one *can* say that the soul by its very essence possesses an actuality or perfection that orders it towards self-awareness. The fact that the soul is subjectively perfected for self-awareness *by its very essence* and not by some accidental habit has important implications for Thomas's theory of human nature.<sup>113</sup> Because the soul's very essence fulfils (analogically) the role of a habit for self-awareness, habitual self-awareness can be viewed not only as a cognitive state, in terms of the soul's perpetual familiarity with itself, but also as an ontological fact: *part of what it means to be a soul (to ti ên einai) is to be ordered to self-awareness.*<sup>114</sup> Indeed, the soul is essentially structured in such a way as to be ready for self-awareness without the need for further ordering by an acquired habit: it *already is essentially* everything that such a habit would have added accidentally. This is, in fact, precisely what it means for the soul, as intellectual being, to be ontologically identical with itself. The ontological dimension of habitual self-awareness is an extremely important point. I will return to this point in Chapter V, §B.2.

### 3. *The Question of Doctrinal Evolution*

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<sup>111</sup> See DV 10.8, cited in note 80 above, and ad 1 s.c., cited in note 102.

<sup>112</sup> See DV 10.8, ad 11, cited in note 105 above.

<sup>113</sup> Note that the directness of actual self-awareness is *not included* in these implications. Rather, actual self-awareness is direct because it proceeds from the essence of the soul *as from a habit*; as noted above in §A.2.a, acts proceed from habits without any "search" or "effort," and are therefore direct.

<sup>114</sup> See Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 97–100; Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 114–15; Still, "Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge," 9; and Fetz, *Ontologie der Innerlichkeit*, 150–51. Fetz especially seems to interpret habitual self-presence as an ontic *rather than* a cognitive structure.

Two related textual problems arise from Thomas's discussion of habitual self-awareness. First, *DV* 10.8 presents the only detailed treatment of habitual self-awareness in the Thomistic corpus; it is not mentioned in the classic divisions of self-knowledge in either *Summa*. Second, characteristics that Thomas repeatedly restricts in *DV* 10.8 to habitual self-awareness (that it occurs *per essentiam*, *per seipsam*, and *per praesentiam*) appear in both *Summae* in connection with perception of the soul's singular existing self, which is said to occur *per seipsam* in *SCG* 3.46, and *per praesentiam suam* in *ST* Ia, 87.1. Numerous authors have pondered why "a doctrine which received a fairly prominent place in the *De Veritate* lose[s] its prominence, and for the most part even its presence, in Thomas's later works."<sup>115</sup> Some solve the problem by suggesting that habitual self-awareness was merely a sop to Augustine's followers, a way to account for the texts in which Augustine seems to propose continuous innate actual self-awareness or the perception of the soul through itself or its essence. According to this interpretation, habitual self-awareness is not really an integral or useful part of Thomas's theory of self-awareness, which he abandons at the first available opportunity.<sup>116</sup> The use in the *Summae* of phrases such as *per praesentiam suam* or *per seipsam* to describe perception of one's existence therefore poses a problem for such

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<sup>115</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 114. Still, "Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge," 39, notes the problem, but refrains from offering a solution. Oddly, Putallaz's study does not even mention the problem at all: see *Le sens de la réflexion*, 92–104.

<sup>116</sup> Lambert, for instance, offers three possible reasons for this textual shift: first, what he construes as a "disanalogy" verging on "paradox" in referring to the essence of the soul as a habit; second, Thomas's lessening interest in presenting his position in coherence with Augustine's; third, the fact that habitual knowledge is "identical with the soul or, at least, analytically derivable from the nature of the soul," and therefore does not need to be expressed in terms of knowledge (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 114–15). Carl Still more radically argues that "habitual self-knowledge represents Aquinas's interpretation of Augustine's claims that the soul is always knowing itself"—a view he attributes somewhat simplistically to Lambert and Putallaz—and that it makes "no distinctly epistemological contribution to Aquinas's account of self-knowledge" ("Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge," 9; see also 18–19 and 35–37, where he adds that the contribution of habitual self-knowledge is largely negative).



theorists and would have to be reconciled with actual self-awareness,<sup>117</sup> or else explained in terms of a change in the way Thomas views actual self-awareness.<sup>118</sup> Such development, however, is hard to countenance, given that the principles motivating Thomas's refusal to grant knowledge *per seipsam* to the soul in *DV* remain unchanged in the *Summae*.

As I argued in the conclusion to Chapter I, the solution to these problems is that habitual self-awareness never really disappears from Thomas's writings; rather, after *DV* 10.8, Thomas tends to incorporate the features of habitual self-awareness into a more general description of self-awareness that does not distinguish between habitual and actual self-awareness.<sup>119</sup> This latter solution, as I noted then, would explain why certain characteristics of habitual self-awareness were transferred to the actual perception of the soul's existence in *SCG* 3.46 and *ST* Ia, 87.1. Thus the texts in which Thomas describes the perception of one's existence as occurring *per seipsam* or *per praesentiam suam* merely indicate that the soul itself, in its presence to itself, is the principle of the act wherein it

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<sup>117</sup> Lambert argues that neither in *ST* Ia, 87.1 and *SCG* 3.46 is there any reference to habitual self-awareness; he considers the phrases *per praesentiam* and *per seipsam* to be reconcilable with actual self-awareness (see *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 111–13 and 123–28).

<sup>118</sup> Wébert tentatively posits a development in doctrine, though he also seems attracted by the notion that later texts merely condense material from the earlier texts. “Le progrès doctrinal, (s’il n’est pas seulement question d’une meilleure expression dans les termes) consiste à poser la nécessité de la perception de l’acte psychologique pour qu’il y ait perception individuelle de l’âme. L’analyse est plus raffinée: la présence est d’abord seulement ontologique, elle devient une présence consciente, lorsque l’âme se saisit comme principe d’un acte” (“Reflexio,” 318 and n. 1).

<sup>119</sup> For instance, Romeyer argues that *ST* Ia, 87.1 merely assumes habitual self-awareness without mentioning it, due to the much more abbreviated nature of the work (“Connaissance de l’esprit humain” [1928], 72). Gardeil gives a more detailed argument that Thomas is actually referring to habitual self-awareness in *ST* Ia, 87.1: “Certes, la perspective est différente, mais préterition n’est pas négation. Dans la *Somme* saint Thomas admet toujours la *perception* de l’âme par sa *seule présence*. Il cite le texte de saint Augustine . . . qui suppose la connaissance habituelle. . .” (“Perception expérimentale,” 221). Brown, however, goes further to note the apparently discontinuity between the language of *DV* 10.8 and of *ST* Ia, 87.1, and suggests that “it is difficult to make sense of his repeated and seemingly paradoxical remarks that the soul knows itself through its essence, its acts and species unless we suppose that the soul knows itself through its essence *dispositionally*” (“Aquinas’ Missing Flying Man,” 23).

beholds itself: which was precisely the aspect of self-awareness for which habitual self-awareness accounted in *DV* 10.8.

These indications, then, suggest that habitual self-awareness, far from being an encumbrance that was quietly shoved aside in later texts, is in fact a crucial element of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge and indeed his theory of human nature. On the other hand, it is true that the references to habitual self-awareness are scarce, and it is not included as a distinct type of self-knowledge in later divisions of self-knowledge in the *Summae*. The reason for this shift, I think, is simply that although habitual self-knowledge can be viewed from either a cognitive or an ontological perspective, its cognitive dimension offers special pitfalls. Throughout his writings, Thomas takes pains to dispel the notion that the human intellect has permanent innate self-awareness independent of the senses; and it is especially easy to misread habitual self-awareness precisely as an unconscious actual vision of the self in the depths of one's soul before the advent of any phantasm. Thus Thomas is careful in *DV* 10.8 to distinguish habitual self-awareness sharply from the operation of actual self-awareness.

But the precarious position of habitual self-awareness as a readiness for self-awareness, an actuality that is neither pure potency nor actual operation, is evident in the varied and conflicting responses to habitual self-awareness among Thomas's commentators. So it is not surprising that Thomas should eventually begin to emphasize the ontological over the cognitive aspect of habitual self-awareness. This is, in fact, precisely what we find him doing in texts such as *ST* Ia, 87.1, where he distinguishes knowledge of the individual soul from knowledge of its nature, arguing that for the former, "the very presence of the

mind suffices, which is the principle of the act from which the mind perceives itself.

And therefore it is said to know itself by its presence.”<sup>120</sup> Here are all the hallmarks of habitual self-awareness: the mind’s subjective sufficiency for self-awareness; its self-presence; its role as the direct principle of self-perception. Yet now the mind’s self-presence is not described by analogy to cognitive habits but as a state of ontological perfection, in which the mind is the direct principle of self-awareness by its self-presence.

Thus I think we can conclude that in outlining the soul’s perfect subjective disposition for self-awareness, Thomas historically shifted from an earlier cognitive description (habitual self-awareness) towards an ontological description (the soul as originating the act of self-awareness *per seipsam*).<sup>121</sup> No development of doctrine, however, occurred: whether one takes the ontological or the cognitive perspective, the relationship between the soul’s essence and the act of self-awareness remains the same. Moreover, given Thomas’s own caution about misinterpreting habitual self-awareness as an innate actual self-awareness, we must seek extreme precision in describing the phenomenon in cognitive terms. Even though the soul can be legitimately said to “see” itself habitually, one must keep in mind that this “vision” does not constitute actual knowing.<sup>122</sup> Conversely, habitual self-awareness indicates the soul’s essential ordering in readiness for self-awareness, in potency *only to the operation itself*.

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<sup>120</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.355]: “Nam ad primam cognitionem de mente habendam, sufficit ipsa mentis praesentia, quae est principium actus ex quo mens percipit seipsam. Et ideo dicitur se cognoscere per suam praesentiam.” The same occurs in *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “Ex hoc enim ipso quod percipit se agere, percipit se esse; agit autem per seipsam; unde per seipsam de se cognoscit quod est.”

<sup>121</sup> The fact that Thomas is so willing to refer to habitual self-awareness from either an ontological or a cognitive dimension is extremely significant, since it shows his awareness of the psychological implications of the essential structure of intellectual being: i.e., the psychological dimension of personhood. We shall explore these topics in more depth in Chapter V, especially §B.2.

<sup>122</sup> *DV* 12.1, ad 11 [Leon. 22/2.369:341–44]: “[V]idere secundum Philosophum dupliciter dicitur, scilicet habitu et actu; unde et visio actum et habitum nominare potest.”

In concluding this section, I would like to point out a case in which habitual self-awareness may provide an interesting solution to a particularly vexed (and relatively late) text, *In De an.* III.2 (approx. 1269), in a non-Augustinian context. Here Aquinas is commenting on *De an.* III.4.429b5-9, a text that has taxed a number of commentators, because it contains a reference to self-knowledge that is apparently disconnected from the surrounding text.<sup>123</sup> In Moerbeke's Latin translation, the text reads:

But when [the intellect] has thus become each thing, so as to know them scientifically, it is said to do so according to act. But this occurs instantly when it can operate by itself. Therefore it is also then in some way in potency, but not in the same way as it had been before learning or discovering. But it is also then able to know itself.<sup>124</sup>

The first part of the text refers to the difference between the intellect's potency before learning something (sheer potency) and after learning something (viz., habitual knowledge). One might be inclined to read this text as indicating that the intellect is able to understand itself in its habitual knowledge of other things.<sup>125</sup> But this reading would be incompatible with Thomas's (and, one might postulate, even Aristotle's) theory of self-knowledge, in which an act of knowing is always required for self-knowledge.

Thomas thus offers another reading, according to which the mysterious reference to self-knowledge constitutes the solution to an aporia:

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<sup>123</sup> For the textual problems associated with this passage in Aristotle's original Greek, see Chapter I, note 36.

<sup>124</sup> *In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.208, at 429b5–9]: “Cum autem sic singula fiat ut sciens, dicitur qui secundum actum. Hoc autem confestim accidit cum possit operari per se ipsum. Est quidem igitur et tunc potencia quodam modo, non tamen similiter et ante addiscere aut inuenire. Et ipse autem se ipsum tunc potest intelligere.”

<sup>125</sup> This seems to be the solution adopted by J. A. Smith in his translation of *De anima* III.4.429b5–9: “Once the mind has become each set of its possible objects, as a man of science has, when this phrase is used of one who is actually a man of science (this happens when he is now able to exercise the power of his own initiative), its condition is still one of potentiality, but in a different sense from the potentiality which preceded the acquisition of knowledge by learning or discovery: the mind too is then able to think *itself*” (*The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. McKeon, 590). Joseph Owens also seems to follow this interpretation: “when actuated by the habitual possession of the forms, the intellect is (a) still in potentiality towards actually thinking about the things, and (b) rendered capable of thinking about itself” (“A Note on Aristotle, *De anima* 3.4,” 113).

And because he has said that when the intellect is rendered in some way into act according to each of those things to which it was in potency, it can understand (*intelligere*), and yet with respect to itself it was in no way in potency, someone might believe that when rendered into act, it would not understand itself; and therefore in order to exclude this he adds that the intellect rendered into act not only is able to understand others, but also *is able then to understand itself*.<sup>126</sup>

The aporia that Thomas here identifies is as follows: he takes Aristotle to be stating that the operation of knowing, or second act, occurs when the intellect is actualized with respect to objects to which it was previously in potency.<sup>127</sup> But how then can the intellect ever actually know itself, since “with respect to itself, it was in no way in potency”? Thomas argues that Aristotle’s reference to self-knowledge here is therefore meant to reassure the reader that the intellect can indeed know itself despite never having been in potency to itself.

This is a curious sort of non-solution, since it has Aristotle responding to the question, “How can the intellect know itself, if it is never *able* to know itself?” by simply stating without any explanation, that the intellect just *does* actually know itself. Yet even the problem itself is a non-problem for the Aristotelian text, since the notion that “with respect to itself, the intellect was in no way in potency” is Thomas’s own interpolation. Moreover, in claiming gratuitously that the intellect is not in potency to itself, Thomas lays himself and Aristotle open to the charge of holding that the intellect must therefore *actually* always know itself, which is clearly contradictory to Thomas’s and Aristotle’s insistence

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<sup>126</sup> *In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.209]: “Et quia dixerat quod quando intellectus fit quodam modo in actu secundum singula eorum ad que erat in potencia, tunc potest intelligere, respectu autem sui nullo modo erat in potencia, posset aliquis credere quod factus in actu se ipsum non intelligeret; et ideo ad hoc excludendum subiungit quod intellectus factus in actu non solum potest intelligere alia, set etiam *tunc potest intelligere seipsum*.”

<sup>127</sup> *In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.208, at 429b5]: “Cum autem sic singula fiat ut sciens, dicitur qui secundum actum.” Thomas comments: “. . . id est, cum reducat in actum specierum intelligibilium, quemadmodum *sciens*, id est habens habitum sciencie, habet species in actu, tunc *dicitur* intellectus *qui* est *secundum actum*” (ibid., 208).

that self-knowledge depends on one's acts.<sup>128</sup> In fact, Thomas's solution seems to raise more questions than it answers.

I suggest that habitual self-awareness can be helpful in illuminating Thomas's obscure comments. It is worth noting that these comments are preceded by a lengthy description of habitual knowledge, in which Thomas, following Aristotle, elaborates two senses of potency: that which "precedes discovery or instruction," and the reduced, relative potency of habitual knowledge.<sup>129</sup> Perhaps, then, the implied solution to the aporia is that the claim that "the intellect is in no way in potency to itself" needs to be qualified. In fact, it is true that the intellect cannot be in absolute potency to itself (since this would imply that it must learn about itself, rather than being rendered instantly intelligible to itself in its acts), but it cannot always be in act with respect to itself either. If Thomas meant for this claim to be reinterpreted to grant the intellect a qualified potency with respect to itself (viz., habitual self-awareness), the aporia would disappear. The intellect would then be one of its own possible objects, since it *is* in a kind of potency to itself—just not an absolute potency.<sup>130</sup> The intellect is not in *potency* to itself, but is already *ordered habitually* towards itself. Reading this text in terms of habitual self-awareness might explain also why Thomas here proposes as obviously false the thesis that the intellect cannot be in pure potency to self-

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<sup>128</sup> See *De an.* III.4.430a2, and Thomas's comments thereon, beginning, "Dicit ergo primo quod intellectus possibilis *est intelligibilis* non per essenciam suam, set per aliquam speciem intelligibilem, *sicut* et alia *intelligibilia*" (*In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:65ff.]).

<sup>129</sup> *In De an.* III.2 [Leon. 45/1.208:31–209:31]: "Set licet tunc intellectus quodam modo sit in actu quando habet species intelligibiles, sicut sciens; tamen *et tunc* etiam est *quodam modo* in *potencia*, non tamen eodem modo sicut erat in potencia *ante* quam scienciam acquireret addiscendo uel inueniendo; nam ante quam haberet habitum sciencie, qui est primus actus, non poterat operari cum uellet, set oportebat quod ab altero reduceretur in actum; set quando iam habet habitum sciencie, qui est actus primus, potest cum uoluerit procedere in actum secundum, quod est operatio."

<sup>130</sup> Interestingly, Kahn likewise interprets 429b9 in the context of the surrounding discussion of habitual knowledge, as indicating habitual self-knowledge: "This capacity to contemplate noetic form is *also* said to be the capacity of *nous* to contemplate itself" ("Aristotle on Thinking," 373)

awareness. *Just by being an intellect*, the intellect fulfils the subjective conditions for self-awareness because its own essence orders it for self-knowledge; the intellect already possesses itself essentially in a way that parallels the conservation of species accidentally. It is for this reason that in it there can be no pure potency for self-knowing.

Taking the passage as relying on habitual self-awareness also helps make sense of Thomas's closing comment: "In order to exclude [that the intellect does not understand itself when rendered into act because it is not in potency to itself] he adds that the intellect rendered into act not only is able to understand others, but also *is able then to understand itself*." As I will argue in Chapter V, habitual self-awareness (i.e., the soul's ontological identity with itself as an immaterial being) is precisely what enables the intellect to understand itself in every act. Thus from the perspective of potency, the intellect's ability (potency) to understand others *is* a habitual disposition to understand itself. And from the perspective of act, the intellect's actualization by a form lends intelligibility-in-act not only to the object, but also to the intellect itself. According to this possible reading, then, Thomas has turned the tables on the problem he identifies in *De an.* III.4. The fact that the intellect is not in potency to itself indicates that its actual self-knowledge must derive from a habitual essential ordering—for it is this habitual ordering alone that ensures that "when rendered into act," the soul understands itself.

### **C. The Intentionality of Self-Awareness**

We now come to a topic that has been held at bay for the last two chapters, and that demands final resolution: implicit or nonintentional self-awareness.<sup>131</sup> The two issues at stake here are: 1) “What is implicit self-awareness?” and 2) “Does Thomas Aquinas provide an account of implicit self-awareness?” These questions are rarely examined in a systematic way in discussions of Thomas’s theory of self-awareness,<sup>132</sup> and proposed solutions vary widely. Some authors have, as noted above, identified implicit self-awareness with habitual self-awareness.<sup>133</sup> Putallaz, on the other hand, characterizes actual self-awareness in terms strongly suggestive of implicit self-awareness, though he argues that they are not quite the same thing.<sup>134</sup> Others, including Lambert, have presented implicit self-awareness as a subcategory within actual self-awareness.<sup>135</sup> Finally, it is also tempting to identify implicit self-awareness with the activity of the common sense, which yields a sort of general consciousness.

This issue is also tied to an assortment of textual and interpretative problems raised in the last two chapters. How does Aquinas account for Augustine’s *se nosse* or *memoria sui*? Where does knowing oneself “in the mode of a means of knowing” (*in ratione medii cognoscendi*) fit in? Does actual self-awareness occur in two acts or one? In what sense is the human being “always” self-aware? While these questions appear unrelated, they cannot be examined in isolation from an investigation of implicit self-awareness. Thus in this last

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<sup>131</sup> In what follows, I will use the word “self-awareness” prescinding from any connotation of attention or lack thereof; whenever I intend to designate attention to the soul’s individual existing self, I shall be careful to describe it as “explicit self-awareness.”

<sup>132</sup> The main exceptions being de Finance, “Cogito cartésien et réflexion thomiste,” 37–41; and Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 133–52, based upon his earlier article, “Nonintentional Experience of Oneself,” 253–75.

<sup>133</sup> See Faucon de Boylesve, *Être et savoir*, 169–70ff.; Goehring, “Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness,” 2; and perhaps Gardeil, “Perception expérimentale,” 225–27, mentioned in notes 6–9 above.

<sup>134</sup> Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 105–116, esp. 109, n. 17; see also p. 167.

<sup>135</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 148, calling it “concomitant reflection.”



section of the chapter, in suggesting an answer to the two main questions noted above, I will also attempt to resolve these issues.

### ***1. What is Implicit Self-Awareness?***

While implicit self-awareness has been explained in countless ways in various philosophical traditions, the phenomenon to be explained remains the same. Simply, I experience all my acts *from my own viewpoint*: an inescapable element of subjectivity is included in every act. Subjectivity is so firmly lodged in my acts that I cannot experience them except as *mine*. Thus I seem to possess a “concomitant self-awareness” that “pertains to the nature of every knowing act,” because “knowledge exists as possessed by the knowing subject, and if the knower does not know that he knows, he will not know at all; an unconscious knowledge will not differ from ignorance.”<sup>136</sup> Since our direction of attention is outward-focused, we primarily attend to the objects that we know, sense, and will, without noticing our own agency in these acts. Yet this self-presence is an intrinsic part of these acts, as evidenced by the fact that I always experience objects as other than myself from a unified perspective, and that in retrospect, I always remember my experiences as *mine*, not as someone else’s.<sup>137</sup>

This implicit perception, which some call “concomitant self-awareness,”<sup>138</sup> or simply “self-consciousness,”<sup>139</sup> can be distinguished from episodic acts of reflection in which we explicitly *notice* ourselves as agents of our acts. “This self-consciousness *is not*, at least at

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<sup>136</sup> Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 76.

<sup>137</sup> Note that this is a distinct (though related) problem from the one discussed in Chapter II, §C.2.a: namely, that in perceiving my acts, I perceive myself, the agent.

<sup>138</sup> Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 76; Reichmann, “The ‘Cogito’ in Thomas and Descartes,” 347.

<sup>139</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 139.

first, a *distinct act* in opposition to the knowledge of the object. Rather it is the same act in so far as it is transparent to itself. . . . Later on, however, self-knowledge can be dissociated from objective knowledge, when the subject considers its own previous acts of direct or objective knowledge in *properly reflective acts*.”<sup>140</sup> In this explicit self-awareness, I focus my attention on myself, noticing my own agency and reflecting on my thoughts, desires, and emotions: I think about myself.<sup>141</sup> The difference between implicit and explicit self-awareness is one of intention (in the sense of attention, not in the sense of possessing or lacking a species). Whenever the intellect is directed intentionally towards some extramental object, an implicit self-awareness accompanies the act, which appears to us as the inescapable dimension of subjectivity inherent in all our acts. When the intentional direction of the intellect shifts towards its own self, it becomes explicitly self-aware, as the intentional object of its own act. The difference between implicit and explicit self-awareness is captured in the difference between describing an extramental object (“The parade included some really good bands”), and articulating this object in terms of my own experience thereof, focusing on my own reaction to it (“I especially liked the drum solo of the third band”). One also sees this distinction in the linguistic development of children: a toddler begins by simply demanding food (“Apple!”), but a notable shift in cognitive development occurs when he begins to *notice* himself as agent of his acts and to express himself accordingly (“Me hungry!”).

## **2. Thomas’s Account of Implicit Self-Awareness**

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<sup>140</sup> Van Steenberghe, *Epistemology*, 104–5.

<sup>141</sup> Notice that explicit self-awareness is still entirely prephilosophical. Philosophical reflection goes further to ponder the meaning of self-identity and subjectivity.

With this profile in mind, we can now turn to the three candidates for implicit self-awareness in Thomas's writings: the activity of the common sense, habitual self-awareness, and some subdivision of actual self-awareness.

*a. Awareness by the common sense or habitual self-awareness?*

The common sense is an attractive candidate for implicit self-awareness. Following Aristotle, Thomas says that one of the functions of the common sense is to “perceive the actions of the proper senses, namely, that we sense that we see and hear.”<sup>142</sup> The common sense provides an ongoing, unified awareness of our sensory environment and is an indispensable tool for any animal capable of locomotion. Since we live in a world that is positively buzzing and blooming with sensory stimulation, the perception of sensations by the common sense must be constantly actual, interrupted only by sleep. Moreover, since the common sense is distinct from the intellect, it can continue to provide awareness of our surroundings even when the intellect is occupied in thinking about something else. For these reasons, it is tempting to point to the common sense as the source for our permanent orientation towards the world as subjects.

On the other hand, the common sense is a material power belonging to a material organ. As such, it cannot return to itself,<sup>143</sup> because a material power cannot become wholly

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<sup>142</sup> *In De an.* II.26 [Leon. 45/1.178:9–11]: “Una [actio potentiae sensitivae communis] est secundum quod nos percipimus actiones propriorum sensuum, puta quod sentimus nos videre et audire. . . .”; See also *ST* Ia, 87.3, ad 3 [Leon. 5.361]: “Et ideo actus sensus proprii percipitur per sensum communem.”

<sup>143</sup> There is, of course, a debate about whether the senses are totally incapable of reflexion upon themselves, or whether they enjoy an incomplete return; see Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 39–69, and Chapter V, note 38 below. I need not address this issue here, for even if one concludes, as Putallaz does, that the senses in human beings alone are capable of a partial return to themselves due to an overflow from the intellect (see for instance 63), still no sense power is capable of perceiving an immaterial power. Thus even if the external and internal senses are in some way aware of their own operations, they cannot be aware of the operation of knowing, and therefore cannot provide a unified grasp of oneself as the subject of all one's intellectual and sensitive acts.

one with all of itself to the degree required for self-perception. Moreover, implicit self-awareness accompanies all intellectual acts, but as a material power, the common sense cannot perceive the acts of the intellect. Indeed if the activity of the common sense were responsible for the human being's orientation to the world as the "I" who is the subject of all experience, then the "I" would be a purely bodily entity. Implicit self-awareness would be excluded from our intellectual actions. Thus while common sense provides a bodily consciousness, it cannot be the candidate for an implicit self-awareness of the kind that we are seeking. Implicit self-awareness must be an intellectual act, since only the intellect, as the soul's highest perceptual power, is able to perceive its own acts as well as the acts of the external and internal senses.

Another attractive candidate for implicit self-awareness is habitual self-awareness. Now, by this point it should be clear that if implicit self-awareness consists in an actual operation of knowing, it cannot be identified with habitual self-awareness. But what if implicit self-awareness is in fact, not an ongoing *actual* implicit perception of myself in my acts, but merely a disposition that enables me to think about myself whenever I choose? The psychological structure of implicit self-awareness could then be sketched as follows. A species of a tree actualizes the intellect in an intentional act of knowing the tree; with respect to the tree, it is a "used" species.<sup>144</sup> But insofar as it is presently actualizing the intellect, this species is also a species of the actualized intellect; with respect to the intellect, it is, as it were, a "stored" species, ready to let the intellect know itself at any time.

Some significant evidence, however, points in the opposite direction.

Phenomenologically, it is implausible that implicit self-awareness is merely habitual. After

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<sup>144</sup> For "using" species, see *ST* Ia, 84.7, ad 1, cited in note 64 above.

enjoying a beautiful sunset, I remember myself to have enjoyed it; in other words, I remember my subjectivity as having been included in the experience. How do I experience objects from a first-person perspective and remember them as having been experienced as such, if my intentional acts include no actual self-awareness, but only a habitual disposition for self-awareness? Neither can this position be upheld by a broader examination of Thomas's teaching on self-awareness, which in my opinion clearly outlines the psychological structure for an implicit *actual* self-awareness. I now proceed to offer the positive evidence for this position.

*b. Implicit self-awareness as an actual self-awareness*

As I have frequently emphasized, Thomas follows Aristotle in holding that the intellect always knows itself in its acts precisely because it is immaterial and in potency to all forms, so that when it takes on the form of the known, it adopts this as its own form, making it actually intelligible to (and thus actually understood by) itself.<sup>145</sup> The species of the known object informing the intellect *is* a species of the intellect; in representing the object to the intellect, it also represents the intellect to itself, because it is a snapshot of the intellect actualized at that moment. Thus it is impossible for the intellect *not* to be illuminated to itself whenever it knows something else: I know myself in all my acts.<sup>146</sup> Yet Thomas cannot mean by this that I am always *thinking about myself*. Thus I propose that what Thomas describes as the intellect's knowledge of itself in all its acts is an *implicit self-awareness*, an actual but unnoticed element in any intentional act.

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<sup>145</sup> See the principle articulated in *ST* Ia, 87.4 [Leon. 5.363]: "Quod autem intelligibiliter est in aliquo intelligente, consequens est ut ab eo intelligatur."

<sup>146</sup> See the texts cited above in note 87.

In fact, there is considerable textual evidence that Thomas holds a theory of implicit *actual* self-awareness. For instance, in *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 4, Thomas cites Augustine's classic statement that "the mind always remembers itself, always understands and loves itself,"<sup>147</sup> a text which "certain ones" have interpreted "as though actual understanding and love of itself belonged to the soul." In response, Thomas points out that the Augustinian text goes on to say that the mind "does not always think of itself as discrete from those things that are not itself"; he thus concludes that "the soul always understands and loves itself, not actually, but habitually." But he then goes on to offer *an alternate interpretation of Augustine*: "It may also be said that, in perceiving its acts, [the mind] understands itself whenever it understands something."<sup>148</sup> Here Augustine's "always" is interpreted less literally to mean "always, whenever we know anything." In this text, then, we find implicit self-awareness presented as a phenomenon distinct from habitual self-awareness, an alternate way of interpreting Augustine's claim that we "always" know ourselves: it is the intellect's concomitant grasp of itself "whenever it knows anything."

Furthermore, in several texts Thomas discusses the psychological structure whereby it is possible for an implicit self-awareness to be part of every outer-directed act,

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<sup>147</sup> *De Trin.* 14.6.6 [CCSL 50A.432]: "Sed quoniam entem semper sui meminisse semperque se ipsam intellegere et amare, quamvis non semper se cogitare discretam ab eis quae non sunt quod ipsa est . . ." Note that in *SCG* 3.46 and *ST* Ia, 87.1, as discussed in Chapter II, §A, Thomas takes a similar formulation from *De Trin.* 10.9.12 [CCSL 50.325] to signify the difference between knowing that the soul exists (*indistincte* or *per praesentiam suam*) and knowing what it is (*distincte*): "Non itaque velut absentem se quaeret cernere, sed praesentem se curet discernere. Nec se quasi non norit cognoscat, sed ab eo quod alterum novit dinoscat." This is important because it shows again that even in *SCG* 3.46 and *ST* Ia, 87.1, when habitual self-awareness is not identified as a distinct kind of self-awareness (as in *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 3–4), Thomas still accounts for that phenomenon in terms of the starting-point of actual self-awareness.

<sup>148</sup> *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 4 [Leon. 5.409–410]: "[A]liquis respondere posset per hoc quod Augustinus dicit XIV de Trin., quod *mens semper sui meminit, semper se intelligit et amat*. Quod quidam sic intelligunt, quasi animae adsit actualis intelligentia et amor sui ipsius. Sed hunc intellectum excludit per hoc quod subdit, quod *non semper se cogitat discretam ab his quae non sunt quod ipsa*. Et sic patet quod anima semper intelligit et amat se, non actualiter, sed habitualiter. Quamvis etiam dici possit quod, percipiendo actum suum, seipsam intelligit quandocumque aliquid intelligit."

distinguishing it carefully from explicit knowledge. To begin, in the Commentary on the *Sentences*, I.3.4.5 (discussed in Chapter I, §B.1.a), he points out that *intelligere* indicates an intelligible presence in “any way whatsoever,” and that consequently the soul can be said “always to know itself and God indeterminately.” As in Ia, 93.7, ad 4, he goes on to add that “in another way, according to the philosophers,” it can be said that “the soul always understands itself, in the same way that everything that is understood, is understood only as illumined by the light of the agent intellect.” In order to explain how the intellect can “always” know itself in all its acts, even though it clearly does not think about itself in every act, he makes the distinction highlighted in Chapter I, between knowing the intellect as an object (*in ratione objecti*) and perceiving the light of the agent intellect as the means of knowing some external object (*in ratione medii cognoscendi*).<sup>149</sup> For instance, I cannot see the light passing through the air until it strikes something and lights it up; in that moment, both the light and the illuminated object are revealed to me as a single visible entity; but *what* I see is the object. The light is seen as that *in which* the object is visible. This is evident when a strand of hair, previously invisible, is caught in a beam of green light from a prism, likewise previously invisible. In a single act of vision, I see the strand of hair,

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<sup>149</sup> *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 [Mand. 1.122]: “Sed secundum quod intelligere nihil aliud dicit quam intuitum, qui nihil aliud est quam praesentia intelligibilis ad intellectum quocumque modo, sic anima semper intelligit se et Deum <Parma add. indeterminate [6.43]>, et consequitur quidam amor indeterminatus. Alio tamen modo, secundum philosophos, intelligitur quod anima semper se intelligit, eo quod omne quod intelligitur, non intelligitur nisi illustratum lumine intellectus agentis, et receptum in intellectu possibili. Unde sicut in omni colore videtur lumen corporale, ita in omni intelligibili videtur lumen intellectus agentis; non tamen in ratione objecti sed in ratione medii cognoscendi.” Note that Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 111–12, deems this text too vague to tell whether it refers to habitual or actual self-awareness. Gardeil, “Perception expérimentale,” 225, n. 3, states unequivocally that this text refers to habitual self-awareness; he makes the same claim for *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 3 (which actually refers to habitual knowledge in general), without noting the clarification offered in ad 4. Romeyer likewise interprets *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 as referring to habitual self-awareness, “Connaissance de l’esprit humain,” [1928], 57; see also Gabriel Picard, “Le problème critique fondamentale,” *Archives de philosophie* 1, cah. 2 (1923): 55. Note, however, that all these authors focus on the “indeterminate” knowledge mentioned in the body of the article, and not on the distinction between knowing *in ratione obiecti* and *in ratione medii*.

shining green, as the explicit object of vision, together with the green light, which I see, not as the object of vision, but as the means by which the hair is visible.<sup>150</sup>

Similarly, Thomas argues, everything that I know is known only insofar as it is illuminated by the light of the agent intellect.<sup>151</sup> Therefore in every act of knowing, even when knowing something else as object, the intellect perceives itself as the means by which knowledge is accomplished. Although an intention is required for any consideration, this kind of oblique self-awareness is precisely characterized by the lack of an intention directed towards the knower (viz., attention to the knower), as Thomas specifies in the reply to the third objection.<sup>152</sup> For this reason, understanding oneself as means of knowing (*in ratione medii cognoscendi*) constitutes implicit rather than explicit self-awareness. Moreover, because there is only one single intention directed towards one single object, illuminating

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<sup>150</sup> As noted in Ch. I, note 63, in *ST* Ia, 79.3, ad 2, Thomas refers to both the “light” of the agent intellect and visible light as the means of knowledge, but observes that for Aristotle, they play slightly different roles as means.

<sup>151</sup> Thomas describes the agent intellect as the intellectual light that makes the phantasms intelligible-in-act; it is the means whereby objects are made present to the possible intellect. The classic text on this point is *ST* Ia, 79.4; see also *DV* 10.6 and *SCG* 3.45. For other texts that describe seeing the light of the agent intellect, see *DV* 18.1, ad 10, where the agent intellect is said to be perceived in every act of illuminating another [Leon. 22/2.534:364–78]: “[I]mmediatum principium et proximum quo ea quae sunt in potentia, fiunt intelligibilia actu, est intellectus agens; sed primum principium quo omnia intelligibilia fiunt, est ipsa lux increata. Et ita ipsa essentia divina comparatur ad intelligibilia, sicut substantia solis ad visibilia corporalia. Non est autem necesse ut ille qui videt colorem aliquem, videat substantiam solis; sed ut videat lumen solis, prout eo color illustratur. Similiter etiam non est necessarium ut ille qui cognoscit aliquid intelligibile, videat essentiam divinam; sed quod percipiat lumen intelligibile, quod a Deo originaliter manat, prout ipso est aliquid intelligibile actu”; and *ST* Ia, 84.5 [Leon. 5.322]: “. . . Alio modo dicitur aliquid cognosci in aliquo sicut in cognitionis principio; sicut si dicamus quod in sole videntur ea quae videntur per solem. Et sic necesse est dicere quod anima humana omnia cognoscat in rationibus aeternis, per quarum participationem omnia cognoscimus. Ipsum enim lumen intellectuale quod est in nobis, nihil est aliud quam quaedam participata similitudo luminis increati, in quo continentur rationes aeternae.”

<sup>152</sup> *In Sent.* I.3.4.5, arg. 3 [Mand. 1.121]: “Item, ad hoc quod anima intelligat vel videat, secundum Augustinum, requiritur intentio cognoscentis, per quam species cognoscibilis in rem deducatur. Sed quandoque anima intelligit, ex intentione intelligit se intelligere. Cum igitur non percipiamus nos intelligere semper animam et Deum, videtur quod intellectus noster non semper sit in actu, respectu horum objectorum”; and ad 3 [122]: “[I]ntentio intelligentis non requiritur ad tale intelligere, sicut dictum est.” The Augustinian text to which Thomas here refers is *De Trin.* 11.2.2 [CCSL 50.334]: “. . . in ea re quae uidetur quamdiu uidetur sensum detinet oculorum, id est animi intentio.”



intellect and illuminated object are known together in a single act.<sup>153</sup> These principles are repeated in *DV* 10.8, ad 10 s.c., where Thomas similarly suggests that we are implicitly aware of the agent intellect in all cognitive acts, since it is the “ratio” by which the species are rendered actually intelligible.<sup>154</sup>

In *DV* 8.14, Thomas further elaborates on this point to explain just why the intellect and its object can be perceived in a single act, in which attention is focused on the object. The sixth objection cites Augustine to prove that like the human mind, the angelic mind “always remembers itself, knows itself, and wills itself,” concluding thence that since an angel also “sometimes knows other things” besides itself, it can know many things at the same time.<sup>155</sup> Thomas responds that in the quote from Augustine, the “always” refers to “interior memory” (namely, habitual knowledge). Human beings actually know themselves, not permanently and continuously, but episodically, through a species (*intentio*). Angels, however, “always” know themselves *actually*, because they know themselves *per essentiam*, which yields permanent continuous self-knowledge. But it is impossible for an intellect to be informed by more than one form at a time. Thus:

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<sup>153</sup> *In Sent.* I.3.4.5, arg. 2 [Mand. 1.121]: “Item, Philosophus [IV *Metaph.*, text 12] dicit quod non contingit multa simul intelligere. Sed anima quandoque intelligit quaedam alia. Ergo tunc non intelligit simul seipsam”; and ad 2 [122]: “[P]hilosophus loquitur de intelligere, secundum quod est operatio intellectus completa distinguens vel cogitantis, et non secundum quod hic sumitur intelligere.”

<sup>154</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 10 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.325:535–47]: “[L]ux corporalis non videtur per se ipsam, nisi quatenus fit ratio visibilitatis visibilium, et forma quaedam dans esse eis visibile actu. Ipsa vero lux quae est in sole, non videtur a nobis nisi per eius similitudinem in visu nostro existentem. Sicut enim species lapidis non est in oculo, sed similitudo eius, ita non potest esse quod forma lucis quae est in sole, ipsa eadem sit in oculo. Et similiter etiam lumen intellectus agentis per seipsum a nobis intelligitur, inquantum est ratio specierum intelligibilium, faciens eas intelligibiles actu.”

<sup>155</sup> *DV* 8.14, arg. 6 [Leon. 22/2.263:34–38]: “Praeterea, Augustinus dicit X De Trinitate, quod ‘mens nostra semper meminit sui, intelligit se et vult se,’ et eadem ratio est de mente angeli; sed angelus quandoque intelligit alias res; ergo simul tunc plura intelligit.” The text to which Aquinas here refers is actually *De Trin.* 14.6.6 [CCSL 50A.432]: “Sed quoniam entem semper sui meminisse semperque se ipsam intellegere et amare, quamvis non semper se cogitare discretam ab eis quae non sunt quod ipsa est . . .”

when the mind of an angel understands itself and something else, it only understands many as one; which is clear from the following: For if there are some two things, such that one is the reason for understanding the other (*ratio intelligendi aliud*), one of them is as though formal, and the other is as though material; and thus those two are one intelligible thing, because one thing is constituted by form and matter. Whence the intellect, when it understands one thing through another, it understands one single intelligible thing, as is clear in sight: for light is that by which color is seen, whence it is related to color as formal; and thus color and light are only one single visible thing, and together are seen by sight. But the essence of the angel is for it the reason for knowing that which is known, although not the perfect reason, because it needs superadded forms: for all things know according to the mode of their substance, as is said in the *Liber de causis*, and according to their proper power (*virtus*) and nature, as Dionysius says in *De divinis nominibus*, ch. 7. Thus when it understands itself and others, it does not understand many things at the same time except as one.<sup>156</sup>

Here, Thomas explains how both the intellect and its object are known in a single act *after accounting for and dismissing habitual self-awareness*; so such knowledge cannot be habitual. Moreover, he uses precisely the same account as in *In Sent.* I.3.4.5, though in much more detail, and appealing to the same example of light and the visible. As in other texts,<sup>157</sup> he notes that there is no reason why many things cannot be known by the intellect at once, as long as they are known under the aspect of one (i.e., the intellect is informed by a single form). The knowing intellect is perceived in the act intentionally directed towards the object, because the intelligible-in-act is constituted formally by the knowing intellect and materially by the object itself. An object becomes actually intelligible when it is actually known by an intellect; the light of the agent intellect constitutes the form of the intelligible-

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<sup>156</sup> DV 8.14, ad 6 [Leon. 22/2.265:246– 266:279]: “[S]icut Augustinus exponit seipsum in XV De Trinitate, hoc quod dixerat in X libro quod ‘mens nostra semper sui meminit, semper se intelligit, semper se vult,’ ad interiorum memoriam est referendum. Unde anima nostra non semper actualiter se intelligit, sed mens angeli semper actualiter se intelligit; quod ideo contingit quia mens Angeli intelligit se per essentiam suam qua semper informatur, mens autem nostra forte intelligit quodam modo per intentionem. Nec tamen cum mens angeli se intelligit et aliquid aliud, intelligit simul multa nisi ut unum; quod sic patet. Si enim aliqua duo ita se habeant quod unum sit ratio intelligendi aliud, unum eorum erit quasi formale, et aliud quasi materiale; et sic illa duo sunt unum intelligibile cum ex forma et materia unum constituatur; unde intellectus quando intelligit aliquid per alterum, intelligit unum tantum intelligibile, sicut patet in visu; lumen enim est quo videtur color, unde se habet ad colorem ut formale, et sic color et lumen sunt unum tantum visibile et simul a visu videntur. Essentia autem angeli est ei ratio cognoscendi omne quod cognoscit, quamvis non perfecta, propter quod formis superadditis indiget: cognoscit enim omnia per modum substantiae suae, ut dicitur in libro De causis, et secundum propriam virtutem et naturam, ut dicit Dionysius, VII cap. De Divinis nominibus. Unde cum intelligit se et alia, non intelligit simul multa nisi ut unum.”

<sup>157</sup> See for instance SCG 1.55; DV 20.4; ST Ia, 86.2; Quodl. 9.4.2.

in-act, and the object constitutes the matter of the intelligible-in-act. Together, this “form” and “matter” result in a single intelligible-in-act: the object *qua* known.<sup>158</sup> In other words, the intellect’s act of understanding “informs” the object with actual intelligibility, so that the two become a single intelligible in which both object and intellect are understood, the object explicitly, as *object*, and the intellect implicitly, as the *reason for knowing* (*ratio intelligendi*).<sup>159</sup> For Thomas, then, this is precisely what it means for the knower and known to be united in the act of knowing; and it is precisely what yields implicit self-awareness.

One might wonder, however, whether this principle is restricted to angelic self-perception. I argue, however, that it is not. For one thing, it reproduces a distinction (knowing something as an object, *in ratione objecti*, and knowing at the same time the means of knowing, *in ratione medii cognoscendi*) that is presented in the Commentary on the *Sentences* with reference to human self-knowledge. Moreover, the angelic knowledge here in question has a parallel structure to human knowledge: although Aquinas identifies the essence of the angel as the reason for knowing (*ratio cognoscendi*), he does not mean that the angel knows objects through its essence. Rather, like the human intellect, it knows through superadded forms (infused in the angel, acquired in the human). Its essence, in fact, is simply the remote principle of the operation of knowing, just as the essence of the human soul is the remote principle of its cognitive acts. Thus with respect to knowledge of external

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<sup>158</sup> One should not confuse this form-matter composition in the intelligible-in-act with a different form-matter composition that takes place in the act of knowing, in which the possible intellect’s reception of the intelligible-in-act as matter receives form: *In De an.* III.1 [Leon. 45/1.206:323–26]: “[S]pecies igitur intelligibilis non est forma intellectus possibilis nisi secundum quod est intelligibilis actu, non est autem intelligibilis actu nisi secundum quod est a fantasmatis abstracta.”

<sup>159</sup> This is not to ignore the fact that ontologically speaking, being is intrinsically intelligible (true). Being is intelligible insofar as it is actual and therefore knowable. The intellect contributes the actual knowing and therefore actualizes the intrinsic actual intelligibility of being in the act of knowing.

objects, the essence of the soul and the angelic essence are the reason for knowing (*ratio cognoscendi*) in exactly the same way.<sup>160</sup>

From these texts, then, we can glean the following observations. First, Thomas sometimes takes “always knowing oneself” in the sense of habitual self-awareness; but sometimes he takes it in the different sense of actually perceiving oneself implicitly *every time one knows something else*. In *DV* 8.14, ad 6 and *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 4 (and perhaps also in *In Sent.* I.3.4.5), discussed above, he clearly distinguishes these two ways of interpreting “always.”<sup>161</sup> These texts thereby definitively distinguish habitual self-awareness from actual implicit self-awareness.

Second, though less clearly, Thomas seems to be assuming a distinction between a) knowing own’s own intellect obliquely as a means of knowing, in every act directed towards an external entity as object; and b) knowing one’s own intellect in a distinct act directed towards the intellect itself as object.<sup>162</sup> This is precisely the distinction between implicit and

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<sup>160</sup> For the relationship between essence and intellect in angels, see *ST* Ia, 54.1–3, where Thomas holds that angelic cognitive acts do not proceed directly from the angel’s essence, but that the proximate principle of knowing is the intellective power; the same applies to man, as stated in *ST* Ia, 76.1. The key difference between angelic and human knowing is that the angelic intellect is essentially in act, whereas the human intellect is essentially passive and therefore divided into a potential and an agent intellect (see *ST* Ia, 54.4); but this is not relevant to the present text.

<sup>161</sup> It must be emphasized that implicit self-awareness is not permanent (unlike habitual self-awareness), but depends upon the soul’s actualization in intentional knowing. Thus I do not agree with Picard’s interpretation that *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 postulates a “*conscience continuelle* très confuse . . . elle saisit immédiatement son objet réel *intelligible* qui lui est intimement *présent*” (“Le problème critique,” 55). It seems to me that this interpretation confuses Thomas’s account of habitual self-knowledge with his account of implicit self-awareness.

<sup>162</sup> This distinction is precisely one that Lonergan outlines at length in a well-known piece on experiential consciousness, “Christ as Subject” (replying to Antoine Perego, “Una nuova opinione sull’unità psicologica di Christo,” *Divinitas* 2 [1958] 402–457, who was critiquing Lonergan’s earlier work *De constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologia* [Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1956; 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 1964]). Lonergan uses slightly different terminology, arguing that consciousness requires that every act include a perception of the subject, which indeed constitutes the subject: “Further, I should say that one and the same act is at once the act of the object and the act of the subject; inasmuch as there is a *sensibile actu* or an *intelligibile actu*, an object is known; inasmuch as there is a *sensus actu* or an *intellectus actu*, the subject in act and his act

explicit self-awareness. He nowhere articulates this distinction in so many words in his discussions of self-knowledge.<sup>163</sup> Yet this distinction is carefully analyzed with respect to loving one's own love in *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 4, where Thomas distinguishes between an act of love that, while directed towards the beloved, also loves itself as the "reason for loving" (*ratio diligendis*), and an act of love that turns back upon itself as its own object.<sup>164</sup> And the distinction between implicit and explicit self-awareness underlies his analysis in the texts discussed above, in the basic assumption that we do not explicitly attend to ourselves in every act of knowing. Unless he is assuming a basic distinction between that which is known implicitly and that which is considered explicitly, it would make no sense for Thomas to strive in these texts for an explanation of how the soul knows oneself "in every act," even those in which it is not explicitly considering itself.

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are constituted and known" (254). This consciousness equates to what I have called implicit actual self-awareness, and Lonergan distinguishes it from an attention to the intellect itself under the *intentio entis intendens*, which appears to equate to what I have called explicit actual self-awareness. He argues that this theory of consciousness is found to some extent in Thomas but suggests that this is nearly impossible to prove from the Thomistic texts, given the disconnect between medieval approaches and modern expectations (see 249–50, esp. n. 11). I hope therefore to provide additional support to his argument by highlighting texts in which Thomas appears to outline such a theory.

<sup>163</sup> One could, however, point to *DM* 16.8, ad 7 as an exception, though I hesitate to place too much weight on it: "Alia autem cognitio est anime qua cognoscitur de ea quod est, et hoc modo homo cognoscit animam percipiendo ipsam esse ex actibus suis quos experitur. Et ad hunc modum cognoscendi pertinet illa cognitio qua cognoscimus nos aliquid cogitare" [Leon. 23.322:289–94]. Here Thomas seems to distinguish between the cognition of the perceiving self, and cogitation about some object about which one is thinking (*cogitare*).

<sup>164</sup> *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 4 [Mand. 1.406–7]: "[A]ctus dilectionis, secundum quod tendit in alterum, constat quod differt numero ab actu dilectionis qui in alio diligitur, sive diligatur ut objectum, sive ut ratio diligendi. Sed quia etiam animam suam potest aliquis ex caritate diligere, potest etiam ex caritate actum suae caritatis diligere. Et tunc distinguendum est. Quia vel dilectio fertur in actum dilectionis proprium, sicut in rationem dilectionis tantum; et sic constat quod eodem actu numero diligitur diligens et actus ejus; et sic idem actus diligitur per actum qui est ipse. Vel diligitur ut objectum dilectionis, et sic est alius actus dilectionis numero qui diligitur et quo diligitur; sicut patet planius in actu intellectus. Cum enim actus distinguantur per objecta, oportet dicere diversos actus qui terminantur ad objecta diversa. Unde sicut sunt diversi actus quibus intellectus intelligit equum et hominem, ita sunt diversi actus in numero, quo intelligit equum et quo intelligit actum illius sub ratione actus. Nec est inconueniens quod in actibus animae eatur in infinitum in potentia, dummodo actus non sint infiniti in actu. Unde etiam Avicenna concedit non esse impossibile quin relationes consequentes actum animae, multiplicentur in infinitum."

This distinction between implicit and explicit self-awareness, in fact, is in no way an anomaly within Thomas's general theory of knowledge. It parallels his familiar distinction between knowing a species and knowing through a species. He insists that a species is transparent to its object and is therefore that by which we know (*id quo*); but through reflexion it can be known secondarily as the object of knowledge (*id quod*).<sup>165</sup> In fact, every act of knowledge must contain an implicit knowledge of the species, for the species is the principle of knowledge, not as the principle of the object's being in the intellect (for which the intellect itself is responsible), but as the principle of the object's relation to the intellect.<sup>166</sup> For Thomas, as stated above, every act of knowing an object contains an oblique implicit perception of the principle of the act, or "that in which we know." Thus in knowing an object *through* the species, the species is implicitly known as principle of the act; in a second act, the species itself becomes the explicitly considered object of an act. Again, a similar distinction between knowing an object by means of an act

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<sup>165</sup> *ST* Ia, 85.2 [Leon. 5.334]: "Et ideo dicendum est quod species intelligibilis se habet ad intellectum ut quo intelligit intellectus. . . . Sed quia intellectus supra seipsum reflectitur, secundum eandem reflexionem intelligit et suum intelligere, et speciem qua intelligit. Et sic species intellectiva secundario est id quod intelligitur. Sed id quod intelligitur primo, est res cuius species intelligibilis est similitudo"; *SCG* 2.75 [Leon. 13.475]: "Licet autem dixerimus quod species intelligibilis in intellectu possibili recepta, non sit quod intelligitur, sed quo intelligitur; non tamen removetur quin per reflexionem quandam intellectus seipsum intelligat, et suum intelligere, et speciem qua intelligit"; *SCG* 4.11 [Leon. 15.32]: "Et quidem quod praedicta intentio non sit in nobis res intellecta, inde apparet quod aliud est intelligere rem, et aliud est intelligere ipsam intentionem intellectam, quod intellectus facit dum super suum opus reflectitur: unde et aliae scientiae sunt de rebus, et aliae de intentionibus intellectis"; *QDDA* 2, ad 5 [Leon. 24/119:389–20:392]: "Species enim intelligibilis est quo intellectus intelligit, non id quod intelligit, nisi per reflexionem, in quantum intelligit se intelligere id quo intelligit." See also *DV* 2.6 and *DP* 7.9.

<sup>166</sup> *DV* 2.5, ad 17 [Leon. 22/1.65:443–50]: "[S]imilitudo enim in vi cognoscitiva existens non est principium cognitionis rei secundum esse quod habet in potentia cognoscitiva, sed secundum relationem quam habet ad rem cognitam; et inde est quod non per modum quo similitudo rei habet esse in cognoscente res cognoscitur sed per modum quo similitudo in intellectu existens est repraesentativa rei." In *Quodl.* 9.4.2 [Leon. 25/1.104:52–54], Thomas notes: "[S]icut autem potencia intellectiva est principium intelligendi ipsi substantie, ita species intelligibilis fit principium intelligendi ipsi potentiae."

of knowing, and returning to know that act itself is precisely what grounds our knowledge of second intentions.<sup>167</sup>

Furthermore, this distinction between implicit and explicit self-awareness is simply the extension of basic principles in Thomas's general theory of knowledge. A dictum of Thomistic psychology is that the intellect can only know one thing at a time, since the intellect becomes what it knows, and it cannot become two things at once.<sup>168</sup> Nevertheless, Thomas notes that one can know many things at once, as long as they are all known under a single intention.

The cognitive power does not know something in act unless an intention is there: whence also sometimes we do not imagine in act the phantasms conserved in the organ, because the intention is not directed to them . . . . Therefore the many to which an intention does not lead all at the same time, we do not behold at the same time. But the ones that necessarily fall under one intention are necessarily understood at the same time.<sup>169</sup>

For example, the intellect is able to compare two things at once because it considers them under a single aspect; it is likewise able to understand a proposition, because a proposition unifies the terms as parts within a whole.<sup>170</sup> Similarly, the intellect can therefore know itself

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<sup>167</sup> See for instance *DP* 7.9 [Marietti, 207–8]: “Prima enim intellecta sunt res extra animam, in quae primo intellectus intelligenda fertur. Secunda autem intellecta dicuntur intentiones consequentes modum intelligendi: hoc enim secundo intellectus intelligit in quantum reflectitur supra se ipsum, intelligens se intelligere et modum quo intelligit.”

<sup>168</sup> *SCG* 1.55 [Leon. 13.157]: “Intellectus enim noster simul multa actu intelligere non potest, quia, cum intellectus in actu sit intellectum in actu, si plura simul actu intelligeret, sequeretur quod intellectus simul esset plura secundum unum genus, quod est impossibile. Dico autem secundum unum genus: quia nihil prohibet idem subiectum informari diversis formis diversorum generum, sicut idem corpus est figuratum et coloratum”; *Quodl.* 9.4.2: “Hanc enim causam Algazel assignat quare non est possibile simul multa intelligere, quia scilicet non est possibile intellectum simul informari multis speciebus in actu perfecte, sicut nec idem corpus figurari simul diversis figuris”; *ST* Ia, 86.2, ad 3 [Leon. 5.350]: “Sed species intelligibiles ingrediuntur intellectum nostrum successive: quia non multa simul actu intelliguntur.”

<sup>169</sup> *SCG* 1.55 [Leon. 13.157]: “Vis cognoscitiva non cognoscit aliquid actu nisi adsit intentio: unde et phantasmata in organo conservata interdum non actu imaginamur, quia intentio non fertur ad ea . . . . Multa igitur ad quae simul intentio non fertur, non simul intuemur. Quae autem oportet sub una intentione cadere, oportet simul esse intellecta: qui enim comparisonem duorum considerat, intentionem ad utrumque dirigit et simul intuetur utrumque.”

<sup>170</sup> *SCG* 1.55 [Leon. 13.157]: “Et inde est quod, quando aliqua multa accipiuntur quocumque modo unita, simul intelliguntur: simul enim intelligit totum continuum, non partem post partem; et similiter simul

implicitly in its acts, because known and knower are grasped in a single intention as object and subject of the same act.<sup>171</sup> Indeed, the thinking soul as subject is necessarily included in the intention directed towards the object because it is the remote principle of the act; the light of the agent intellect and the species are also necessarily included, as the means of knowing that object. Any one of these (the singular soul, the light of the agent intellect, and the species) can itself be known as object in a second act.

To summarize our findings here, then: we are implicitly self-aware in every act, and this self-awareness is actual, not habitual.<sup>172</sup> This is the inescapable conclusion of the doctrine that knower and known are one in the act of knowing: while attention can only be focused on one or the other, they constitute two dimensions of the same intelligibility. In explicitly considering the known as object, we cannot help implicitly perceiving the knower as principle of the act (and conversely, as we shall see, the known provides the context in which the knower can explicitly consider itself as object). We can conclude, then, that Thomas does offer an account for implicit self-awareness, and that it precisely involves a

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intelligit propositionem, non prius subiectum et postea praedicatum; quia secundum unam totius speciem omnes partes cognoscit.”

<sup>171</sup> See especially the entirety of *DV* 8.6. See note 187 below for the meaning of “intention” and how it applies here.

<sup>172</sup> The texts in which Thomas contrasts habit with actual consideration (see for instance *ST* Ia, 93.7 ad 3 [Leon. 5.409]: “Sed quando sine cogitatione sunt, ad solam memoriam pertinent; quae nihil est aliud, secundum ipsum, quam habitualis retentio notitiae et amoris”; *DV* 4.4 [Leon. 22/1.128:97–100]: “Verbum enim quod in nobis exprimitur per actuale considerationem, quasi exortum ex aliqua priorum consideratione, vel saltem cognitione habituali . . .”; and *ST* Ia-IIa, 50.4, cited below), should therefore be taken as stating that consideration is the perfect and final fulfilment of the operation. The ultimate goal of the habit is actual consideration, since something is most perfectly known when it is considered: see for instance *ST* Ia-IIae, 57.1 [Leon. 6.364]: “[Habitūs intellectuales speculativi] possunt quidem dici virtutes inquantum faciunt facultatem bonae operationis, quae est consideratio veri (hoc enim est bonum opus intellectus).” There is no reason, however, to take this as excluding a less complete actualization in an implicit knowledge. Thus we even find Thomas describing the proper operation of the intellect, to which the habit is oriented, in a twofold way as “intelligere” and “considerare”: *ST* Ia-IIae, 50.4 [Leon. 6.321]: “Sicut enim eius est potentia cuius est operatio, ita etiam eius est habitus cuius est operatio. Intelligere autem et considerare est proprius actus intellectus. Ergo et habitus quo consideratur, est proprie in ipso intellectu.”



grasp of the subject *qua* subject (principle of operation) within an act explicitly attending to some other object: as Reichmann calls it, a “concomitant presence” or a “connatural knowledge . . . the soul possesses of its own existence whenever it knows anything at all.”<sup>173</sup>

*c. Implicit actual self-awareness as a key to other textual problems*

Once Thomas is seen to accept two levels of actual self-awareness, implicit and explicit, a number of other apparent textual inconsistencies regarding self-awareness can be cleared up. First, we have already discussed how habitual self-awareness possesses a facility of exercise such that the soul is able to know itself just by willing to do so—yet the soul cannot know itself unless it is actualized by a species. I noted that the solution to this apparent contradiction is that the decision to consider one’s singular self cannot occur without an intellectual act motivating the decision. But the intellect is naturally already aware of itself in this prior intellectual act; consequently habitual self-awareness is exercised at two levels: first, a spontaneous self-awareness necessarily accompanying every act, and second, a much more infrequent consideration of self deliberately motivated by the will. It is now clear that these two “levels” of self-awareness are nothing other than implicit and explicit self-awareness.

Second, Lambert argues that there is an ambiguity in Thomas’s texts concerning whether the soul always knows itself in knowing other things,<sup>174</sup> or whether the soul only occasionally knows itself in its acts.<sup>175</sup> Lambert argues for the latter: the soul “has the

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<sup>173</sup> Reichmann, “The ‘Cogito’ in Thomas and Descartes,” 347–48. It should be noted that Reichmann ignores explicit self-awareness completely, as he is mainly interested in identifying the kind of awareness that corresponds to Descartes’ *cogito* and comparing it with the *cogito*.

<sup>174</sup> Lambert cites the following texts (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 117 and 344, n. 446): *ST* Ia, 111.1, ad 3; *DV* 8.6; *DV* 18.1, ad 10; and *In Ethic.* III.3. For citations and additional texts, see note 87 above.

<sup>175</sup> Lambert cites the following texts (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 118 and 345, n. 448): *Quodl.* 10.4.1, ad 2 [Leon. 25/1.135:76–82]: “Set id quo cognoscimus sicut forma cognoscentis, non oportet

opportunity to perceive itself . . . whenever it performs its proper act of understanding.

That opportunity is usually taken up in some fashion, as we are normally aware to some degree of our own presence amidst the items of experience, but some momentary experiences do seem to eliminate self awareness in favor of total concentration on the object of consciousness.”<sup>176</sup> The notion that an experience can be so absorbing that one loses the sense of oneself as subject is Plotinian, however, not Thomistic.<sup>177</sup> In fact, I have repeatedly argued that because self-awareness occurs *per seipsam*, self-awareness is an intrinsic part of every intentional act.<sup>178</sup>

The distinction between habitual self-awareness, implicit actual self-awareness, and explicit actual self-awareness now provides us with a way of interpreting the apparent conflict in the texts. The proposition, “The human intellect always actually understands itself,” is false when ‘always’ is taken to mean ‘permanently, and continuously’ (since only

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esse notum, quia nec oculus videt lucem que est de oculi compositione, nec speciem per quam uidet; et ita etiam non est necessarium ut quicumque intelligit aliquid, intelligat intellectum suum quo intelligit uel lumen intellectualem”; *DV* 10.8, ad 11 [Leon. 22/2.323:395–99]: “[I]ta etiam non oportet quod semper intelligatur actualiter ipsa mens, cuius cognitio inest nobis habitualiter, ex hoc quod ipsa eius essentia intellectui nostro est praesens”; *DV* 1.5, ad 5 [Leon. 22/1.19:307–310]: “[N]on enim oportet quod quidquid intellectus intelligendo habet, intelligendo intelligat, quia non semper reflectitur super seipsum.” He also cites *ST* Ia, 14.6, ad 1, but the text is not actually relevant to his argument. I would, however, add to the list *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 1 [Leon. 5.356]: “[M]ens seipsam per seipsam novit, quia tandem in sui ipsius cognitionem pervenit, licet per suum actum” (my emphasis).

<sup>176</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 118–19.

<sup>177</sup> Plotinus’ doctrine on this point is well known; one could mention for instance, *Ennead* VI.9: “But when the soul seeks to know in its own way—by coalescence and unification—it is prevented by that very unification from recognizing it has found The One, for it is unable to distinguish knower and known” (*The Essential Plotinus*, trans. Elmer O’Brien [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1964], 76). Thomas, in contrast, insists that even in the beatific vision, the angels and separated souls are not distracted from God by knowing other things, because union with God is of a different order from other cognitive acts and is the *ratio* for all these lesser acts: “Vnde simul ex intellectu angeli procedit operatio duplex: una ratione unionis ad Verbum, qua scilicet uidet res in Verbo, alia ratione speciei intelligibilis qua informatur, qua videt res in propria natura. Nec etiam in una harum operationum debilitatur per attentionem ad alteram, set magis confortatur, cum una sit ratio alterius, sicut ymaginatio rei uise confortatur dum uidetur in actu oculo exteriori: actio enim beatitudinis in beatis est ratio cuiuslibet alterius actionis in eis invente” (*Quodl.* 9.4.2 [Leon. 25/1.104:75–85]).

<sup>178</sup> Other authors who concur on this point include: Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 107; Reichmann, “The ‘Cogito’ in Thomas and Descartes,” 346; de Finance, “Cogito cartésien et réflexion thomiste,” 39; Lonergan, “Christ as Subject”; and Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 74–76.

angels and God know themselves actually in this way, which requires self-awareness *per essentiam*). The same proposition is true, however, when ‘always’ is contracted so as to signify ‘in every act’ (since the human intellect understands itself implicitly in all its acts). Finally, even assuming this contracted meaning of ‘always,’ the proposition is false when ‘understands itself’ is taken to mean ‘explicitly attends to itself’ (since the human intellect only sometimes considers itself explicitly). Thomas himself generally does not clarify how he means to take the terms, but we can determine the correct interpretation based on the distinctions between habitual, implicit, and explicit self-awareness. Thus for instance when he argues in *Quodl.* 10.4.1, ad 2 that the intellect does not always understand its species or the intellectual light, we can take this to mean that the intellect does not always know itself explicitly *as object*.<sup>179</sup>

Third, the distinction between implicit and explicit self-awareness also accounts for what would otherwise apparently be a puzzling textual inconsistency. In some texts Thomas insists that the intellect and its object are known in a single act: “In the same operation, I understand the intelligible and I understand that I understand.”<sup>180</sup> Yet this does not stop him from arguing elsewhere that self-awareness is a numerically and temporally distinct act that

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<sup>179</sup> See *Quodl.* 10.4.1, ad 2, cited in note 175 above. Note too that Thomas is here responding to the claim that the divine truth is always known in every act of knowledge, by analogy with visible light. His response is therefore to point out that we do not necessarily see visible or intellectual light; this is consistent with his distinction between seeing something as object, or as the means of vision.

<sup>180</sup> *In Sent.* I.1.2.1, ad 2 [Mand. 1.38]: “[E]adem operatione intelligo intelligibile et intelligo me intelligere.” See also I.10.1.5, ad 2 [Mand. 1.271]: “[S]icut est in inferioribus, quod non alio actu potentia fertur in objectum et in actum suum, eodem enim actu intellectus intelligit se et intelligit se intelligere” (a principle that Thomas uses to show how there is no need for a second act of loving the first act of love in the Trinity; hence the impossibility of generating a fourth Person); *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 4, cited in note 164 above; *DV* 10.8, ad 9 [Leon. 22/2.323:373–76]: “Alio modo dicitur aliquid alio cognosci sicut in quo cognoscitur, et sic non oportet ut id quo cognoscitur, alia cognitione cognoscatur quam id quod eo cognoscitur”; and, less clearly, *ST* Ia-IIae, 112.5, ad 1 [Leon. 7.327]: “Illa quae sunt per essentiam sui in anima, cognoscuntur experimentalis cognitione, in quantum homo experitur per actus principia intrinseca: sicut voluntatem percipimus volendo, et vitam in operibus vitae.”

follows upon the act in which the external object is known.<sup>181</sup> Indeed, Thomas is challenged on this point by an objector who argues that if the soul knows itself in a second act, then it could know that it knows itself in a third act, and know that it knows that it knows itself in a fourth act . . . and so on to infinity. But Thomas cheerfully accepts this possibility, noting that while it is impossible to achieve an actual infinity, that the sequence of reflexive acts is at least potentially infinite.<sup>182</sup> In SCG 2.49, he even uses this potential infinity of reflexive acts to prove that the soul must be immaterial.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> See *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 4, cited in note 164 above; *DV* 10.9 [Leon. 22/2.328:202–7]: “Unde actio intellectus nostri primo tendit in ea quae per phantasmata apprehenduntur et deinde redit ad actum suum cognoscendum, et ulterius in species et habitus et potentias et essentiam ipsius mentis”; SCG 4.11 [Leon. 15.32]: “[A]liud est intelligere rem, et aliud est intelligere ipsam intensionem intellectam”; *ST* Ia, 16.4, ad 2 [Leon. 4.211]: “[S]ecundum hoc est aliquid prius ratione, quod prius cadit in intellectu. Intellectus autem per prius apprehendit ipsum ens; et secundario apprehendit se intelligere ens; et tertio apprehendit se appetere ens”; and *ST* Ia, 28.4, ad 2, and 87.3, ad 1 and 2, cited below in note 182. Cf. also *DV* 2.2, ad 2 where Aquinas implies that the soul’s *exitus* to external things and its *reditus* to its own essence are distinct acts. Most interestingly, in *In Met.* XII.11, no. 2617 [Marietti, 608], Thomas notes a difficulty with describing the knowledge of the First Intellect: “Et si aliquando sint suiipsius, sicut cum aliquis sentit se sentire, vel scit se scire, vel opinatur se opinari, vel meditatur se meditari, hoc est quidem praeter opus vel praeter actum principalem: nam hic videtur principalis actio, ut aliquis intelligat intelligibile.—Quod autem aliquis intelligat se intelligere intelligibile, hoc videtur esse praeter principalem actum, quasi accessorium quoddam. Unde si intelligere primi non sit nisi intelligentia intelligentiae, videtur sequi quod suum intelligere non sit principalissimum.” He identifies the solution in no. 2620 [ibid.]: “[M]anifestum est quod in substantia prima, quae maxime remota est a materia, maxime idem est intelligere et intellectum. Et sic una est intelligentia intellecti tantum, et non est aliud intelligentia intellecti, et aliud intelligentia intelligentiae.” Here he distinguishes between our common experience of knowledge, in which self-awareness requires a second act “praeter actum principalem” on account of the non-identity between the intellect and its act of understanding, and the knowledge of the First Intellect, which is identical with the intellect itself, and which is therefore known in the same act, not in a distinct act.

<sup>182</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.3, ad 1 [Leon. 5.361]: “Intellectus potest actum suum intelligere. Sed non primo”; and ad 2 [ibid.]: “Unde alius est actus quo intellectus intelligit lapidem, et alius est actus quo intelligit se intelligere lapidem, et sic inde. Nec est inconueniens in intellectu esse infinitum in potentia, ut supra dictum est.” See also Ia, 28.4, ad 2 [Leon. 4.326]: “[I]n nobis relationes intelligibiles in infinitum multiplicantur, quia alio actu intelligit homo lapidem, et alio actu intelligit se intelligere lapidem, et alio etiam intelligit hoc intelligere: et sic in infinitum multiplicantur actus intelligendi, et per consequens relationes intellectae.”

<sup>183</sup> SCG 2.49 [Leon. 13.381–82]: “Actio corporis ad actionem non terminatur, nec motus ad motum: ut in physicis est probatum. Actio autem substantiae intelligentis ad actionem terminatur: intellectus enim, sicut intelligit rem, ita intelligit se intelligere, et sic in infinitum. Substantia igitur intelligens non est corpus.”

One cannot appeal to a development of doctrine, since articulations of both positions can be found in *De veritate* q. 10, one in a. 8 and the other in a. 9.<sup>184</sup> But when the distinction between implicit and explicit self-awareness is applied, the inconsistency vanishes. In implicit self-awareness, both the known object and the means of knowing (the intellect / species) are known in a single act in which attention is directed towards the object. “Thus in one act of knowing, the intellect understands the thing of which the intelligibility is an abstracted likeness, the intelligibility itself, the first principles of being, and itself as the subject exercising the act of understanding.”<sup>185</sup> But explicit self-awareness involves a shift of intellectual attention from the known entity to the knowing self. The intellect’s intention or attention is now directed towards itself. Here, we have two acts; a first-order act in which the intention is explicitly directed towards the object (with the subject known therein implicitly as the principle of knowing), and a second-order act in which it is explicitly directed towards the subject.<sup>186</sup>

### ***3. Attention Problems: The Relationship of Implicit and Explicit Self-Awareness***

The difference between implicit and explicit self-awareness, is therefore one of intention in the sense of attention. But what psychological structure underlies the shift in attention from implicit to explicit self-awareness? What happens when I am engaged in

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<sup>184</sup> Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, argues that there is development in the way Thomas discusses implicit self-awareness: after the *Sentences*, he considers Thomas to have stopped treating implicit self-awareness “as a species of knowledge” in favor of describing it “as the nature itself of any knowing activity” (76). I suspect, however, that he is misled by certain texts in the *Summa* that he deems to be referring to implicit self-awareness.

<sup>185</sup> Reichmann, “The ‘Cogito’ in Thomas and Descartes,” 346.

<sup>186</sup> This is likely why Still insists that knowledge of the object is temporally prior to self-awareness: “Once the intellect has been actualized, the object whose species has been received will be the first thing known; only then is the soul in a position to know itself for the first time, by returning to its own act” (“Aquinas’s Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 34). This applies to explicit self-awareness, but not to implicit self-awareness.

explicitly considering a tree while implicitly grasping myself as the subject of that consideration, and then turn my attention towards myself to consider myself explicitly?

In addressing this problem, it is important to note the two closely related meanings of *intentio*. According to Schütz, the term more usually signifies ‘attention’ or direction of gaze; less often but still quite frequently, it signifies a species or phantasm.<sup>187</sup> This makes sense, because the intelligible actualization of the species in the illumination of the phantasm by the agent intellect is what makes it possible to attend to a given truth. An intention in the sense of ‘species’ provides the intellect with content; it refers or points to the object that it makes present. But intention in the sense of ‘attention’ is the directing of the intellect towards the object to which the species points. The species thus lays out an intelligible path to an object, so to speak; attention marches the intellect down that path.

Given the close relationship of attention and species, then, an initial impulse might be to account for the shift from implicit to explicit self-awareness in terms of the use of a different species or phantasm. Perhaps explicit self-awareness occurs when the intellect abstracts a species of itself or the imagination concocts a phantasm of the intellect.<sup>188</sup> In Chapter II, §C.2.b, however, I noted Thomas’s insistence that the intellect only uses species

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<sup>187</sup> Ludwig Schütz, *Thomas-Lexikon: Sammlung, Übersetzung und Erklärung der in sämtlichen Werken des h. Thomas von Aquin vorkommenden Kunstausdrücke und wissenschaftlichen Aussprüche*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1895; reprint, New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1948), s.v. “intentio,” pp. 419–22. The first meaning is “Aufmerksamkeit” (attention), with references to *ST* Ia-IIa, 37.1, 38.2, and 77.1; *SCG* 1.55; and *DV* 13.3. The second meaning is “Anstrengung, Absicht, Vorhaben” (intention in the sense of tendency or purpose), with references to *ST* Ia, 79.10, ad 3, and I-IIae, 12.1; *DV* 21.3, ad 5, and 22.13; *DM* 16.11, ad 3, etc.. The third meaning is “Beziehung, synonym mit habitudo, ratio, und relatio.” Only in the fourth and fifth meanings do we find references to mental entities. Thus the fourth meaning is “Ähnlichkeit, Abbild, synonym mit similitudo und species,” and the fifth meaning is “übersinnliches Erkenntnisbild, Vorstellung der Vernunft, Begriff, synonym mit conceptio intelligibilis und ratio.”

<sup>188</sup> “The active intellect ‘generalizes’ the multitude of individual intellectual acts, and thus fashions a species of the ‘acts’ through which is seen their ‘subject,’ the possible intellect. This species is deposited in, and understood by, the same possible intellect, wherein the secondary species accompanies the intention of whatever sensible object the intellect happens to be conceptualizing at a given moment” (Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 149).

of external objects in self-knowledge, even to know itself quidditatively, and there seems to be no reason to exempt explicit self-awareness from this rule.

Instead, we can only solve this problem by returning to a theme that can hardly be emphasized enough: since the intellect receives the species as its form, the species of, say, a sunset informing the intellect *is* the species of the intellect, a snapshot of its actualized self. Indeed, if the intellect were to construct a species of itself knowing a sunset, it would end up constructing that very same species: one and the same species actualizes the intellect for knowing the sunset and for knowing itself. This is an important point, for it highlights the dependency of explicit self-awareness on an abstracted species. Putallaz, for instance, insists that Thomas does not objectify the intellect in self-awareness. In other words, it is impossible for the intellect to view itself as an object, an “other”: it must always see itself as a subject, in the first person. Consequently, an orientation towards the object, the “other,” must continue throughout all acts of self-awareness, so that “I” can be differentiated from “it.”<sup>189</sup> The intellect’s self-awareness, both implicit and explicit, is always founded upon its knowledge of the external object.<sup>190</sup> The intellect *notices* itself, not in a void, but in the act of knowing something; what I see when I turn my attention towards myself is me-in-the-act-of-viewing-a-sunset, not a solitary Ego. Consequently the species of the sunset cannot be removed without destroying the intellect’s intelligibility.

The same applies to the phantasm: a phantasm of the sunset (for instance) is necessary for the intellect to be actualized in the act of knowing the sunset implicitly.

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<sup>189</sup> “En réalité, dans tout acte de connaissance, il n’y a pas d’objet autre que la chose extra-mentale; le ‘soi’ n’est pas ob-jet, il n’est pas conçu comme autrui . . .” (Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 111).

<sup>190</sup> See DV 10.8, ad 5 [Leon. 22/2.322:353–55]: “[N]otitia actuali, secundum quam anima non percipit se esse nisi percipiendo actum suum et obiectum . . .”

Without this phantasm, the intellect cannot actually know the sunset; without the act in which one is knowing the sunset, the intellect cannot be made intelligible for either implicit or explicit self-awareness. Lest one should object that an imagined phantasm of the intellect should accompany one's explicit self-awareness because of human knowledge's dependence on phantasms, Thomas notes in *In Sent.* III.23.1.2 that "every cognition by which the intellect cognizes those things that are in the soul, is founded upon its knowing its object, which has a phantasm corresponding to it: for it is not necessary that cognition should remain solely in the phantasms; but rather that from the phantasms, its cognition should arise, and that it should leave behind imagination in some things."<sup>191</sup> In other words, the presentation of the phantasm of the sunset is adequate to give rise to self-awareness; there is no need to construct further phantasms of the intellect to accommodate a change in attention.<sup>192</sup>

If one asks, then, what changes in the intellect when attention is shifted from the sunset to me-as-knowing-the-sunset, the answer is—simply the intellect's direction of gaze (intention in the sense of attention). With the species and the phantasm remaining the same, the explanation for this shift lies in the will. The species together with the phantasm delimits the range of what can be considered by means of a single species. But the will

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<sup>191</sup> *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 5 [Moos 3.704]: "[T]ota cognitio qua cognoscit intellectus ea quae sunt in anima, fundatur super hoc quod cognoscit objectum suum, quod habet phantasma sibi correspondens. Non enim oportet quod solum in phantasmatis cognitione stet, sed quod ex phantasmatis sua cognitio oriatur, et quod imaginationem in aliquibus relinquat."

<sup>192</sup> See *DV* 10.8, ad 1 [Leon. 22/2.323:325–31]: "Sed essentia sua sibi innata est, ut non eam necesse habeat a phantasmatis acquirere; sicut nec materiae essentia acquiritur ab agente naturali, sed solum eius forma, quae ita comparatur ad materiam naturalem sicut forma intelligibilis ad materiam sensibilem"; *DV* 10.8, ad 2 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.324:481–91]: "[I]n visione intellectuali aliquis inspicit ipsam essentiam rei sine hoc quod inspicat aliquam similitudinem illius rei, quamvis quandoque per aliquam similitudinem illam essentiam inspicat; quod etiam experimento patet. Cum enim intelligimus animam, non confingimus nobis aliquod animae simulacrum quod intueamur, sicut in visione imaginaria accidebat; sed ipsam essentiam animae consideramus. Non tamen ex hoc excluditur quin ista visio sit per aliquam speciem"; and Still, "Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge," 42.



chooses the point of view from which the intellect considers its object through that species; for instance, using a single species of ‘man,’ I might consider man as rational (making man-qua-rational the object of the act), or I might consider him as a religious being (making man-qua-religious the object of the act).

Self-awareness is no exception. Since the human intellect is naturally oriented towards forms abstracted from material beings, its attention is by default commanded by extramental entities, which are known explicitly, while the intellect itself is always perceived implicitly in the same act as the reason for knowing (*ratio cognoscendi*).<sup>193</sup> But the will can also direct the intellect to consider, *by means of that same species*, its own knowing self as principle of the act, for the knowing intellect and the known entity constitute a single understood intelligible, with the intellect contributing the formal dimension and the known entity contributing the material dimension. “But the one knowing and the one known—insofar as the effect proceeds from them is just one thing, namely, the intellect-in-act [or, intellection-in-act]—are one principle of this act, namely, to understand.”<sup>194</sup> What happens in explicit self-awareness is therefore simply the reverse of implicit self-awareness: the intellect’s attention is directed towards itself as formal principle of the act of knowing the sunset, while the sunset itself is perceived implicitly as the material principle of the act, granting the “content” whereby I perceive myself-in-act. It is for this reason that even in explicit self-awareness, the intellect continues to perceive itself

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<sup>193</sup> See *In Sent.* I.3.4.5, ad 3: [Mand. 1.122]: “[I]ntentio intelligentis non requiritur ad tale intelligere [viz., in ratione objecti], sicut dictum est, in corpore art.”

<sup>194</sup> *DV* 8.6 [Leon. 22/2.238:123–26]: “Sed intelligens et intellectum, prout ex eis est effectum unum quid, quod est intellectus in actu, sunt unum principium huius actus quod est intelligere.”

as “I” and not “it”; it still perceives itself, though now explicitly, as knowing subject, since it cannot be perceived in any other way except as actualized by what is other.<sup>195</sup>

It is important to note that the act of explicit self-awareness is distinct from the original, implicitly-self-aware act focused on an extramental entity, because the intellect can only attend to one thing at a time as an object (*in ratione obiecti*). Acts are distinguished by their objects, and the object of an act is determined by the direction of the intellectual gaze (intention/attention).<sup>196</sup> But how can this second-order act, focused on the intellect, replace the first-order act, when it is constructed on the basis of this first-order act (I understand that-I-am-knowing-a-sunset, *intelligit se intelligere*)? How does it continue to rely on the content of the first-order act, when the intellect can only receive one act at a time?<sup>197</sup> The answer, I think, is found in the ineliminable duality of every intentional act, in which knower and known are one in the single act of knowing. To be aware of some entity, to

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<sup>195</sup> It should also be noted that for Thomas, a shift in attention from the object considered to the means by which it is known is non-discursive; see *DV* 2.3, ad 3 [Leon. 22/1.52:335–50]: “Tunc enim solum dicitur intellectus de uno in aliud discurrere, quando diversa apprehensione utrumque apprehendit, sicut intellectus humanus alio actu apprehendit causam et effectum et ideo effectum per causas cognoscens dicitur de causa discurrere in effectum. Quando vero non alio actu fertur potentia cognoscitiva in medium quo cognoscit et in rem cognitam tunc non est aliquis discursus in cognitione, sicut visus cognoscens lapidem per speciem lapidis in ipso existentem vel rem quae resultat in speculo per speculum non dicitur discurrere, quia idem est ei ferri in similitudinem rei et in rem quae per talem similitudinem cognoscitur.”

<sup>196</sup> SCG 1.55 [Leon. 13.157]: “Intellectus successive multa considerantis impossibile est esse unam tantum operationem: cum enim operationes secundum obiecta differant, oportebit diversam esse operationem intellectus qua considerabitur primum, et qua considerabitur secundum.

<sup>197</sup> This is the problem noted by Putallaz: “Si l’acte réflexif n’est pas une analyse abstraite et si, comme le note Thomas d’Aquin, il est dans la dépendance actuelle de l’acte intentionnel directe, comment l’intellect peut-il être ordonné simultanément à deux ‘objets’ différents? . . . Vouloir saisir l’acte de l’intellect comme objet ne fait-il pas disparaître l’acte lui-même?” (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 153) Putallaz solves this problem by arguing that there are two simultaneous acts, “l’un direct et l’autre réflexif, parce que ces derniers ne portent pas réellement sur deux objets différents . . . En effet, l’acte intentionnel atteint et saisit la chose extra-mentale, mais dans sa quiddité réelle, tandis que l’acte réflexif atteint cette même chose, mais dans son intelligibilité conçue par l’intellect” (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 154). This solution seems to me unsatisfactory. For instance, the reflexive act would therefore not yield explicit self-awareness, but knowledge of the object under a certain aspect (and this is in fact precisely what Putallaz is arguing, since he considers reflexion to be the act of judgment of the object’s existence; see Chapter IV, §C); yet Putallaz does seem to want reflexion to attain the individual agent in some sense (155).

consider it explicitly, is to be aware of it *as other*, which in turn requires an implicit reference to the knower *as subject*. Conversely, my consideration of myself is always of myself *as subject*, not as other; but this requires a reference to something else that is other. Or to put it another way, I can only consider some entity as “it” in the context of “I,” and vice versa.<sup>198</sup>

For Thomas, this mutual illumination of known and knower derives from their union in a single act of knowing, constituting the formal and material aspects of a single intellection, by means of a single species that represents both at once. Since acts are distinguished by objects and therefore by the direction of attention, the first-order act cannot remain as the basis for the second-order act. There is only room for one act at a time in the intellect. *But the same union of knower and known by means of the same species—the same intelligibility/intellection-in-act, composed formally of the intellect and materially of the extramental entity—does remain.* In the first-order act *and* in the second-order act, the union of intellect and the extramental entity is numerically the same; only the direction of intellectual gaze has shifted. Taking the species as a source of data, one could say that all the requisite “information” for explicit self-awareness is already present in the actuality provided by the species. Or, taking it as an actualization, one could say that the species is entirely adequate to manifest the intellect to itself, if only the intellect would look in its own direction. The species never ceases to be a species *of the sunset* (so that once attention has

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<sup>198</sup> Thus not only the known, but also the knower itself, are present to the knower in a single act of knowing. As Thomas puts it *In Sent.* I.3.4.5, ad 1 [Mand. 1.122]: “[H]oc est intelligendum quando potentiae operantur circa diversa objecta: tunc enim una impedit aliam in actu suo, vel ex toto retrahit. Sed quando ordinantur ad idem objectum, tunc una iuvat aliam; sicut illud quod videmus, facilius imaginatur.” In other words, I can only *pay attention* to one thing (*in ratione obiecti*) at a time, though many things are present to my mind which I am not specifically noticing. And because the intellect is the means of knowing, it “helps” the object to be known and is thus included implicitly in all knowledge of the object.

shifted to oneself as subject, the sunset is now known implicitly as the other dimension of that intelligible), but since it is also a species of the intellect when it actualizes the intellect, the species itself does not change—only the direction of gaze does. Thus although the first-order act focused on the sunset is replaced by the second-order act focused on the intellect, in this latter act the intellect is still known as *subject*, as “I,” and never as “it.” When the intellect explicitly considers itself *in ratione obiecti*, it is not “objectifying” itself, as though viewing itself in a detached way as a third-person item. This is precisely because the intellect is still united to the extramental entity, but has merely shifted its attention to itself, a self which is made manifest as knower in that union with that entity.

#### **4. Thomas’s Appropriation of Augustine’s “*se nosse*”**

This analysis of implicit and explicit self-awareness concludes our investigation of Thomas’s theory of self-awareness, the knowledge according to which the soul knows its own singular self. At this point, it is now possible to gauge Thomas’s interpretation of the mysterious Augustinian distinction (discussed in Chapter I, §A.1) between the mind’s uninterrupted familiarity with itself (*se nosse*), a familiarity that Augustine compares to the way in which a doctor continues to know grammar while practicing medicine, and its episodic attention to itself, when it thinks about itself (*se cogitare*). In outlining this distinction in the first chapter, I noted that one’s familiarity with oneself (*se nosse*) could be taken in two ways. Taken one way, this familiarity could be an actual implicit self-awareness; it is in this way that Aquinas’s opponents interpret it, attributing to Augustine the view that the soul possesses an innate intuition of itself. Taken another way, this familiarity could be a habitual awareness whereby the soul is merely ready to know itself.

Thomas—rightly, I believe—sees Augustine’s teaching on self-familiarity (*se nosse*), as an extension of Augustine’s insistence that the soul “always” knows itself, which could likewise be interpreted as habitual or as actual implicit self-knowledge. Interestingly, Thomas does not choose one interpretation to the exclusion of the other. Instead, he recognizes both as necessary to a complete analysis of self-awareness. Taken by analogy to a habit, self-familiarity (*se nosse*)<sup>199</sup> occurs “always” in the strongest possible sense—when we are sleeping, before our senses ever actually perceive anything—and necessarily belongs to the essence of the intellectual soul. Taken as implicit actual self-awareness, Augustine’s self-familiarity occurs “always” in a weaker sense, i.e., in every cognitive act.<sup>200</sup> This type of self-awareness is an indispensable dimension of our experience of the world and is the necessary corollary of the Aristotelian account of intellection as the immaterial reception of a form.

Thomas therefore treats Augustine as using a single description (*se nosse*) for two distinct cognitive phenomena. With customary charity, however, he does not point this out; instead, he simply interprets texts in which Augustine proposes that the soul is familiar with itself, or that the soul always knows itself, in whatever way happens to be convenient. Thus sometimes he presents both habitual self-awareness and implicit actual self-awareness as alternate interpretations of Augustine, as in *In Sent.* I.3.4.5 and *ST* Ia, 93.7, ad 4, or more subtly, in *DV* 8.14, ad 6. But sometimes, as in Ia, 93.7, ad 3, he only mentions habitual self-

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<sup>199</sup> This interpretation especially resonates with Thomas’s theory of habit, in which this kind of familiarity is proper to habitual knowledge; see the discussion of presence above in §A.

<sup>200</sup> For a similar handling of the “always” in the parallel case of our knowledge of God, see *In Sent.* I.17.1.4 [Mand. 1.403–4]: “Quamvis quidam aliter dicant, quod ipsam charitatem, quae Deus est, in nobis videmus, sed visio est adeo tenuis, scilicet quod nec visio potest dici, nec aliquis percipit se videre; eo quod visio ipsius Dei quasi confunditur et admiscetur in cognitione aliorum. Sicut etiam dicunt, quod anima semper se intelligit, sed tamen non semper de se cogitat.”

awareness. The fact that Thomas interprets Augustine's permanent self-familiarity (*se nosse*) sometimes as habitual and sometimes as implicit actual self-awareness is consistent with his general use of the related term 'notitia' to refer to both habitual and actual knowledge.<sup>201</sup>

With considerable insight, then, Thomas incorporates both interpretations of Augustine into his system. He does, however, impose one Aristotelian restriction: implicit actual self-awareness cannot occur "always" in the strong sense. Thomas is willing to interpret Augustine's *se nosse* as either habitual or actual, as long as this is never taken to indicate that we have permanent actual self-awareness apart from cognitive acts arising from the senses.

#### D. Conclusion

It is now clear that habitual self-awareness, for Thomas, is neither an act of self-knowing, nor simply a pure potency for self-knowing; it is, rather, the essential ordering and perfection that makes it possible and indeed necessary for the soul to catch an inattentive glimpse of itself as the subject of every act, and that allows the soul to consider itself actually whenever it chooses. That this habitual self-awareness belongs to the very essence of the soul indicates the soul's intellectual dimension. In fact, it is in virtue of the fact that the soul is essentially in *sheer potency* to knowing all forms, it is also essentially *habitually disposed* towards knowing itself. By the very nature of its immateriality and intellectuality, whereby it is in potency to form, the soul is ordered so as to be ready to know itself, *qua* knower. And this is simply *what it means to be an intellectual being*. But as the lowest in

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<sup>201</sup> *Quodl.* 7.1.4, cited above in note 104.

the order of intellects, the soul's default state is one of potency to its object, so that it must be actualized by a form from without in order to become intelligible *qua* known. Always already on the cusp of knowing itself, the soul is barred from achieving perpetual actual self-awareness only by its own essential potency to form—a potency that pertains to the very intellectuality whereby the same soul is habitually ready to know itself. And this is part of what it means to be the least powerful of all intellects.

Habitual self-awareness is exercised at two levels of actual self-awareness: 1) spontaneously in the implicit self-awareness that accompanies every act intentionally directed towards the “other”; and 2) by will, in a second, reflexive, act of explicit self-awareness, in which the intellect directs its attention towards its acting self. At the first level, actual implicit self-awareness spontaneously accompanies any intentional act. Because the very form of the intellect is to know, whenever it receives form it is rendered intelligible to itself. In terms of the conditions for knowledge, the intellect cannot help but know itself in every act, since in each act it fulfils the conditions of immateriality, presence to itself, and intelligibility. Likewise, the nature of knowing dictates that the intellect must know itself in every act, since in the act of knowing, the knower and the known are united, sharing a single actuality. Thus the experience of oneself as subject is an ineliminable part of the experience of considering some “other” as object. But this self-perception is only implicit, for the intellect's attention is naturally trained on the extramental object. Thus the knowing subject, although perceived implicitly as a necessary aspect of one's consideration of anything at all, is not at this level explicitly considered or spoken in the interior word “I.”

Later, in a second, explicit act of self-awareness, the intellect can reflect upon itself. Here, retaining the same species and phantasm of the external thing that it is knowing or remembering, it turns its attention to itself as the principle of that act, the subject of that intelligibility. In the outer-directed act of knowing a sunset, the “I” is known implicitly as principle and the sunset is known explicitly (*in ratione objecti*) as the terminus of attentive consideration. In the reflexive act of explicit self-awareness, the sunset is known implicitly as the act’s material content, and the “I” is known explicitly as the terminus of attentive consideration (*in ratione objecti*). In the act of knowing a sunset, the intelligibility of the “I” is manifested implicitly as subject, but what the intellect explicitly knows and speaks in a mental word is “sunset.” In explicit self-awareness, the intelligibility of the sunset is manifested implicitly, but what the intellect explicitly knows is “I.” This is possible because knower and known are one in the act of knowing.

The intellect’s ability to consider its singular self explicitly is extremely important, for it constitutes the gateway to quidditative self-knowledge (the topic of the next chapter). For it is explicit self-awareness that first generates the word “I”: indeed, whatever the intellect considers explicitly, it “speaks” interiorly with an interior word.<sup>202</sup> The word “I” is not said or thought in an outer-directed (implicit) act, even though the subject is implicitly present in that act and one can reflect upon one’s experience later so as to disengage the “I.” One cannot inquire into the nature of a thing until one starts explicitly thinking about it,

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<sup>202</sup> When contrasting habitual self-awareness with actual consideration of oneself (explicit self-awareness), Thomas notes in *ST Ia*, 93.7, ad 3 [Leon. 5.409]: “Sed quando sine cogitatione sunt, ad solam memoriam pertinent; quae nihil est aliud, secundum [Augustinum], quam habitualis retentio notitiae et amoris. Sed quia, ut ipse dicit, *verbum ibi esse sine cogitatione non potest (cogitamus enim omne quod dicimus etiam illo interiori verbo quod ad nullius gentis pertinet linguam)* . . .” See also *Ia*, 107.1 [Leon. 5.488]: “Quando autem mens convertit se ad actu considerandum quod habet in habitu, loquitur aliquis sibi ipsi: nam ipse conceptus mentis *interius verbum* vocatur.” For more discussion of the interior word, see Ch. IV, §A.3.



anymore than one can engage in the science of optics until one has explicitly noticed that light is separable from color. In explicit self-awareness, the soul grasps itself as “a being whose essence is definable,”<sup>203</sup> though it has not yet reached any definition. In pronouncing the interior word “I,” the soul summarizes for the first time its self-perception in a concept that serves as a springboard for further inquiry.<sup>204</sup> Thus until the soul turns back upon itself in the act of knowing another, there can be no science of the soul. It is with this science of the soul that the next chapter is concerned.

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<sup>203</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 140.

<sup>204</sup> One might worry that a *verbum* should only be produced in the fourth type of self-knowledge, judgment of the self. But we have already noted in Chapter II that actual self-awareness must include an apprehension of essence and a judgment of existence; when these become explicit, there is no reason that a *verbum* cannot be produced.

## CHAPTER IV DISCOVERING THE NATURE OF THE SOUL

### Introduction

Having examined the first part of Thomas's main division of self-knowledge (knowledge that the soul exists, *an est*), we can now examine the second part: quidditative self-knowledge, or science of the soul (knowledge of what the soul is, *quid est*).<sup>1</sup> After all the controversies associated with self-awareness as the unique instance in which the human soul directly perceives a singular immaterial existent, quidditative self-knowledge offers a welcome lack of drama.<sup>2</sup> The soul's nature is intelligible in the same way that other natures are<sup>3</sup>: it is apprehended through a species<sup>4</sup> and defined at the end of a grueling discursive process.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, of all known natures, it alone is the knower's own nature. Consequently, the process of discovering the soul's nature has certain interesting idiosyncracies.

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<sup>1</sup> For texts articulating this major division, see *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3; *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 1.3; *DV* 10.8; *SCG* 2.75 and 3.46; *ST Ia*, 111.1, ad 3; *ST Ia*, 87.1; *De unit. int.* 5; *DM* 16.8, ad 7; and *Quodl.* 2.2.

<sup>2</sup> This is, perhaps, why most commenters on Aquinas's theory of self-knowledge spend little time on quidditative self-knowledge: Putallaz, for instance, only dedicates 6 pages to it in *Le sens de la réflexion* (126–31); Still offers scarcely three pages in “Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 29–31. Of all the commentators, Lambert and Romeyer take the most interest in this phenomenon; see Lambert's *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 207–247; and Romeyer's “Connaissance de l'esprit humain” (1928), 77–106.

<sup>3</sup> *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.217:109–110]: “. . . intellectus possibilis habet aliquid quod facit ipsum intelligibilem sicut et alia.”

<sup>4</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:255–58]: “Si igitur consideretur quantum ad apprehensionem, sic dico, quod natura animae a nobis cognoscitur per species quas a sensibus abstrahimus.”

<sup>5</sup> *In Sent.* I.3.1.2, ad 3 [Mand. 1.95]: “[M]axima difficultas est in cognitione animae, nec devenitur in ipsam, nisi ratiocinando ex objectis in actus et ex actibus in potentias”; *DV* 10.8, ad 8 s.c.: [Leon. 22/2.325:524–35] “[C]ognoscere quid sit anima, difficillimum est”; *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 1.3 [Leon. 50.87:98–99]: “[C]um multa inquisitione indigeat ad cognoscendum quid est intellectus”; *ST Ia*, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: “Sed ad secundam cognitionem de mente habendam, non sufficit eius praesentia, sed requiritur diligens et subtilis inquisitio. Unde et multi naturam animae ignorant, et multi etiam circa naturam animae erraverunt.”

First, as noted in Chapter II, §A, self-awareness already includes minimal essential content, insofar as I perceive myself as “a being” or “a knowing thing.” If quidditative self-knowledge merely provides a more distinct understanding of this original essential content, how can Thomas justify treating it as a diverse type of self-knowledge, distinguished from self-awareness as knowledge *quid sit* from knowledge *an sit*? How are these two types of self-knowledge related?

Second, we have seen that self-awareness operates by means of a species, not of the soul, but of its external object. Is the same true for quidditative knowledge? And if so, how does this anomaly affect the structure of quidditative self-knowledge?

Third, in *DV* 10.8, Thomas distinguishes quidditative self-knowledge into apprehension of the soul’s nature and judgment of the soul according to the eternal reasons. He mentions this judgment of self only once more, in *ST* Ia, 87.1. What role, then, does it play in Thomas’s theory of self-knowledge, and why does it appear so infrequently?

Fourth, what is the relation between quidditative self-knowledge and the *reditio completa* that Thomas often mentions in connection with the *Liber de causis*?<sup>6</sup>

In order to address these issues, this chapter will be divided into three sections. In the first, I will examine quidditative self-knowledge, with special emphasis on the process by which it is attained (see the first two questions above). Next, I will focus on the judgment of self to determine whether it is simply a necessary aspect of quidditative self-knowledge or a distinct type of self-knowledge on its own (see the third question above). Lastly, I will examine the *reditio completa* and its relationship to quidditative knowledge

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<sup>6</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15; cf. *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 3; *In Sent.* II.19.1.1; *DV* 1.9; *DV* 2.2; *DV* 8.6, ad 5; *DV* 10.9; *ST* Ia, 14.2.

(see the fourth question above); in doing so, I will also address Putallaz's interpretation, which identifies *reditio* with *reflexio* and sets it apart as a distinct type of self-knowledge.

## A. Knowing What I Am

### 1. The Origin and Goal of Quidditative Self-Knowledge

The starting-point for inquiry into the soul's nature is explicit self-awareness—for one can only make the effort to discover *what kind of thing* some agent is when one has perceived such an agent to exist.<sup>7</sup> It is, in fact, the act of explicit self-awareness that provides each person with a store of indisputably certain experiential observations of his own acting soul that can serve as the material for investigating its nature.<sup>8</sup> This starting-point of self-awareness also shapes the characteristics of science of the soul: because the existence of its subject-matter is indisputably certain, the science of the soul is likewise itself “most certain.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> It will be remembered from Ch. II, §A, that this in no way constitutes a reversal of the principle that knowledge of essence is prior to knowledge of existence: in perceiving myself to exist, I perceive myself as “an existing thing” or “a being,” which is the most indistinct and general essential content possible.

<sup>8</sup> For an interesting discussion of how the appeal to individual self-awareness factors into Thomas's argument for the unicity of the possible intellect in *ST* Ia, 76.1, see Black, “Aquinas's Critique of Averroes's Psychology,” 354–56. See also Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 130: “Parvenir à une telle connaissance abstraite de la *species* et des *habitus* suppose un savoir solide portant sur les conditions prochaines de l'acte; la connaissance abstraite de la quiddité de l'âme dépend en effet d'une analyse, également abstraite, des éléments qui sont produits par l'activité cognitive de l'âme, analyse fondée discursivement à partir de constatations”; and Romeyer, “Connaissance de l'esprit humain” (1928), 77–79. Reichmann, on the other hand, holds that “this primitive, connatural knowledge [self-awareness] cannot function as the first principle of inquiry into the nature of the self, the nature of truth, etc.,” for such a “Cartesian” claim would entail that we “instantaneously possess full and unerring knowledge of the self” (“The ‘Cogito’ in Thomas and Descartes,” 347). But Reichmann is here led astray by his conception of self-awareness as a contentless presence.

<sup>9</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 8 s.c. [Leon. 22.2/325:521–24]: “[S]ecundum hoc scientia de anima est certissima, quod unusquisque in se ipso experitur se animam habere, et actus animae sibi inesse”; *In De an.* I.1 [Leon. 45/1.5:92–95]: “Hec autem scientia, scilicet de anima . . . certa est (hoc enim quilibet experitur in se ipso, quod scilicet habeat animam et quod anima uiuificet).” As Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 225, notes: “Self perception assures us of the reality of the subject under discussion, and gives us a set of concrete experiences to which we may constantly refer as exemplifications of the soul and as helps in our procedure in psychology.” See *SCG* 3.46's repeated use of *scire* with reference to knowledge of what the soul is (*quid est*).

From this starting-point in explicit self-awareness, the philosopher attains quidditative self-knowledge when he finally articulates the proper definition that distinguishes the human soul from all other things.<sup>10</sup> Now, Thomas is well aware that the definition required for quidditative knowledge must include the appropriate genus and specifying difference.<sup>11</sup> Oddly enough, the texts discussing quidditative self-knowledge never offer such a definition of the human soul. Elsewhere, Thomas defines soul in general as “the act of a physical organic body that potentially has life,”<sup>12</sup> the classic definition from Aristotle’s *De anima*. In *ST* 76.3, ad 4, he identifies the genus of the human soul more precisely as “sensate soul” and the specific difference as intellectuality: “That in which the intellective soul exceeds the sensitive, is taken as formal and complete, and from it the difference of man is formed.”<sup>13</sup> These texts seem to imply that the proper definition of the human soul would be “the intellectual form of a physical organic body.”

But instead of giving such a definition, *DV* 10.8—the most detailed description of how philosophical inquiry into the soul’s nature ought to be conducted—suggests that the

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<sup>10</sup> See *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123], where Aquinas explains that to know what the soul is, is to know its definition: “Unde et in hoc dicit aliquos errasse, quod animam non distinxerunt ab illis quae sunt ab ipsa diversa. Per hoc autem quod scitur de re quid est, scitur res prout est ab aliis distincta: unde et definitio, quae significat quid est res, distinguit definitum ab omnibus aliis.” See also *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: “Propter quod Augustinus dicit, *X de Trin.*, de tali inquisitione mentis: *Non velut absentem se quaerat mens cernere; sed praesentem quaerat discernere*, idest cognoscere differentiam suam ab aliis rebus, quod est cognoscere quidditatem et naturam suam”; *In Post. an.* II.2 [Leon. 1\*/2.180:65–66]: “[D]iffinitio est indicativa eius ‘quod quid est’.”

<sup>11</sup> See *In Post. an.* II.14, especially: “Et quod hoc differat ad diffiniendum patet per hoc quod, quia oportet *omne* quod diffinitur constitui *ex duobus*, scilicet ex genere et differentia, sic igitur, si ‘mansuetum’ accipitur ut differentia animalis, oportet quod ‘animal mansuetum’ sit *aliquid unum* quod accipiat ut genus, *ex quo et alia differentia*, quae est bipes, constituatur *homo*; et eadem ratio est de quocumque alio *quod fit unum* ex pluribus per se et non per accedens” [Leon. 1\*/2.224:99–225:108].

<sup>12</sup> *ST* Ia, 76.5, s.c. [Leon. 5.227]: “[A]nima est actus corporis physici organici potentia vitam habentis”; Thomas is here citing Aristotle, *De anima* II.1, 412b4–5 [Leon. 45/1.67]: “Si autem aliquod commune in omni anima oportet dicere, erit utique actus primus corporis physici organici,” which he presents in his commentary on that text as the proper definition of the soul: see *In De an.* II.1 [Leon. 45/1.72:358–65].

<sup>13</sup> *ST* Ia, 76.3, ad 4 [Leon. 5.221]: “Et quia hoc [quod pertinet ad virtutum sensitivae] invenit commune homini et aliis animalibus, ex hoc rationem generis format. Id vero in quo anima intellectiva sensitiva excedit, accipit quasi formale et completivum, et ex eo format differentiam hominis.”

philosopher attains quidditative self-knowledge when he discovers that “the intellect is a kind of thing that does not depend on matter,” from which one can then ascertain “the other properties of the intellectual soul.”<sup>14</sup> These claims are problematic. First, “immaterial thing” fails utterly as a definition of the human soul, since, setting aside its improper form, it does not allow one to distinguish the human soul from the angels and God. Second, it seems inconsistent with the definition of the human soul articulated in *ST* Ia, 76.3. Third, in this text as in others, Thomas alternates freely between characterizing quidditative self-knowledge as a knowledge of what the *soul* is, and a knowledge of what the *mind* or *intellect* is.<sup>15</sup> While the distinction between soul and intellect is not very relevant to my awareness of myself as singular principle of my acts, it certainly seems that there ought to be a significant difference between defining the soul and defining one of its powers, since the soul is not identical with its powers.<sup>16</sup>

I believe that these problems can be resolved by recalling that the starting-point of all inquiry into the soul’s nature is the perception of one’s singular, existing soul in one’s acts.

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<sup>14</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:281–86]: “Ex hoc autem quod species intelligibilis est immaterialis, perceperunt quod intellectus est res quaedam non dependens a materia; et ex hoc ad alias proprietates cognoscendas intellectivae animae processerunt.” See likewise *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “Unde et Aristoteles . . . ex ipso intelligere demonstrat naturam intellectus possibilis, scilicet quod sit *immixtus et incorruptibilis*.”

<sup>15</sup> Thus in *DV* 10.8 we find such phrases as: “[P]er aliam vero cognitionem scitur quid est anima, et quae sunt per se accidentia eius” [Leon. 22/2.321.214–16]; “Sed si loquamur de cognitione animae, cum mens humana speciali aut generali cognitione diffinitur” [322.247.49]; “natura animae a nobis cognoscitur” [256–57]; “sed ex hoc quod apprehendit alia, [mens nostra] devenit in suam cognitionem” [272–73]; and “intellectus est intelligibilis, sicut alia intelligibilia” [287–88]. *ST* Ia, 87.1 offers the same ambiguity as to the object of quidditative self-knowledge: “Alio modo, in universali, secundum quod naturam humanae mentis ex actu intellectus consideramus” [Leon. 5.356]; and even: “Sed ad secundam cognitionem *de mente* habendam, non sufficit eius praesentia, sed requiritur diligens et subtilis inquisitio. Unde et multi *naturam animae* ignorant, et multi etiam circa naturam animae erraverunt” [ibid.] (emphasis mine). See a similar ambiguity in *SCG* 3.46’s alternation of *intellectus*, *mens*, and *anima*.

<sup>16</sup> See the discussion in *ST* Ia, q. 77. Article 1, for instance, unequivocally states: “[I]mpossibile est dicere quod essentia animae sit eius potentia” [Leon. 5.236] As I have already noted in the introduction to the dissertation, note 63, there is a debate among Thomists regarding whether Thomas ever held that the soul’s powers are identical with its essence; I agree with those who argue that he did not.

While the human soul can, in fact, legitimately be defined with reference to immaterial substance (as the only intellect that is naturally joined to a body),<sup>17</sup> this is not the definition that Thomas has in mind when he says that quidditative self-knowledge consists in discovering that the intellect does not depend on matter. This is clear when we consider the order of discovery that Thomas outlines in *DV* 10.8. The philosopher does not begin with immaterial substance as a genus and seek that by which the soul is differentiated from other immaterial substances. Rather, soul, broadly speaking, is apprehended prephilosophically as the source or first principle of vital operations: “In order to seek the nature of the soul, it is necessary to presuppose that the soul is said to be the first principle of life in those things that live, according to our perspective; for we say that animate things are living, but that inanimate things lack life.”<sup>18</sup> And in fact, it is precisely in this way that I experience my own singular soul in self-awareness: i.e., as the principle of vital operations such as thought and sensation.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See *ST* Ia, 76.5 [Leon. 5.228]: “Anima autem intellectiva . . . secundum naturae ordinem, infimum gradum in substantiis intellectualibus tenet . . . Oportuit igitur animam intellectivam tali corpori uniri, quod possit esse conveniens organum sensus”; *ST* Ia, 75.7, ad 3 [Leon. 5.207]: “[C]orpus non est de essentia animae, sed anima ex natura suae essentiae habet quod sit corpori unibilis. . . . Et hoc ipsum quod anima quodammodo indiget corpore ad suam operationem, ostendit quod anima tenet inferiorem gradum intellectualitatis quam Angelus, qui corpori non unitur”; and *ST* Ia, 89.1 [Leon. 5.371]: “Manifestum est autem inter substantias intellectuales, secundum naturae ordinem, infimas esse animas humanas. . . . Sic ergo patet quod propter melius animae est ut corpori uniatur.”

<sup>18</sup> *ST* Ia, 75.1 [Leon. 5.194]: “[A]d inquirendum de natura animae, oportet praesupponere quod anima dicitur esse primum principium vitae in his quae apud nos vivunt animata enim viventia dicimus, res vero inanimatas vita carentes.” Thomas adds: “Manifestum est enim quod non quodcumque vitalis operationis principium est anima, sic enim oculus esset anima, cum sit quoddam principium visionis; et idem esset dicendum de aliis animae instrumentis. Sed primum principium vitae dicimus esse animam”; see a similar prephilosophical view of soul in *ST* Ia, 76.1 [Leon. 5.208–9]: “Manifestum est autem quod primum quo corpus vivit, est anima. Et cum vita manifestetur secundum diversas operationes in diversis gradibus viventium, id quo primo operamur unumquodque horum operum vitae, est anima, anima enim est primum quo nutrimur, et sentimus, et movemur secundum locum; et similiter quo primo intelligimus.” For Thomas’s source in Aristotle’s *De anima* and comments thereon, see note 12 above.

<sup>19</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:222–25]: “In hoc enim aliquis percipit se animam habere, et vivere, et esse, quod percipit se sentire et intelligere, et alia huiusmodi vitae opera exercere”; *ST* Ia-IIae, 112.5, ad 1

In *DV* 10.8, then, Thomas is rightly presuming that the quest to know the nature of the human soul begins from the prephilosophical apprehension of soul as the body's life-principle.<sup>20</sup> While this initial, indistinct apprehension fails to distinguish the human soul from other souls, it takes very little reflection to articulate this distinction, however: most people easily recognize that rationality is distinctive of human agency. With relatively little trouble, then, one can attain a definition of the human soul as the intellectual life-principle of the human body. But the real philosophical work has only just begun: quidditative self-knowledge requires the proper understanding of the differentia, namely intellectuality, and *we have not yet properly understood thought, until we recognize that thought requires immateriality*.<sup>21</sup> In fact, someone who defines the human soul as a "life-principle capable of thought," but views thought as a material epiphenomenon of brain-function, is really defining the human soul incorrectly as a "life-principle capable of imagination."

Thus quidditative self-knowledge is achieved in defining the human soul as the intellectual first act of a material body that has the power of intellection (as in *ST* Ia, 76.3 above) *only* when intellection is understood, not as a refined type of corporeal imagination, but as *an operation in which universal natures are received immaterially*. Only then are the properties of the human soul (including *per se* subsistence) revealed: only then is the distinction between the human soul and other souls truly grasped. It is, I think, for this reason that Thomas identifies the immateriality of the human soul as the goal of

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[Leon. 7.327]: "[I]lla quae sunt per essentiam sui in anima, cognoscuntur experimentaliter cognitione, in quantum homo experitur per actus principia intrinseca, sicut voluntatem percipimus volendo, et vitam in operibus vitae."

<sup>20</sup> This is why faulty definitions of soul always presume that soul is in some way related to body, but tend to specify the soul's relation to body in the wrong way; see for instance the errors that Thomas cites in *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.122]: "[M]ulti opinati sint animam esse hoc vel illud corpus, et aliqui numerum, vel harmoniam. Non igitur anima per seipsam cognoscit de se quid est."

<sup>21</sup> See for instance the discussion in *ST* Ia, 75.2.



philosophical inquiry into the soul's nature. He can presume that anyone who is engaging in serious philosophical consideration of the nature of the human soul already understands the human soul in an indistinct, prephilosophical (or minimally philosophical) way as a thinking life-principle. But quidditative self-knowledge requires that this initial definition be refined through the discovery of the immateriality of all thought.<sup>22</sup>

These observations help make sense of the fact that Thomas sometimes describes quidditative self-knowledge as knowledge of the soul's nature, and sometimes as knowledge of the intellect's nature, or even as knowledge of the nature of understanding.<sup>23</sup> The human soul is only known quidditatively when it is known *as intellectual*. Thus quidditative knowledge of the intellect is a prerequisite for quidditative knowledge of the human soul. It is for this reason that Thomas repeatedly outlines a strict order for inquiry into the soul's nature, from the nature of the object, to the nature of the act, to the nature of the power, to the nature of the soul itself—a process that will be explained in the next section.

We can also now understand the reason why quidditative self-knowledge does not investigate the nature of the human being as rational animal. The inquiry into one's own nature is initiated when someone asks, "What kind of thing am I?" And since the "I" in this question is grasped prephilosophically as the first principle of one's vital acts, it is precisely about this first principle, i.e., the soul, that one is inquiring.<sup>24</sup> For Thomas, a question about

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<sup>22</sup> It should also be noted that the attainment of quidditative self-knowledge in no way constitutes *comprehension* of the soul. Quidditative knowledge is simply the ability to define what the soul is (*quid est*) in such a way as to distinguish it from everything else.

<sup>23</sup> *De unit. int.* 5 [Leon. 43.312:234–28]: "[Q]uando autem intelligit intelligere simpliciter, intelligit aliquid uniuersale."

<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Thomas says in another context that when we first inquire about the intellect, we do so as inquiring about the principle of our perceived acts of intellection: "Manifestum est enim quod hic homo singularis intelligit: numquam enim de intellectu quereremus nisi intelligeremus; nec cum querimus de intellectu, de alio principio querimus quam de eo quo nos intelligimus" (*De unit. int.* 3 [Leon. 43.303:27–31]).

the principle of action leads us to the quidditative knowledge of the soul, not to human nature.<sup>25</sup> Nor does quidditative self-knowledge investigate the nature of “I-ness” or personal selfhood. Although it may come as a surprise to modern philosophers, Thomas’s discussion of quidditative self-knowledge is not concerned with the nature of human personal identity. If we want to know Thomas’s position on the latter point, we must seek for it in other contexts, which will be examined in Chapter V.

## 2. *The Process of Discovery*

Having outlined the basic parameters for quidditative self-knowledge, we can now consider in detail the process by which quidditative self-knowledge is achieved. As with all discursion, inquiry into the soul’s nature must proceed from what is better known to what is less well known: “And therefore it is necessary that in cognition of the soul we proceed from those things that are more external, from which intelligible species are abstracted, through which [species] the intellect understands itself, so that, namely, through objects we may know acts and through acts, powers, and through powers, the essence of the soul.”<sup>26</sup> The human soul is by nature turned towards sense-objects. Thus in order to understand its own

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One might object that the “I,” strictly speaking, is not the soul, for Thomas famously argues in *ST* Ia, 75.4, ad 2 [Leon. 5.201]: “[N]on quaelibet substantia particularis est hypostasis vel persona, sed quae habet completam naturam speciei. Unde manus vel pes non potest dici hypostasis vel persona. Et similiter nec anima, cum sit pars speciei humanae” (see also *SCG* 4.26 and *DP* 9.2, ad 14). But the prephilosophical question “What am I?” is a question about the principle of action, not the human hypostasis. Consequently, it is natural that this question should be answered by investigating the nature of the soul, which is the principle of human action.

<sup>25</sup> See *ST* Ia, 77.5, ad 1 [Leon. 5.245]: “[O]mnes potentiae dicuntur esse animae, non sicut subiecti, sed sicut principii, quia per animam coniunctum habet quod tales operationes operari possit.”

<sup>26</sup> *In De an.* II.6 [Leon. 45/1.94:180–90]; see Latin text cited below at note 36. Thomas appears to derive this methodological order from Aristotle’s *De anima* II.4.415a15–22, where Aristotle proposes that in investigating the nature of the soul one ought to start with its objects, and then reason back to what is prior in reason: namely, acts, powers, and finally the nature of the soul itself: “Si autem oportet dicere quid unumquodque ipsorum, ut quid intellectuum aut sensitivum aut vegetativum, prius adhuc dicendum quid sit intelligere et quid sentire: priores enim potentiis actus et operationes secundum rationem sunt. Si autem sic, hiis adhuc priora opposita [oportet considerare]. De illis primum utique oportebit determinare propter eandem causam, ut de alimento et sensibili et intelligibili” [*nova translatio*, Leon. 45/1.91].

nature, it must return from the senses to itself in stages, beginning with what is farthest from its inmost being (and therefore most intelligible to itself), and ending with its own essence.<sup>27</sup> This return occurs in a predictable series of four steps. First we know objects. Through objects, we come to know acts (since acts are differentiated by their objects). Through acts, we learn the nature of the acting powers (since powers are differentiated by their acts). Finally, through its powers, we know the soul's essence.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *DV* 2.2, ad 2 [Leon. 22/1.45:205–219]: “[L]ocutio haec qua dicitur quod sciens se ad essentiam suam redit, est locutio metaphorica . . . unde nec proprie loquendo est ibi recessus aut reditus, sed pro tanto dicitur ibi esse processus vel motus in quantum ex uno cognoscibili pervenitur ad aliud; et quidem in nobis fit per quemdam discursum, secundum quem est exitus et reditus in animam nostram dum cognoscit se ipsam: primo enim actus ab ipsa exiens terminatur ad obiectum; et deinde reflectitur super actum et demum supra potentiam et essentiam secundum quod actus cognoscuntur ex obiectis et potentiae per actus.” As Putallaz notes: “L’homme ne peut connaître la quiddité de l’âme humaine qu’indirectement, en faisant de la philosophie, grâce à une sorte de détour par l’objet, par l’acte, jusqu’à la faculté intellectuelle. C’est une démarche traditionnelle dans la philosophie aristotélicienne” (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 131; see also Cornelio Fabro, “Coscienza e autocoscienza dell’anima,” *Doctor communis* 11 [1958]: 110).

<sup>28</sup> In addition to the texts cited in notes 26 and 27 above, see *In Sent.* I.3.1.2, ad 3 [Mand. 1.95]: “[N]ec devenitur in [cognitionem animae], nisi ratiocinando ex objectis in actus et ex actibus in potentias”; *In Sent.* I.17.1.4, ad 4 [Mand. 1.404]: “Et ideo ipsam animam et potentias ejus et habitus ejus non cognoscimus nisi per actus, qui cognoscuntur per objecta”; *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3, cited below in note 53; *QDDA* 8, ad 16 [Leon. 24/1.147:410–13]: “Et hoc est commune in omnibus potentiis animae, quod actus cognoscuntur per objecta, et potentiae per actus, et anima per suas potentias”; and *ST* Ia, 77.3 [Leon. 5.241]: “[P]otentia, secundum illud quod est potentia, ordinatur ad actum. Unde oportet rationem potentiae accipi ex actu ad quem ordinatur, et per consequens oportet quod ratio potentiae diversificetur, ut diversificatur ratio actus. Ratio autem actus diversificatur secundum diversam rationem obiecti.”

Note that some texts list a shortened sequence: *DV* 10.8 [22/2.322:277–86]: “[E]x hoc enim quod anima humana universales rerum naturas cognoscit, percipit quod species qua intelligimus est immaterialis; alias esset individuata et sic non duceret in cognitionem universalis; ex hoc autem quod species intelligibilis est immaterialis, perceperunt quod intellectus est res quaedam non dependens a materia, et ex hoc ad alias proprietates cognoscendas intellectivae animae processerunt”; *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: “Dicit enim [Aristoteles] in III *de Anima*, quod *intellectus possibilis intelligit se sicut alia*. Intelligit enim se per speciem intelligibilem, qua fit actu in genere intelligibilem. . . . Unde et Aristoteles, in III *de Anima*, ex ipso intelligere demonstrat naturam intellectus possibilis, scilicet quod sit *immixtus et incorruptibilis*, ut ex praemissis patet”; *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: “Alio modo, in universali, secundum quod naturam humanae mentis ex actu intellectus consideramus. Others present a longer sequence, such as Conversely, when discussing knowledge of habits in *DV* 10.9 [Leon. 22/2.328:202–7], Thomas expands the sequence to include the knowledge of species and of habits as additional stages leading to quidditative knowledge of the mind: “Unde actio intellectus nostri primo tendit in ea quae per phantasmata apprehenduntur, et deinde redit ad actum suum cognoscendum; et ulterius in species et habitus et potentias et essentiam ipsius mentis.” (For an argument that knowledge of habits is an important part in developing one’s understanding of human nature, see Inagaki, “*Habitus* and *natura* in Aquinas.”) Moreover, Thomas’s own reasoning about the essence of the soul seldom follows all these steps. Lambert points out that “there appears to be no single passage from any of his works that actually applies the complete method with all its steps. Thomas’s statements almost always contain no more than one step in the full argument, with the specific nature of that step dependent on the subject matter of

Lambert suggests that this process unfolds in the following way:

From the fact that its object is an absolute nature, it can be inferred that the species through which the possible intellect understands is immaterial. Since its activity in the operation of understanding is immaterial, it may be concluded that the intellectual faculty itself must be immaterial. Because the human soul supports a faculty which is intrinsically independent of matter, the soul itself must have a capability and a status which are not totally enveloped by matter.<sup>29</sup>

Inquiry into the soul's nature begins, then, when instead of simply thinking about things, I explicitly perceive myself as thinking and begin to ask questions about the act of thinking. Thus I first must consider what the object of thought is—not specifically some item of which I am thinking, like a chocolate bar, but rather more generally, *what it means to be an object of thought* (i.e., chocolate bars not as such but as known). Having discovered that the object of knowledge is “the natures of all bodies,” I can then conclude that such entities can only be known apart from their material and individuating characteristics; thus the act of knowing must be immaterial.<sup>30</sup> From this it is evident that the intellectual power does not require a material organ in order to operate,<sup>31</sup> and that the intellective soul itself must be

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the passage” (*Self Knowledge in Aquinas*, 214–15). I agree with Lambert when he says that such divergences are merely “convenient abbreviations of the full method” (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 215). One can additionally note that knowledge of the species is, in fact, knowledge of the act of the soul; the discovery that the species is immaterial is basically the discovery that the act of knowing occurs immaterially, without a bodily organ.

<sup>29</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 217.

<sup>30</sup> *ST Ia*, 75.2 [Leon. 5.196]: “[H]omo per intellectum cognoscere potest naturas omnium corporum. Quod autem potest cognoscere aliqua, oportet ut nihil eorum habeat in sua natura: quia illud quod inesset ei naturaliter, impediret cognitionem aliorum”; *QDDA 1* [Leon. 24/1.8:231–42]: “[O]perationes [animae rationalis] sunt intelligere et abstrahere species, non solum a materia, sed ab omnibus conditionibus materialibus individuantibus, quod requiritur ad cognitionem universalis. . . non solum absque materia et conditionibus materiae species intelligibiles recipit, sed nec etiam in eius propria operatione possibile est communicare aliquod organum corporale; ut sic aliquod corporeum sit organum intelligendi, sicut oculus est organum videndi; ut probatur in III de anima.”

<sup>31</sup> *ST Ia*, 75.2 [Leon. 5.196]: “Si igitur principium intellectuale haberet in se naturam alicuius corporis, non posset omnia corpora cognoscere. Omne autem corpus habet aliquam naturam determinatam. Impossibile est igitur quod principium intellectuale sit corpus. Et similiter impossibile est quod intelligat per organum corporeum: quia etiam natura determinata illius organi corporei prohiberet cognitionem omnium corporum.” See Still, “Aquinas’s Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 30: “The analogy [between the human soul and prime matter] turns on the premise that the intellect apprehends things by being informed by and conformed to the likenesses of things. From its need to be informed by the species of things in order to be actualized, its

immaterial and therefore subsistent. I have now reached the proper definition of the human soul: while it is clearly the form of a material body (here I recognize the genus), such that even its highest act, thinking, is oriented towards sensible bodies, it is yet intellectual (here I recognize the difference), and thus enjoys the properties of immateriality and even subsistence *per se* (here I recognize the essential properties).<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, Thomas refers in *DV* 10.8 to this process as a *deductio* or deduction,<sup>33</sup> which indicates that it applies universal principles to particular premises. This is perplexing, since at first sight the process outlined above appears to be inductive: we begin from our experience of ourselves and reason to a definition of a soul. It is possible that Thomas is simply using “*deductio*” in a broad sense to mean any inference. On the other hand, it is quite possible that Thomas means that in order to reason to the immateriality of the species or the act of knowing, some universal principle is employed. From hints in *De unit. int.* and *In De an.*, it seems likely that this principle is something like “Whatever is able to receive every form must be immaterial.”<sup>34</sup> Thus once one recognizes that the object of the intellect

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nature as a potentiality can be inferred. From its ability to be conformed to any and every intelligible species, its universal receptivity—that the soul is ‘in a certain way all things (*quoddammodo omnia*)’—is corroborated.”

<sup>32</sup> *ST* Ia, 75.2 [Leon. 5.196]: “Ipsium igitur intellectuale principium, quod dicitur mens vel intellectus, habet operationem per se, cui non communicat corpus. Nihil autem potest per se operari, nisi quod per se subsistit. Non enim est operari nisi entis in actu . . . Relinquitur igitur animam humanam, quae dicitur intellectus vel mens, esse aliquid incorporeum et subsistens.”

<sup>33</sup> See *DV* 10.8, cited in note 73 below.

<sup>34</sup> See Thomas’s comments on *De an.* III.4.429a18–19, in *In De an.* III.1 [Leon. 45/1.203:131–42]: “[O]mne enim quod est in potentia ad aliquid et receptivum eius caret eo ad quod est in potentia et cuius est receptivum . . . set intellectus noster intelligit intelligibilia quod est in potencia ad ea et susceptivum eorum sicut sensus sensibilium; ergo caret omnibus illis rebus que natus est intelligere; cum enim intellectus noster natus est intelligere omnes res sensibiles et corporeas, oportet quod careat omni natura corporali.” Here we have an example of a deduction of, perhaps, the sort that Thomas is thinking in *DV* 10.8. An example of this same deduction performed with the universal premise only implied, in *De unit. int.* 1, where Thomas is arguing for the immateriality and separability of the intellectual soul [Leon. 43.295:352–65]: “Est autem differentia inter sensum et intellectum, quia sensus non est cognoscitivus omnium, sed visus colorum tantum, auditus sonorum, et sic de aliis; intellectus autem est simpliciter omnium cognoscitivus. . . . Quia uero Aristoteles iam probavit de intellectu per similitudinem sensus, quod non est actu id quod cognoscit sed in potentia tantum, concludit e contrario quod ‘necesse est intellectum, quia cognoscit omnia, quod sit immixtus.’”

is the nature of any and every material objects (probably by induction), one can then conclude deductively that its reception of forms must occur imaterially, by applying this universal principle. This would explain how one could reason deductively to the nature of the soul.

This process of inquiry into the soul's nature is, of course, discursive: hence its oft-noted difficulty and the high risk of error.<sup>35</sup> The discursivity of quidditative self-knowledge is an important point, because in some casual references to self-knowledge, Thomas does not always stop to note the main distinction between particular and universal self-knowledge (self-awareness and quidditative self-knowledge). Thus his references to the discursion by which one knows one's own nature can sometimes be misread as applying to self-awareness, which, as I argued in Chapter II, §C, is non-discursive and pre-discursive. The two most notable instances of such ambiguity are as follows:

- a) *In De an.* II.6: Nothing is known except insofar as it is in act; whence our possible intellect cognizes itself through an intelligible species, as will be said in Book III, but not by intuiting its essence directly. And therefore it is necessary that in cognition of the soul we proceed from those things that are more extrinsic, from which intelligible species are abstracted, through which the intellect understands itself; namely, so that we know acts through objects, and powers through acts, and the essence of the soul through its powers. But if the soul knew its essence directly through itself, a contrary order would have to be preserved in the cognition of the soul; for then the closer something were to the essence of the soul, the more immediately it would be known by the soul.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See *DV* 2.2, ad 2, cited above in note 27; *SCG* 2.75 [Leon. 13.474]: “Suum autem intelligere intelligit dupliciter . . . alio modo in universali, secundum quod ratiocinatur de ipsius actus natura”; and the texts cited in note 5 above.

<sup>36</sup> *In De an.* II.6 [Leon. 45/1.94:175–90]: “[N]ichil autem cognoscitur nisi secundum quod est actu; unde intellectus possibilis noster cognoscit se ipsum per speciem intelligibilem, ut in III habebitur, non autem intuendo essenciam suam directe. Et ideo oportet, quod in cognitionem anime procedamus ab hiis que sunt magis extrinseca, a quibus abstrahuntur species intelligibiles, per quas intellectus intelligit se ipsum; ut scilicet per obiecta cognoscamus actus et per actus potencias et per potencias essenciam anime. Si autem directe essenciam suam cognosceret anima per se ipsam, esset contrarius ordo observandus in animae cognitione; quia quanto aliquid esset propinquius essencie anime, tanto per prius cognosceretur ab ea.” Note that in neither of these two texts is there any guarantee that Thomas is using the term *directe* in the sense that I have defined it in Chapter II.

- b) *QDDA* 16, ad 8: Our possible intellect understands itself, not by directly apprehending its essence, but through a species received from the phantasms. Whence the philosopher says in III *De Anima* that the possible intellect is intelligible just like other things. . . . Whence, because the possible intellect is only in potency in intelligible being, it cannot be understood except by its form, through which it is rendered into act, which is the species received from the phantasms . . . . And this is common in all powers of the soul, that acts are known by objects, and powers by acts, and the soul through its powers.<sup>37</sup>

The context clarifies that the issue at stake is apprehension of the essence of the soul, *not* perception of one's existence. In both texts, Thomas is describing the process of reasoning from an object *qua* object (not the entity currently being known, but the aspect of being to which a given power is ordered), to the nature of the corresponding act, to the nature of the power and ultimately the essence of the soul itself. This is a discursive process, not a perception, and it concerns quidditative self-knowledge, not self-awareness (in which case Thomas would more likely say *intelligit se intelligere*). In perception, one does not perceive an act and then reason to the existence of an agent; rather, one perceives the agent in its act. In emphasizing that the soul's nature is discovered discursively, then, Thomas is therefore rejecting the notion that the soul knows *its essence* directly.

In fact, although this is not immediately apparent, one of Thomas's main concerns in discussing self-knowledge is precisely to refute the theory that the soul knows its own *essence* intuitively, *per essentiam*, or *per seipsam*. This concern is spelled out with special care in *ST* Ia, 87.3, on whether the soul knows its own acts. There Thomas notes that only in God is it the same "to understand that he understands, and to understand his essence,

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<sup>37</sup> *QDDA* 16, ad 8 [Leon. 24/1.147:397–402]: "[I]ntellectus possibilis noster intelligit se ipsum non directe, apprehendendo essentiam suam, set per speciem a fantasmatis acceptam. Vnde Philosophus dicit in III *De anima* quod intellectus possibilis est intelligibilis sicut et alia. . . . Vnde, cum intellectus possibilis sit potentia tantum in esse intelligibili, non potest intelligi nisi per formam suam per quam fit actu, que est species a fantasmatis accepta; sicut et quilibet alia res intelligitur per formam suam. Et hoc est etiam commune in omnibus potentiis anime, quod actus cognoscuntur per obiecta, et potentie per actus, et anima per suas potentias. Sic igitur et anima intellectiva per suum intelligibile cognoscitur." This text could be made less ambiguous by repositioning the comma after "directe" as follows: "Intellectus intelligit se ipsum, non directe apprehendendo essentiam suam, set per speciem . . ."

because his essence is his understanding.” An angel understands his own understanding and his own essence at the same time, not because they are one and the same, but because “the first object of his understanding is his essence.” Thus “understanding his essence is the proper perfection of his essence; and a thing is understood in one and the same act with its perfection.” None of these conditions apply to the human intellect, however: not only is it passive, but it is also ordered toward the “nature of a material thing” as its proper object:

And therefore that which is first understood by the human intellect is an object of this sort; and secondarily the act by which it understands the object is understood; and through the act, it cognizes the intellect itself, whose perfection is the very act of understanding. And therefore the philosopher says that objects are known before acts (*praecognoscuntur*), and acts before powers.<sup>38</sup>

In other words, the theory that the soul knows its essence directly or *per essentiam* contradicts its nature as ordered towards the natures of material objects. In order to grasp its essence without discursion, it would have to be God or an angel. The essence of the intellective soul is manifested in the fact that it knows *other things*, for that is its perfection. Consequently, its essence cannot be known until other things are known, and only then by reasoning discursively from the acts in which it knows those other things. It is important to remember that these principles specifically aim to clarify quidditative self-knowledge in light of the soul’s status as lowest of the intellects. Self-awareness too is conditioned by the

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<sup>38</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.3 [Leon. 5.361]: “Est enim aliquis intellectus, scilicet divinus, qui est ipsum suum intelligere. Et sic in Deo idem est quod intelligat se intelligere et quod intelligat suam essentiam, quia sua essentia est suum intelligere. Est autem alius intellectus, scilicet angelicus, qui non est suum intelligere, sicut supra dictum est, sed tamen primum obiectum sui intelligere est eius essentia. Unde etsi aliud sit in Angelo, secundum rationem, quod intelligat se intelligere, et quod intelligat suam essentiam, tamen simul et uno actu utrumque intelligit, quia hoc quod est intelligere suam essentiam, est propria perfectio suae essentiae; simul autem et uno actu intelligitur res cum sua perfectione. Est autem alius intellectus, scilicet humanus, qui nec est suum intelligere, nec sui intelligere est obiectum primum ipsa eius essentia, sed aliquid extrinsecum, scilicet natura materialis rei. Et ideo id quod primo cognoscitur ab intellectu humano, est huiusmodi obiectum; et secundario cognoscitur ipse actus quo cognoscitur obiectum; et per actum cognoscitur ipse intellectus, cuius est perfectio ipsum intelligere. Et ideo philosophus dicit quod obiecta praecognoscuntur actibus, et actus potentiis.”



soul's low intellectual status, so that the soul can only perceive itself in its intentional acts, directed towards external objects: "the knowledge which the soul can have of itself *an est*, just as much as that which it can have of itself *quid est*, is 'conditioned': the knowledge *an est*, by the *acts* of knowing (exterior) objects; the knowledge *quid est*, by knowing the intelligible species, in which those objects are made intelligible."<sup>39</sup> Thus one must always take special care to examine the context of Thomas's remarks to determine whether he is referring to self-awareness or quidditative self-knowledge; the majority of texts, in fact, turn out to be concerned with quidditative self-knowledge.

### 3. *Species or Concepts*

Our examination of the inquiry into the soul's nature resurrects a problem that has been mentioned already in the context of self-awareness (Chapter II, §C.2.b). Does quidditative self-knowledge require a species of the soul, or can it use whatever species happens to be in the intellect at that moment, as self-awareness does? Moreover, does it produce a concept of the soul? It is important to keep these two questions distinct, since it is in fact on account of confusing species and concepts that some authors have claimed that quidditative self-knowledge requires a separate species of the soul, abstracted from a

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<sup>39</sup> Fabro, "Coscienza e autocoscienza," 111–12: "Tanto la conoscenza *dell'an est*, quanto quella del *quid est*, che l'anima può avere da sè, è 'condizionata': la conoscenza dell'*an est*, dagli *atti* de conoscere gli oggetti (esteriori); quella del *quid est* dalla conoscenza della *specie* intelligibile, in cui quegli oggetti si fanno intelligibili." For textual confirmation, see *ST* Ia, 87.1, where the essential passivity of the soul is used to establish its dependence on the senses with respect to both self-awareness and quidditative self-knowledge; and *DV* 10.8, where Thomas lumps together self-awareness and quidditative self-knowledge in his concluding summary as occurring "per intentionem sive per speciem": "Sic ergo patet quod mens nostra cognoscit seipsam quodammodo per essentiam suam, ut Augustinus dicit: quodam vero modo per intentionem, sive per speciem, ut philosophus et Commentator dicunt; quodam vero intuendo inviolabilem veritatem, ut item Augustinus dicit" [Leon. 22/2.322:311–17].

phantasm.<sup>40</sup> There is, of course a serious debate as to exactly what concepts are, which I cannot address here. Most commonly, it is held that concepts are some sort of mental entity (though of course interpretations vary drastically regarding the content of this mental entity, its relationship to spoken words, and its role as terminus of knowledge).<sup>41</sup> In contrast, John O'Callaghan has claimed that the concept or *verbum mentis* is a theological notion; he argues that what is "produced" by the intellect is simply the act itself informed by the species.<sup>42</sup> Despite certain attractive features of O'Callaghan's analysis, in what follows I shall follow the traditional view, since this seems to me to be the most reasonable interpretation of the texts.

The relationship between intelligible species and concepts is complicated by the fact that both are a type of species, taken in the broadest sense of an intentional similitude.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> For instance, consistent with his claim that all knowledge is intentional and that intentionality depends on the presence of a representational species (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 133–52), Lambert argues that quidditative self-knowledge requires a distinct species of the soul (242–45). In doing so, however, he confuses species and concepts, arguing that such a species is required because "psychological comprehension of the mental, like any science, would be a highly conceptual enterprise, involving sometimes complicated classifications and demanding often lengthy and arduous periods of learning and mental discipline" (244).

<sup>41</sup> See Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*; Umberto Degl'Innocenti, "La natura del *verbum mentis*," *Aquinas* 15 (1972): 127–48; Jacques Maritain, *Distinguish to Unite, or The Degrees of Knowledge*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., trans. Gerard B. Phelan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), Appendix 1; William W. Meissner, "Some Aspects of the *Verbum* in the Texts of St. Thomas," *The Modern Schoolman* 36 (1958): 1–30; Bernard Lonergan's article in five parts, "The Concept of *Verbum* in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 7 (1946): 349–92; 8 (1947): 35–79 and 404–444; 10 (1949): 3–40 and 359–93; Matthew J. O'Connell, "St. Thomas and the *Verbum*," *The Modern Schoolman* 24 (1947): 224–34; and; J. de la Vaissière, "Le sens du mot 'Verbe mental' dans les écrits de saint Thomas," *Archives de philosophie* 3, cah. 2 (1925): 168–75. Despite their widely differing notions on the nature and role of the *verbum*, these authors all agree that it is an important part of Thomistic psychology.

<sup>42</sup> See John O'Callaghan, "*Verbum Mentis*: Philosophical or Theological Doctrine in Aquinas?" *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 74 (2000): 103–117. A response was offered by James C. Doig, "O'Callaghan on *Verbum Mentis* in Aquinas," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 77 (2003): 233–55, with a counter-response by O'Callaghan in the same issue: "More Words on the *Verbum*: A Response to James Doig," 257–68.

<sup>43</sup> Spruit, *Species intelligibilis*, 161: "Thomas splits up the Averroist intention into a formal representational principle [intelligible species] and a concept, the latter expressing . . . the content of our knowledge."

Thus intelligible species are sometimes called impressed species,<sup>44</sup> and concepts, expressed species. The difference between the two is that “the impressed species is the *principle* of the act of the intellect; the expressed species is the *term* of that act. The possible intellect is receptive with regard to the former, productive with regard to the latter.”<sup>45</sup> The species actualizes the intellect by endowing it with the form of its object. The content of the species depends on what is provided by the phantasm and the senses; it is not an interpretation of the object, or a perspective on the object, but simply mediates the intellect’s apprehension of the object. The concept, on the other hand, is produced, not received; it may either be simple (a single *ratio* produced by simple apprehension) or complex (i.e., a proposition resulting from judgment).<sup>46</sup> The concept is a likeness of the intellect’s object *as understood* (which is, I believe, why Aquinas calls the concept an “understood intention”<sup>47</sup>). It thus accompanies explicit knowledge, since only in attending to a thing is the intellect aware of that thing *as object*. Since explicit consideration is the

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<sup>44</sup> See for instance Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 141; Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, Appendix 1, 390.

<sup>45</sup> Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 141. The two main texts that Peifer cites in support of this distinction are *DP* 8.1 [Marietti, 215]: “[S]pecies intelligibilis, qua fit intellectus in actu, consideratur ut principium actionis intellectus . . . . Differt autem *ab actione* intellectus: quia praedicta conceptio consideratur ut terminus actionis, et quasi quoddam per ipsam constitutum. Intellectus enim sua actione format rei definitionem, vel etiam propositionem affirmativam seu negativam. Haec autem conceptio intellectus in nobis proprie *verbum* dicitur”; and *SCG* 1.53 [Leon. 13.150–51]: “Haec autem intentio intellecta, cum sit quasi *terminus* intelligibilis operationis, est aliud a specie intelligibili quae facit intellectum in actu, quam oportet considerari ut intelligibilis operationis *principium*: licet utrumque sit rei intellectae similitudo.”

<sup>46</sup> See *DV* 11.1 [22/2.350:267–72]: “[P]rimae conceptiones intellectus, quae statim lumine intellectus agentis cognoscuntur . . . sive sint complexa, ut dignitates, sive incomplexa, sicut ratio entis et unius et huiusmodi quae statim intellectu apprehendit”; Lonergan, “*Verbum*,” pt. 1, 353–54.

<sup>47</sup> *SCG* 4.11 [Leon. 15.33]: “Cum ergo dicitur, Deus erat verbum, ostenditur verbum divinum non solum esse intentionem intellectam, sicut verbum nostrum; sed etiam rem in natura existentem et subsistentem.”

goal of the intellect, then, the concept that such consideration generates is the end product or terminus of knowledge.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, Peifer notes that intelligible species are stored, whereas a concept “represents the object as determinately and actually known, so it cannot exist apart from actual cognition.”<sup>49</sup> Thus a concept is a snapshot of the intellect’s *present* understanding of its object; as the intellect’s subjective understanding of a thing changes or becomes more distinct, the concept captures these permutations. Consequently, the meaning of a word is continually enriched for a speaker as he gains additional perspectives on the corresponding objects: the understanding of man signified by the definition “rational animal” when spoken by Aristotle is much fuller and richer than the understanding signified by the same definition spoken by a college freshman.<sup>50</sup>

The species and the concept are not the same, then; but the concept represents the object *as understood in a particular act mediated by the species*. The production of this

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<sup>48</sup> It is important to note that the concept (and the species, for that matter) is not *that which* is understood. Some of Aquinas’s formulations have misled commentators into claiming that the concept is the object of knowledge; see Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 254; Lonergan, “*Verbum*,” pt. 1, 354; Meissner, “Some Aspects of the *Verbum*,” 1–2; and Claude Panaccio, “Aquinas on Intellectual Representation,” in *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality*, ed. Dominik Perler (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 191 and 200. This view highlights certain problematic texts, including *DP* 9.5, *DV* 4.1 and 4.2, *CT* 1.37, and *De spirit. creat.* 9, ad 5. For very good refutations of this view, and analysis of the texts involved, see Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, Appendix 1, especially section 4; Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 165–79; and Spruit, *Species intelligibilis*, 169–70, n. 288.

<sup>49</sup> Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 145. Peifer cites *ST* Ia, 93.7 [Leon. 5.409]: “*Verbum autem in anima nostra sine actuali cognitione esse non potest*”; I add *DV* 4.4 [Leon. 22/2.128:97–99]: “*Verbum enim quod in nobis exprimitur per actuale considerationem . . .*” and *ST* Ia, 107.1 [Leon. 5.488]: “*Quando autem mens convertit se ad actu considerandum quod habet in habitu, loquitur aliquis sibi ipsi, nam ipse conceptus mentis interius verbum vocatur.*” The same observation is made by Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, citing *SCG* 4.11 and *DV* 4.1, ad 1.

<sup>50</sup> Thus what Lambert says about intelligible species—namely that they are “generalities constructed out of sufficient experience,” involving an element of social construction and interpretation—applies to concepts, not intelligible species (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 133–34); as noted in Ch. II, §C.2.b, this is one of the reasons that he defends a double-species theory. Pasnau appears to make the same mistake when he argues that the “forming” of a mental word is required because “there are no universal horses, so intellect has to form its own representation of horses” (*Theories of Cognition*, 262); but this is the reason for positing intelligible species, not concepts.

concept is the completion of the act of knowing. With these clarifications in mind, we can now return to self-knowledge in order to argue that for Thomas, a) the species used to mediate quidditative self-knowledge is not a species of the soul, but a species of the known object; and b) quidditative self-knowledge produces a concept of the soul.

The attractiveness of the notion that the soul knows itself through a species of itself derives from Thomas's frequent claim, borrowed from Aristotle, that the soul knows itself "like other things"<sup>51</sup> (*sicut et alia*). But in several texts, Thomas clearly denies that quidditative self-knowledge includes a species of the soul.<sup>52</sup> His Commentary on the *Sentences* offers the most detailed explanation:

But the intellect, as it is said in III *De anima*, knows itself like other things, but indeed not by a species of itself, but [by a species] of the object which is its form; from which it knows the nature of its act, and from the nature of the act, the nature of the knowing power, and from the nature of the power, the nature of the essence, and consequently [the natures] of the other powers. Not that it has diverse similitudes of all these; rather, in its object it does not only know the aspect (*ratio*) of the true, insofar as it is its [the intellect's] object, but every aspect that is in it, including the aspect of the good; and therefore consequently through that same

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<sup>51</sup> In Gauthier's edition of Moerbeke's translation, *De anima* 430a3 reads: "Et ipse [intellectus] autem intelligibilis est sicut intelligibilia" [Leon. 45/1.214]; see the discussion of this principle and texts in Ch. I, §A.2, and Ch. II, note 156.

<sup>52</sup> See for instance *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3, cited below in note 53; *DV* 10.8, ad 5 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.325:504–7]: "[A]nima non cognoscitur per aliam speciem abstractam a se, sed per speciem obiecti sui quae etiam fit forma eius secundum quod est intelligens actu"; and ad 9 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.325:528–34]: "[A]nima non cognoscitur per speciem a sensibilibus abstractam quasi intelligatur species illa esse animae similitudo; sed quia considerando naturam speciei quae a sensibilibus abstrahitur, invenitur natura animae in qua huiusmodi species recipitur, sicut ex forma cognoscitur materia"; *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:80–82]: "Species igitur rei intellecte in actu est species ipsius intellectus, et sic per eam se ipsum intelligere potest"; *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: "[I]ntellectus vero possibilis noster [de se intelligit quid est] per speciem intelligibilem, per quam fit actu intelligens"; *ST* Ia, 87.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.356]: "Et ideo intellectus humanus, qui fit in actu per speciem rei intellectae, per eandem speciem intelligitur, sicut per formam suam"; *QDDA* 3, ad 4 [Leon. 24/1.28:338–41]: "Set intellectus possibilis dicitur intelligibilis sicut et alia intelligibilia, quia per speciem intelligibilem intelligibilium aliorum se intelligit"; *QDDA* 16, ad 8 [Leon. 24/1.147:405–410]: "Vnde, cum intellectus possibilis sit potentia tantum in esse intelligibili, non potest intelligi nisi per formam suam per quam fit actu, quae est species a phantasmatibus accepta; sicut et quilibet alia res intelligitur per formam suam." Cf. also *DV* 10.9, ad 4 [Leon. 22/2.329:298–330:301]: "[H]abitus non cognoscitur ab anima per aliquam eius speciem a sensu abstractam, sed per species eorum quae per habitum cognoscuntur"; and ad 10 [330.336–40]: "[I]ntellectus cognoscit speciem intelligibilem non per essentiam suam neque per aliquam speciem speciei, sed cognoscendo obiectum cuius est species per quandam reflexionem."

species it knows the act of the will and the nature of the will, and similarly also the other powers of the soul and their acts.<sup>53</sup>

The soul-in-act is already as intelligible to itself as it can be; a species of itself (were it even possible to abstract such a thing) would add nothing to its intelligibility since in being informed with the species of an external object, it is already in direct contact with its own form. The first step towards understanding the soul's nature is to investigate the kinds of objects that pertain to its acts: and for this, one needs a species of *these objects*, not of itself. The intellect's uncovering of its own nature by reasoning about the nature of its objects through species of those objects is, therefore, somewhat like discovering someone's aptitude for cooking: a critic discerns this aptitude by tasting the dishes, not by interviewing the cook.

Consequently the claim that "the soul knows itself quidditatively and essentially . . . in just the same way that it knows other objects, namely, by abstracting from images, forming concepts and judgments, and acquiring intelligible species,"<sup>54</sup> must always be carefully qualified. It cannot be taken to mean that the soul abstracts a species of itself from an image of itself. Rather, a person knows the nature of his soul "through the abstract species insofar as he comes to apprehend just what the act of knowing by means of such species must necessarily presuppose."<sup>55</sup> All the usual elements involved in human knowledge are present when the soul knows its own nature, because it knows itself "like

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<sup>53</sup> *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3: [Moos 3.703]: "Intellectus autem, ut dicitur in III *De Anima*, sicut alia, cognoscit seipsum, quia scilicet per speciem non quidem sui, sed objecti, quae est forma ejus; ex qua cognoscit actus sui naturam, et ex natura actus naturam potentiae cognoscentis, et ex natura potentiae naturam essentiae, et per consequens aliarum potentiarum. Non quod habeat de omnibus his diversas similitudines, sed quia in objecto suo non solum cognoscit rationem veri, secundum quam est ejus objectum, sed omnem rationem quae est in eo, unde et rationem boni; et ideo consequenter per illam eandem speciem cognoscit actum voluntatis et naturam voluntatis, et similiter etiam alias potentias animae et actus earum."

<sup>54</sup> Black, "Aquinas's Critique of Averroes's Psychology," 360.

<sup>55</sup> McKian, "The Metaphysics of Introspection," 107. Romeyer, "Connaissance de l'esprit humain" (1928), 84–86, is in agreement.

other intelligibles.” Yet the images and intelligible species employed are those of external objects, not of the soul itself.

Concepts, however, are a different story. Thomas repeatedly states that quidditative self-knowledge produces a concept of the soul: “For the mind itself, from the fact that it understands itself in act, conceives its word in itself: for this is nothing other than the intelligible intention itself of the mind, which is also called the understood mind existing in the mind.”<sup>56</sup> Contrasting the human self-concept or *verbum* with the Divine Word, Thomas emphasizes that the human self-concept “is not true man, having the natural being (*esse*) of a man, but rather only a man-in-the-intellect, like a certain similitude of a true man apprehended by the intellect.”<sup>57</sup> Thus whereas the Divine self-concept is a subsisting Divine Person, the concept in which the human intellect expresses its self-understanding is merely an “understood intention.”<sup>58</sup> This point helps us clarify the content of our self-concepts. In fact, as noted in Chapter III, §C.3, an object can be considered under a variety of different aspects: I can consider human nature from the perspective of risibility, or rationality, or corporality, or immortality, all by means of the same intelligible species. But concepts are

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<sup>56</sup> *SCG* 4.26 [Leon. 15.102]: “Ipsa enim mens, ex hoc quod se actu intelligit, verbum suum concipit in seipsa: quod nihil aliud est quam ipsa intentio intelligibilis mentis, quae et mens intellecta dicitur, in mente existens.” See also *DV* 4.2 [Leon. 22/1.124:120–22]: “[Q]uando mens intelligit se ipsam, eius conceptio non est ipsa mens, sed aliquid expressum a notitia mentis”; *DV* 10.7 [Leon. 22/2.316:186–90]: “Sed in cognitione qua mens nostra cognoscit se ipsam est repraesentatio Trinitatis increatae secundum analogiam, in quantum hoc modo mens cognoscens se ipsam verbum sui gignit et ex utroque procedit amor”; *DP* 2.1 [Marietti, 26]: “Sicut autem in nostro intellectu seipsum intelligente invenitur quoddam verbum progrediens, eius a quo progreditur similitudinem gerens . . .”; *DP* 9.5 [Marietti, 236]: “[C]um intelligit se ipsum, format conceptum sui, quod voce etiam potest exprimere”; *CT* 1.39 [Leon. 42.93:8–10]: “Quando vero intellectus intelligit seipsum, verbum conceptum comparatur ad intelligentem sicut proles ad patrem”; *In Ioan.* I.1, no. 26 [Marietti, 8]: “Et si quidem eadem res sit intelligens et intellecta, tunc verbum est ratio et similitudo intellectus, a quo procedit; . . . quando intellectus intelligit se, tunc huiusmodi verbum est similitudo et ratio intellectus.” See Romeyer, “Connaissance de l’esprit humain” (1928), 92–93.

<sup>57</sup> *SCG* 4.11 [Leon. 15.33]: “Unde oportet quod in homine intelligente seipsum, verbum interius conceptum non sit homo verus, naturale hominis esse habens; sed sit homo intellectus tantum, quasi quaedam similitudo hominis veri ab intellectu apprehensa.”

<sup>58</sup> See *SCG* 4.11, cited in note 47 above.

similitudes of an object *as it is presently understood* and therefore capture the intellect's intention/attention to its object under specific aspects. Thus as I begin to examine the soul, this self-concept expresses an indistinct understanding of the soul as principle of my acts; as the inquiry progresses, I may consider the soul as intellectual, or as appetitive, or as sensory, etc., with each of these acts of considering captured in a concept. The expressed concept always represents the soul according to the aspect under which I am currently considering it.<sup>59</sup> This concept of the soul's nature, then, signifies the account (*ratio*) or definition of the soul, either as a term or a proposition: it is the "account and similitude of the intellect from which it proceeds."<sup>60</sup>

A final note on the soul's concept of its own nature. As some authors have suggested, although it is absurd to claim that the soul abstracts a species of itself from a phantasm, still some sort of abstraction is necessary in order to give a universal note to one's self-apprehension.<sup>61</sup> In fact, as Thomas points out, the intellect abstracts in two ways: in one way, by the abstraction of form from sensible matter, and in another way, by the abstraction of the universal from the particular, "which is the abstraction of the whole in which some nature is considered absolutely according to its essential intelligibility, from all parts that are

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<sup>59</sup> For the partiality of concepts, see Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 171.

<sup>60</sup> *In Ioan.* I.1, no. 26; Latin cited above at note 56. See also *SCG* 1.53 [Leon. 13.150]: "[I]ntellectus, per speciem rei formatus, intelligendo format in seipso quandam intentionem rei intellectae, quae est ratio ipsius, quam significat definitio"; *DP* 8.1 [Marietti, 215]: "Intellectus enim sua actione format rei definitionem, vel etiam propositionem affirmativam seu negativam. Haec autem conceptio intellectus in nobis proprie verbum dicitur." Note that in these latter two texts, concepts are said to refer to the definitions of things. In the texts cited above in note 56, however, concepts seem more broadly to refer to the *rationes* or intelligibilities of things, which suggests that we can have concepts of individual things as well.

<sup>61</sup> See Romeyer: "La note caractéristique universelle de l'esprit humain n'étant point réalisée comme universelle dans l'expérience spirituelle ne saurait être pensée que moyennant une certaine abstraction, non point dématérialisante celle-là, mais universalisante" ("Notre science de l'esprit humain" [1923], 46); Wébert, "Reflexio," 324: "Il n'y a pas de science de l'individuel. Il est requis de l'universaliser pour construire la Logique, tout autant que la Psychologie."



not the parts of the species but are accidental parts.”<sup>62</sup> Since the soul is immaterial, only the second abstraction could apply to quidditative self-knowledge. It might be argued, however, that this abstraction from the universal does not produce a distinct species, but is a sort of selective consideration achieved through attention.<sup>63</sup> Thus the soul can consider itself under the aspect of its particular and changing states (me-as-knowing-this-now; me-as-wanting-dinner), or under the aspect of its common nature, while informed by one and the same species. Initiating a search into quidditative self-knowledge simply means the transfer of intellectual attention from the particular to the common aspects of the soul, which constitutes an abstraction of the universal “soul” from my particular soul; this difference is captured in concepts as the difference between “I” and “soul.”<sup>64</sup>

This observation brings us back to the point of departure for inquiry into the soul’s nature, viz., one’s perceptions of one’s own self in one’s acts. A philosopher on a desert island with no experience of other human beings could still discover the immaterial, intellectual nature of the human soul, because the perceptions from which quidditative self-

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<sup>62</sup> *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 5.3 [Leon. 50.149:239–48]: “Et ita sunt due abstractiones intellectus: una que respondet unioni forme et materie uel accidentis et subiecti, et hec est abstractio forme a materia sensibili; alia que respondet unioni totius et partis, et huic respondet abstractio uniuersalis a particulari, que est abstractio totius in quo consideratur absolute natura aliqua secundum suam rationem essentialem, ab omnibus partibus que non sunt partes speciei set sunt partes accidentales”; *DV* 2.6, ad 1 [Leon. 22/1.66.117–19]: “Unde patet quod abstractio, quae est communis omni intellectui, facit formam esse universalem.”

<sup>63</sup> See L.-B. Geiger, “Abstraction et séparation d’après S. Thomas *In de Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 31 (1947): 14: “En d’autres termes, l’objectivité de l’abstraction proprement dite repose sur une certaine orientation de l’attention. L’intelligence se porte sur tel aspect d’un être complexe en négligeant tels autres, et elle le peut parce que objectivement ces aspects sont indépendants les uns des autres dans l’ordre de l’intelligibilité.”

<sup>64</sup> Romeyer, “Connaissance de l’esprit humain” (1928), 107: “Ce qui d’emblée était intuition plus ou moins nette d’absolu et de nécessaire, ce qui par là même était universel en puissance le devient en acte. Non . . . par application subjective à un donné exclusivement singulier de formes universelles, mais par simple transposition sur le mode explicitement universel d’un donné métaphysique ou absolu.” Gardeil distinguishes quidditative self-knowledge and self-awareness in terms of what aspect of the soul is present to itself: the former presence is that of a “réalité purement *quidditative* et, de soi, nullement existante”; the latter is that of a “réalité *existante*” (“Examen de conscience,” 172–73).

knowledge is gleaned are *not* perceptions of *many other human souls*, but rather perceptions of one's own soul.<sup>65</sup> It is by means of knowing the nature of one's own soul that one knows the natures of other souls: "Our intellect, by knowing itself, knows other intellects, insofar as it is the similitude of other intellects."<sup>66</sup> I do not observe the behavior of other humans and then reason to the nature of the human soul. Rather, it is only by examining the particular perceptible characteristics of my own individual soul and universalizing them that I discover *what* I am.<sup>67</sup>

#### 4. Summary

"The soul knows itself like other things." The very structure of quidditative self-knowledge is elegantly assimilated to Thomas's general theory of knowledge, while carefully accounting for the differences between knowing natures abstracted from external objects, and knowing the nature of an immaterial being that also happens to be oneself. Thus quidditative self-knowledge occurs "through a species"—but this species is that of an external object, not of the soul itself. And this species is not only the form whereby the soul is rendered perceptible to itself (in self-awareness), but also the object of scrutiny in the

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<sup>65</sup> Lambert argues, on the other hand, argues that "an excessive reliance on one's own soul, without comparison to the cases of others, runs the severe risk of narrowness and distortion" (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 227–28). But whereas this might be true in discussing motives and tendencies in human moral action, it seems impossible that one could reflect on anyone else's experience of what-it-means to know: how could such an experience even be communicated?

<sup>66</sup> *DV* 2.3, ad 1 [Leon. 22/1.51:268–74]: "Sed similitudo rei intellectae est in intellectu dupliciter: quandoque quidem ut aliud ab ipso intelligente, quandoque vero ut ipsa intelligentis essentia, sicut intellectus noster cognoscendo se ipsum cognoscit alios intellectus, in quantum ipsemet est similitudo aliorum intellectuum."

<sup>67</sup> Fabro puts it well: "La percezione, allora, che l'anima ha di se stessa, a traverso i suoi atti, costituisce una fonte di contenuti originali, i contenuti della vita spirituale. Il lockiano 'nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu' non vale nel Tomismo se non per gli oggetti che fanno coscienza di sè a traverso specie ricavate dai fantasmi, come sono le essenze delle cose materiali. La consocenza della realtà spirituale ha un punto di partenza proprio e nuovo, benché avvenga in continuità ed anche in dipendenza dell'altra conoscenza, poiché si danno delle percezioni autentiche della realtà spirituale" ("Coscienza e autocoscienza," 112). For the dependence of quidditative self-knowledge on self-awareness, see also Wébert, "Reflexio," 324–25.

process of exploring the soul's nature (in quidditative self-knowledge).<sup>68</sup> Again, quidditative self-knowledge derives, like all human knowing, from the senses, yet in a different way. The soul does not gather sensations of itself, form a phantasm, and abstract a species of itself. Rather, it pauses its normal business of sensing, forming phantasms of, and abstracting species from, material beings, in order to consider what kind of being it must be in order for such activities to be possible. It thus begins by considering sensed objects to determine the mode according to which they are known: this starting-point in the senses leads eventually to the discovery of its immaterial nature.

We can now return to the question of the relationship between the contents of self-awareness and of quidditative self-knowledge. Self-awareness grasps the soul as an individual existent: it is known as "a being" only in the context of being perceived as "*this* being." Quidditative self-knowledge, however, abstracts from the soul's individuality, examining it insofar as it shares a common nature with other souls. That alone is enough to set these two distinct categories of self-knowledge apart qualitatively. Moreover, as we have seen in Chapter II, §A, no matter how rich the content of self-awareness is, given the intelligibility contributed by the act in which the soul catches itself ("I, a knowing, chocolate-loving being"), it will always remain descriptive.<sup>69</sup> But these are of an entirely

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<sup>68</sup> See Romeyer, "Connaissance de l'esprit humain" (1928), 84–85: "Saint Thomas tient encore avec Aristote que l'intellect se comprend, comme il comprend le reste, par la médiation d'espèces abstraites du sensible . . . en ce sens que la nature universelle de l'espèce, révélée en celle de l'intellection même, lui permet d'*inférer* la caractéristique propre de cette essence." There are therefore three ways in which something can be known through a species: the soul knows a tree through a species of the tree, insofar as that species makes the tree's nature immaterially present to the intellect; the soul perceives its existent self through the species of the tree, insofar as that species renders it into act and therefore intelligible; the soul understands its nature through the species of the tree, insofar as it must scrutinize the nature of that species before it can understand its own nature.

<sup>69</sup> Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 226: "Although generalizing the formula breaks its bonds with the particular perceiver, it hardly brings the formula to the brink of a definition of the soul. For

different order from the proper definition in which the proper specific difference of the soul's common nature is given. Thus, "when the acts of the soul are perceived, the principle of such acts is perceived to inhere, namely, of motion and sense-perception; yet from this the nature of the soul is not known."<sup>70</sup> When I catch myself in the act of knowing, I directly perceive myself as "a knowing thing," but I cannot directly perceive that the ability to know is the specific difference of the nature of the soul. To know the latter is to make a leap to a qualitatively different type of knowledge.

Thus in one sense quidditative self-knowledge is simply a more distinct understanding of what was already given in self-awareness, insofar as all scientific knowledge presupposes a perception of some entity in its acts, acts which are then considered in order to attain a proper definition of that thing's nature.<sup>71</sup> But in another sense, quidditative self-knowledge offers a whole new level of self-knowledge, in which the soul moves from knowing itself as a whole, to knowing itself *wholly*, i.e., according to its proper definition.<sup>72</sup>

## B. Judging the Soul in the Light of Divine Truth

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what the formula to this point conveys is not any positive attribute of the soul, but rather that the soul is 'whatever will explain' vital acts of 'that which accounts for' life operations." While I disagree with Lambert's claim that such preliminary formulas are negative (it seems to me that to describe the soul as "a knowing thing" is different from describing it as "whatever will explain knowledge"), I agree that they are on a completely different plane from the proper definition.

<sup>70</sup> DV 10.9 [22/2.328:173–78]: "Sed anima non est principium actuum per essentiam suam sed per suas vires, unde perceptis actibus animae, percipitur inesse principium talium actuum, utpote motus et sensus, non tamen ex hoc natura animae scitur."

<sup>71</sup> See Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 224–25: "[Aquinas] seems to believe that the scientific process is a method of unfolding and explicating the ordinary apprehension of objects which people have in their daily lives. Science does not discover a new world that contradicts the old one, but simply depicts the old common sense universe more clearly."

<sup>72</sup> For Augustine's distinction between knowing the mind as a whole, and knowing it wholly, see Ch. I, §A.1.

We may now turn to the distinction within quidditative self-knowledge between apprehension of the soul's nature and the judgment whereby it is affirmed to be such as it has been apprehended. This distinction is explicitly made in *DV* 10.8, where Thomas presents the deduction discussed above by which one arrives at the nature of the soul (apprehension) as distinct from judgment of this nature:

But if one considers the cognition that we have of the soul regarding the judgment whereby we pronounce that it is such as it had been apprehended by the previous deduction, thus knowledge of the soul is had insofar as we behold (*intuemur*) inviolable truth, from which we define as perfectly as we can, not what sort of mind each man has, but what sort of mind it ought to be in the eternal reasons, as Augustine says in *De Trin.* IX: but we behold this inviolable truth in its similitude which is impressed on our mind insofar as we know certain things naturally, as *per se* known, according to which we examine all other things, judging about all things according to them.<sup>73</sup>

The same distinction is obliquely referenced in *ST* Ia, 87.1, where Thomas concludes his discussion of quidditative self-knowledge by noting that

the judgment and efficacy of this knowledge by which we know the nature of the soul belongs to us according to the derivation of the light of our intellect from the divine truth, in which the reasons of all things are contained. . . . Whence also Augustine says, in *De Trin.* IX, that we behold inviolable truth from which we define as perfectly as we can, not what sort of mind each man has, but what sort of mind it ought to be in the eternal reasons.<sup>74</sup>

There are a number of puzzles here. First of all, it is odd that only these two texts mention the judgment as distinct from the apprehension of the soul's nature. Second, it is hard to see what this judgment adds to the apprehension. In *DV* 10.8, Thomas outlines the

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<sup>73</sup> *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:250–55 and 296–310]: “[A]d cognitionem enim duo concurrere oportet, scilicet apprehensionem et iudicium de re apprehensa; et ideo cognitio qua natura animae cognoscitur potest considerari et quantum ad apprehensionem, et quantum ad iudicium. . . . Si vero consideretur cognitio quam de natura animae habemus quantum ad iudicium quo sententiamus ita esse ut deductione praedicta apprehenderamus, sic notitia animae habetur in quantum ‘intuemur inviolabilem veritatem, ex qua perfecte quantum possumus diffinimus, non qualis sit uniuscuiusque hominis mens sed qualis esse sempiternis rationibus debeat,’ ut Augustinus dicit IX de Trinitate. Hanc autem inviolabilem veritatem <intuemur> in sui similitudine, quae est menti nostrae impressa, in quantum aliqua naturaliter cognoscimus ut per se nota, ad quae omnia alia examinamus, secundum ea de omnibus iudicantes.”

<sup>74</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: “Sed verum est quod iudicium et efficacia huius cognitionis per quam naturam animae cognoscimus, competit nobis secundum derivationem luminis intellectus nostri a veritate divina, in qua rationes omnium rerum continentur, sicut supra dictum est. Unde et Augustinus dicit, in *De Trin.* IX, intuemur inviolabilem veritatem, ex qua perfecte, quantum possumus, definimus non qualis sit uniuscuiusque hominis mens, sed qualis esse sempiternis rationibus debeat.”

entire process of discovering the soul's immateriality and separate subsistence *before* mentioning judgment. How then does judgment complete the apprehension of the soul's nature, and where does it fit into quidditative self-knowledge as a whole? Third, in both *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 87.1, Thomas appeals to the same illuminationist text from *De Trin.* IX<sup>75</sup> as referring to the judgment of the soul's nature. But why, when it is commonly agreed that Thomas rejects Augustine's theory of knowing truth by Divine illumination, in favor of a more Aristotelian theory of abstracting forms from phantasms by the light of the agent intellect? These puzzles can, I believe, be cleared up by examining how Thomas's view of judgment complements his view of apprehension, and how both relate to the human intellect's participation in the Divine light.

### ***1. Judgment of esse in re in the Light of Divine Truth***

In Chapter II, §A.1.c, in order to explain how the soul can perceive itself as existing, I mentioned that, for Thomas, essence and existence are grasped in two distinct intellectual operations: apprehension and judgment. In order to isolate the contribution that judgment makes to quidditative self-knowledge, we must now examine it in more depth. As the roles that Thomas assigns to judgment are numerous and complex, I will simply discuss the function that appears in connection with the judgment of the soul's nature in *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 87.1: verification.

Thomas attributes to judgment the role of verifying an apprehended form by pronouncing "that it is, or is not, so in reality (*esse vel non esse in re*): which is to compose

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<sup>75</sup> See Augustine, *De Trin.* 9.6.9 [CCSL 50.301]; for full text, see below, note 118.

and divide.”<sup>76</sup> Verificational judgment thus involves a composition or division of an apprehended form with *esse in re*, or real extramental existence. This is not to say that judgment composes some apprehended form (oyster) with another apprehended form (existence). Rather, there is only one apprehended form, to which the intellect assents, affirming that this form has real extramental existence (“there is an oyster”). It is the “strength of the intellectual light” that allows the intellect to distinguish between a form which has *esse in re* and a form which only has *esse in intellectu* (i.e., a chimera, which is intelligible but not real).<sup>77</sup> This light is the agent intellect, which is a created participation in uncreated light,<sup>78</sup> and which merits the name of ‘light’ because it makes forms intelligible-in-act, just as physical light makes colors visible-in-act.<sup>79</sup> The agent intellect’s

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<sup>76</sup> *In Perierm.* I.3 [Leon. 1\*/1.17:167–72]: “Cognoscere autem praedictam conformitatis habitudinem nihil est aliud quam iudicare ita esse in re vel non esse: quod est componere et dividere; et ideo intellectus non cognoscit veritatem, nisi componendo vel dividendo per suum iudicium”; *DV* 1.9: “In intellectu enim est [veritas] sicut consequens actum intellectus, et sicut cognita per intellectum. Consequitur namque intellectus operationem, secundum quod iudicium intellectus est de re secundum quod est”; *ST Ia*, 16.2 [Leon. 4.208]: “Intellectus autem conformitatem sui ad rem intelligibilem cognoscere potest, sed tamen non apprehendit eam secundum quod cognoscit de aliquo quod quid est; sed quando iudicat rem ita se habere sicut est forma quam de re apprehendit, tunc primo cognoscit et dicit verum. Et hoc facit componendo et dividendo, nam in omni propositione aliquam formam significatam per praedicatum, vel applicat alicui rei significatae per subiectum, vel remouet ab ea.”

<sup>77</sup> *ST IIa-IIae*, 173.2 [Leon. 10.386]: “Iudicium autem humanae mentis fit secundum vim intellectualis luminis”; see also *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 1.1, ad 8 [Leon. 50.83:243–48]: “[E]o ipso quod Deus in nobis lumen naturale conseruando causat et ipsum dirigit ad uidendum, manifestum est quod perceptio ueritatis precipue sibi debet ascribi, sicut operatio artis magis attribuitur artifice quam serre”; *ST Ia*, 88.3, ad 1 [Leon. 5.368]: “[I]n luce primae veritatis omnia intelligimus et iudicamus, inquantum ipsum lumen intellectus nostri, sive naturale sive gratuitum, nihil aliud est quam quaedam impressio veritatis primae, ut supra dictum est.”

<sup>78</sup> *ST Ia*, 79.4 [Leon. 5.267–68]: “Ergo oportet virtutem quae est principium huius actionis, esse aliquid in anima. Et ideo Aristoteles comparavit intellectum agentem lumini, quod est aliquid receptum in aere. Plato autem intellectum separatum imprimentem in animas nostras, comparavit soli . . . Sed intellectus separatus, secundum nostrae fidei documenta, est ipse Deus, qui est creator animae, et in quo solo beatificatur, ut infra patebit. Unde ab ipso anima humana lumen intellectuale participat.”

<sup>79</sup> *ST Ia*, 79.3 [Leon. 5.264]: “Oportebat igitur ponere aliquam virtutem ex parte intellectus, quae faceret intelligibilia in actu, per abstractionem specierum a conditionibus materialibus. Et haec est necessitas ponendi intellectum agentem”; see also *In De an.* III.5 [Leon. 45/1:219.50–54]: “Intellectus autem agens facit ipsa intelligibilia esse in actu, que prius erant in potencia, per hoc quod abstrahit ea a materia: sic enim sunt intelligibilia in actu.” Note, however, that as Thomas reports Aristotle, physical light does not make color visible by any abstraction, but only by making the medium (air) able to transmit color; consequently from the Aristotelian perspective, physical and intellectual light operate differently, but are compared on account of the

indispensable role in abstraction and therefore in apprehension is well known. But as we shall see, this participated “intellectual light” also plays a role in the judgment that some understood form has *esse in re*.

Now, the form that the intellect apprehends is attained in one of two ways: either directly, abstracted from a phantasm, or indirectly, as the conclusion of discursive reasoning. Thus verification of the intellect’s initial apprehension of a form proceeds differently from verification of the apprehension of a form discovered at the term of discursive reasoning. In fact, each of these apprehensions is judged by the “measure” proper to it.<sup>80</sup> In discussing the soul’s knowledge of its own habits, Thomas identifies two such “measures”:

Judgment of each thing is had according to that which is the measure thereof. A measure of any habit is that to which the habit is ordained: which relates to our cognition in three ways. For sometimes [that to which the habit is ordered] is received from the senses, whether by sight or by hearing; as when we see the use of grammar or medicine, or hear about [this use] from others, and from this use we know scientifically what grammar or medicine is. But sometimes it is given (*indita*) through natural cognition; which is most evident in the habits of virtues, of which reason pronounces the natural ends. But sometimes it is divinely infused, as occurs in faith and hope and other infused habits of this sort. And because natural cognition in us arises from divine illumination (*illustratione divina*), uncreated truth is consulted in both cases. Whence the judgment in which the cognition of the nature of a habit is completed is either according to what we receive from sense, or according to our consultation of uncreated truth.<sup>81</sup>

Depending on what is being judged, the intellect may verify an apprehension by using one of two measures: the senses (in the case of sensible forms) or uncreated truth (in the case of

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similarity in the result (color is rendered visible-in-act, forms are rendered intelligible-in-act); see *In De an.* III.5 [Leon. 45/1.219:43–54]; and *ST Ia*, 79.4, ad 2.

<sup>80</sup> In fact, Aquinas says that judgment *is* measuring and that the name “mens” derives from this activity; see *ST Ia*, 79.9, ad 4 [Leon. 5. 276]: “*Diudicare* vero, vel *mensurare*, est actus intellectus applicantis principia certa ad examinationem propositorum. Et ex hoc sumitur nomen *mentis*.”

<sup>81</sup> *DV* 10.9 [Leon. 22/2.328:210–329:330]: “Iudicium autem de unoquoque habetur secundum id quod est mensura illius. Cuiuslibet autem habitus mensura quaedam est id ad quod habitus ordinatur: quod quidem ad nostram cognitionem se habet tripliciter. Quandoque enim est a sensu acceptum, vel visu vel auditu; sicut cum videmus utilitatem grammaticae vel medicinae, aut eam ab aliis audimus, et ex hac utilitate scimus quid est grammatica vel medicina. Quandoque vero est naturali cognitioni inditum; quod maxime patet in habitibus virtutum, quarum fines naturalis ratio dictat. Quandoque vero est divinitus infusum, sicut patet in fide et spe, et aliis huiusmodi habitibus infusis. Et quia etiam naturalis cognitio in nobis ex illustratione divina oritur, in utroque veritas increata consulitur. Unde iudicium in quo completur cognitio de natura habitus, vel est secundum id quod sensu accipimus, vel secundum quod increatam consulimus veritatem.”



naturally or divinely infused forms). In verifying its apprehension of a form abstracted from sense-data, it must measure this apprehension against the corresponding sensed objects.<sup>82</sup> And in verifying its apprehension of a form initially abstracted from sensation, but whose indistinct details have been fleshed out through discursive reasoning (or a form which has been discovered at the conclusion of a syllogism), it must also measure this apprehension against uncreated truth, which illuminates the naturally known first principles that are the guide for such reasoning. In the first instance, a verificational judgment affirms the *esse in re* of the form obtained directly from sensation; in the second instance, a verificational judgment affirms the *esse in re* of the form attained indirectly by reasoning, according to the naturally known first principles.<sup>83</sup> A brief treatment of each of these types of verification is in order, so as to clarify what is occurring in the judgment of the soul's nature.

*a. Verification of a form apprehended through sensation*

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<sup>82</sup> Aquinas describes sensed objects as the “measure” for intellectual truth in a number of passages. To mention only a few: *ST Ia*, 21.2 [Leon. 5.259–60]: “Quando igitur res sunt mensura et regula intellectus, veritas consistit in hoc, quod intellectus adaequatur rei, ut in nobis accidit, ex eo enim quod res est vel non est, opinio nostra et oratio vera vel falsa est”; *In Perierm.* I.3 [Leon. 1\*/1.16:149–51]: “Et, sicut dicitur res uera per comparationem ad suam mensuram, ita etiam et sensus uel intellectus, cuius mensura est res extra animam.”

<sup>83</sup> In a long text from *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 6.2 [Leon. 50.164–65] Thomas provides a more detailed division of verification according to its termination at different kinds of objects: “Dicendum quod in qualibet cognitione duo est considerare, scilicet principium et terminum. Principium quidem ad apprehensionem pertinet, terminus autem ad iudicium; ibi enim cognitio perficitur. . . . Sed terminus cognitionis non semper est uniformiter: quandoque enim est in sensu, quandoque in imaginatione, quandoque autem in solo intellectu.” To summarize his argument: apprehended forms of sensible objects are verified by referring to the sensations thereof; apprehended forms of mathematical objects are verified by referring to the imagined phantasms thereof; and apprehended forms of separate substances such as God or angels are verified by referring to our understanding of them, since there is no sensible or imaginative data whereby to verify the truth of such apprehensions. This last claim, however, seems to suggest that understanding can verify itself. Here, the text cited above from *DV* 10.9 (note 81 above) is helpful, showing that a form that is reached at the term of reasoning is verified by a resolution to self-evident first principles. The intellect can therefore verify the truth of forms that it has reached discursively and to which no sensible or imaginative experiences correspond, by checking the validity of its reasoning against these naturally known first principles contained in the intellect from its first apprehension of anything that is.

We begin by examining how the intellect judges that a form obtained from sensation possesses *esse in re*. Here it is helpful to glean a few principles from Thomas's doctrine of conversion to phantasms. For Thomas, every act of explicit knowing requires conversion to the phantasms, as he famously explains in *ST* Ia, 87.4:

The proper object of the human intellect that is conjoined to a body is the quiddity or nature existing in corporeal matter; and through such natures of visible things also it ascends to a certain knowledge of invisible things. But it belongs to the intelligibility (*ratio*) of this nature to exist in some individual, which is not without corporeal matter, just as it belongs to the intelligibility of the nature of a stone to be in this stone, and to the intelligibility of the nature of a horse to be in this horse, and so forth. Whence the nature of a stone, or of any material being, cannot be known completely and truly, except insofar as it is known as existing in a particular. But we apprehend the particular through sense and imagination. And therefore in order for the intellect to understand in act its proper object, it is necessary that it turn itself to the phantasms, so that it may behold the universal nature existing in the particular.<sup>84</sup>

For Thomas, then, the human intellect is in a peculiar position. On the one hand, like any intellect, it can only receive immaterial forms; but on the other hand, the type of form that it encounters in its corporeal environment, and that it is specially designed to know, is “the nature existing in corporeal matter.”

Part of this obstacle is overcome by the dematerializing activity of the agent intellect. But the dematerialization of the phantasm only accounts for knowing the nature of a material object *qua* form.<sup>85</sup> For Thomas, this is not good enough: if it belongs to a nature to

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<sup>84</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.4 [Leon. 5.325]: “Intellectus autem humani, qui est coniunctus corpori, proprium obiectum est quidditas sive natura in materia corporali existens; et per huiusmodi naturas visibilium rerum etiam in invisibilium rerum aliqualem cognitionem ascendit. De ratione autem huius naturae est, quod in aliquo individuo existat, quod non est absque materia corporali, sicut de ratione naturae lapidis est quod sit in hoc lapide, et de ratione naturae equi quod sit in hoc equo, et sic de aliis. Unde natura lapidis, vel cuiuscumque materialis rei, cognosci non potest complete et vere, nisi secundum quod cognoscitur ut in particulari existens. Particulare autem apprehendimus per sensum et imaginationem. Et ideo necesse est ad hoc quod intellectus actu intelligat suum obiectum proprium, quod convertat se ad phantasmata, ut speculetur naturam universalem in particulari existentem.”

<sup>85</sup> Of course, this “form” is the *forma totius* (the matter and form abstracted from individuating principles), not the *forma partis* (substantial form); see *In Met.* V.5, no. 822 [Marietti, 233]: “*Secundus modus* adiacet *quinto* modo praedicto quo forma dicebatur natura. Et secundum hunc modum non solum forma partis dicitur natura, sed species ipsa est forma totius. Ut si dicamus quod hominis natura non solum est anima, sed

be enmattered, and I do not know it *as existing in corporeal matter*, I do not know it “completely and truly.” Yet matter cannot inform an immaterial intellect. Thomas concludes that the human intellect can only access the universal existing in the particular obliquely,<sup>86</sup> by turning towards the relevant phantasm as it considers the form abstracted from that phantasm. Somehow the intellect knows the form, not just as form, but *as belonging to an existing particular*—yet without itself being informed by the particularity of its object. What exactly this “turn” or “conversion” to the phantasm” entails, is not at all clear. In some texts, Thomas describes the intellect as “looking at” the phantasm as though at an object.<sup>87</sup> In other texts, the intellect’s turning towards the phantasm is attributed to a “connection” (*continuatio*) with the phantasm (*DV* 2.6 and *SCG* 2.59), or a “connection” with the sensitive power, which is evidenced both in the mind’s ability to return reflexively to the singular from its act, and in the power of the mind to rule the sensitive powers (*DV* 10.5).<sup>88</sup>

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humanitas et substantia quam significat definitio.” Otherwise in knowing an animal, one would only know the animal-soul.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas says that the *conversio* yields “indirect” knowledge of singulars (*ST* Ia, 89.4 [Leon. 5.378]: “[S]ecundum istum modum [viz., abstractionis a phantasmatis] singularia per intellectum cognosci non possunt directe, sed indirecte”); but whereas I used “indirect” in Chapter II to signal knowledge attained by discursion, he here uses it more in the sense of a mediated or oblique knowing, a looking towards something outside one’s range of vision.

<sup>87</sup> *In Sent.* IV.50.1.2 [Parma 7.1249]: “[P]ropter perfectam conjunctionem ejus ad corpus, potentia intellectiva ejus nihil cognoscit nisi per ea quae per corpus recipiuntur, unde habet phantasmata quasi objecta ad quae respicit.” This is an odd claim, since the phantasm is not *id quod cognoscitur*, an object of knowledge.

<sup>88</sup> See for instance *DV* 2.6, *DV* 10.5, and *SCG* 2.59 in note 94 below. Klubertanz points out that in addition to its spatial meaning of “contact,” *continuatio* is also used in Thomas to refer to “juxtaposition on a scale of perfection” or the “‘contact’ or ‘union’ between the principal cause and its instrument, or between a mover and a thing moved, an agent and a patient” (“Knowledge of the Singular,” 142). He points out that such “contact” on the spiritual level indicates an order of influence; see *Quodl.* 3.3.2 [Leon. 25/1.250:34–41]: “Quod autem est in corporalibus situs, est in spiritualibus ordo: nam situs est quidam ordo partium corporalium secundum locum. Et ideo ipse ordo substantiarum spiritualium ad inuicem sufficit ad hoc quod una influat in alteram.” He also notes that the term does not appear in treatments after *De veritate*, perhaps because of its Averroist associations (145–46).

This is not the place to pursue further how the immaterial intellect approaches the material phantasm.<sup>89</sup> But we can glean two important observations regarding the verificational role of judgment from Thomas's discussion of the conversion to the phantasm. First, it appears that for Thomas, this conversion is what provides the human intellect with the elements necessary for judgment.<sup>90</sup> Through conversion to the phantasm, the intellect gains its point of access to *esse*. In fact, to grasp *x* as belonging to some existing particular is precisely what it means to judge that *x* has *esse in re*,<sup>91</sup> or to verify that a thing *is* such as it has been apprehended.<sup>92</sup> Thus the conversion is what enables the intellect to verify forms apprehended by the senses.<sup>93</sup>

Second, Thomas explicitly states that the conversion to phantasms and the verificational judgment are only possible because of the abstractive operation of the agent intellect (though it is ultimately the possible intellect that judges and turns to the phantasm). Conversion is possible on account of the "connection" (*continuatio*) between the possible

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<sup>89</sup> This question cannot, in fact, be easily resolved in a few paragraphs. A thorough treatment of all the relevant texts can be found in Klubertanz, "Knowledge of the Singular," 135–66. Klubertanz concludes that when a singular object is being experienced according to sense and intellect in act together, the form received in the intellect is composed with the matter received in the sense, as part of a unified experience. He distinguishes this from a scientific knowledge of the singular, in which the philosopher reflects "that the intelligible *species*, as an actual determination, must have been derived from a retained experience or phantasm, and the phantasm through sense experience from a sensible singular" (163–66).

<sup>90</sup> Klubertanz even goes so far as to say that the *conversio* is a judgment: "The intellectual knowledge of the material singular is, in the first instance at least, a judgment. The simplest reason for saying this is that particulars, and only particulars exist, and the act of existence is known, and in the first instance only known, in the judgment" ("Knowledge of the Singular," 165).

<sup>91</sup> Note that for Thomas, *esse in re* involves either subsistence *in se* (substantial being) or inherence in a substance (accidental being): *In Sent.* III.5.2.3 [Moos 3.203]: "[C]ircumscriptio personae a natura divina potest dupliciter intelligi. Uno modo quod circumscribatur omnis ratio personalitatis; et sic ipsa natura neque erit subsistens in se, neque erit in aliquo subsistente; et sic non habebit esse in re, sed in intellectu."

<sup>92</sup> Note that this way of putting it allows us to avoid essentializing existence. The judgment does not compose a concept of "oyster" with a concept of "existence." Rather, the composition by which *esse in re* is judged consists in the grasp of a complex state of affairs: *this form as belonging to an existing particular*.

<sup>93</sup> Interestingly, Romeyer makes precisely this point in passing, in "Connaissance de l'esprit humain" (1928), 87.

intellect and the phantasm, and this continuity is due to the fact that the agent intellect has abstracted a species from that phantasm.

Just as the species which is in the sense is abstracted from the things themselves, and through it the cognition of sense is connected with the sensible things themselves; so too our intellect abstracted the species from the phantasms, and through [the species] its cognition in some way is connected with the phantasms.<sup>94</sup>

Thus not only does the agent intellect begin to overcome the obstacle to intellection posed by materiality, by abstracting the form from the phantasm—but it also finishes the job insofar as abstraction provides a certain continuity with the phantasm, making possible a conversion that recontextualizes the known form in an existing particular. To use a metaphor: the light of the agent intellect shines on the phantasm to extract the intelligible species therefrom. Without thereby making the phantasm itself intelligible (as though it were some quasi-species), this illumination touches the phantasm, giving the intellect a continuity with the phantasm that makes possible the conversion.

Since verificational judgment relies upon this continuity, it is therefore the light of the agent intellect that makes this judgment possible, providing the possible intellect with its point of contact with *esse*. Although Thomas does not explicitly say that verification occurs by means of the light of the agent intellect, he suggests it in a number of texts contrasting the embodied soul's conversion to phantasms in the light of the agent intellect, with the

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<sup>94</sup> *DV* 2.6 [Leon. 22/1.66:62–67]: “[S]icut species quae est in sensu, abstrahitur a rebus ipsis, et per eam cognitio sensus continuatur ad ipsas res sensibiles; ita intellectus noster abstrahit speciem a phantasmatibus, et per eam eius cognitio quodammodo ad phantasmata continuatur.” See also *DV* 10.5 [Leon. 22/2.309:67–81]: “Sed tamen mens per accidens singularibus se immiscet, inquantum continuatur viribus sensitivis, quae circa particularia versantur. Quae quidem continuatio est dupliciter. Uno modo inquantum motus sensitivae partis terminatur ad mentem, sicut accidit in motu qui est a rebus ad animam. Et sic mens singulare cognoscit per quamdam reflexionem, prout scilicet mens cognoscendo obiectum suum, quod est aliqua natura universalis, redit in cognitionem sui actus, et ulterius in speciem quae est sui actus principium, et ulterius in phantasma a quo species est abstracta; et sic aliquam cognitionem de singulari accipit. Alio modo secundum quod motus qui est ab anima ad res, incipit a mente, et procedit in partem sensitivam, prout mens regit inferiores vires”; and *SCG* 2.59 [Leon. 13.415]: “Similis igitur continuatio est intellectus possibilis per formam intelligibilem ad phantasma quod in nobis est, et potentiae visivae ad colorem qui est in lapide.”

separated soul's conversion to infused species that participate in the Divine light.<sup>95</sup> Both these lights reveal *esse*, the first obliquely, the second directly; they are granted by God in the appropriate circumstances so that souls and angels will be able to know forms, not just in themselves, but *as they are*.<sup>96</sup> Both, moreover, participate in the Divine light. God knows material singulars in all their singularity as their creator and the source of their *esse*; thus it is only by a participation in his light that lower intellects too can know them.<sup>97</sup> For angels, this occurs through naturally infused species, which manifest both the natures and the individuating principles of things because they are received from God rather than abstracted from things.<sup>98</sup> Human beings too can know material singulars, but only obliquely, insofar as

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<sup>95</sup> *ST* Ia, 89.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.371]: “[A]nima separata non intelligit per species innatas; nec per species quas tunc abstrahit; nec solum per species conservatas, ut obiectio probat, sed per species ex influentia divini luminis participatas, quarum anima fit particeps sicut et aliae substantiae separatae, quamvis inferiori modo. Unde tam cito cessante conversione ad corpus, ad superiora convertitur. Nec tamen propter hoc cognitio non est naturalis, quia Deus est auctor non solum influentiae gratuiti luminis, sed etiam naturalis.”

<sup>96</sup> Recall the importance for Thomas, discussed in Chapter III, §A.2.b, of *using* the species of a material object *to know that singular material existing thing*. See *ST* Ia, 84.7, ad 1 [Leon. 5.325]: “[S]pecies conservatae in intellectu possibili, in eo existunt habitualiter quando actu non intelligit, sicut supra dictum est. Unde ad hoc quod intelligamus in actu, non sufficit ipsa conservatio specierum; sed oportet quod eis utamur secundum quod convenit rebus quarum sunt species, quae sunt naturae in particularibus existentes.” See also *DV* 10.2, ad 7 [Leon. 22/2.302:216–30]: “[N]ulla potentia potest aliquid cognoscere nisi convertendo se ad obiectum suum . . . quantumcumque aliquam speciem intelligibilem apud se intellectus habeat, nunquam tamen actu aliquid considerat secundum illam speciem, nisi convertendo se ad phantasma. Et ideo, sicut intellectus noster secundum statum viae indiget phantasmatis ad actu considerandum antequam accipiat habitum, ita et postquam acceperit.”

<sup>97</sup> See *ST* Ia, 89.4 [Leon. 5.378]: “[D]uplex est modus intelligendi. Unus per abstractionem a phantasmatis, et secundum istum modum singularia per intellectum cognosci non possunt directe, sed indirecte, sicut supra dictum est. Alius modus intelligendi est per influentiam specierum a Deo, et per istum modum intellectus potest singularia cognoscere. Sicut enim ipse Deus per suam essentiam, in quantum est causa universalium et individualium principiorum, cognoscit omnia et universalia et singularia, ut supra dictum est; ita substantiae separatae per species, quae sunt quaedam participatae similitudines illius divinae essentiae, possunt singularia cognoscere.” In *In Sent.* IV.50.1.3, Thomas states that God does not need to engage in conversion to phantasms, because he knows all material singulars in himself as first cause of their *esse*: “Sed in illa cognitione quae est per formas quae sunt rerum causae, vel earum impressiones, pervenitur usque ad singularia, quamvis huiusmodi formae sint omnino immateriales, eo quod causa rei prima est quae rebus esse influit; esse autem communiter materiam et formam respicit. Unde huiusmodi formae ducunt directe in cognitionem utriusque, scilicet materiae et formae; et propter hoc per talem cognitionem cognoscuntur res et in universali et in singulari” [Parma 7.1250]; see also *ST* Ia, 14.11.

<sup>98</sup> See *ST* Ia, 57.2, esp. ad 3 [Leon. 5.71]: “Angeli cognoscunt singularia per formas universales, quae tamen sunt similitudines rerum, et quantum ad principia universalia, et quantum ad individuationis principia.”

the *esse in re* of a known form is in some way manifested to the possible intellect in the *conversio* by the light of the agent intellect, and pronounced upon by the possible intellect in the operation of judgment. The light of the agent intellect provides us not only with the ability to extract the lasting intelligibility from fleeting material objects (simple apprehension), but also with the insight to distinguish the real from the true-seeming (judgment): through it “we know truth immutably in mutable things, and we discern the things themselves from the likenesses of things.”<sup>99</sup>

It is therefore the agent intellect that makes the possible intellect able to measure or verify the *esse in re* of a form apprehended directly from sensation, as well as the agent intellect whose abstractive action is the source of the possible intellect’s “continuity with the phantasm” or “continuity with the imagination.”<sup>100</sup> It is because the intellect is not merely passive, but also active, that it is able not merely to receive forms, but also to pronounce upon whether its knowledge properly conforms to the known object. To judge that “a man exists” or “human nature *is* (exists) just as I have apprehended it” is, therefore, to assent to a complex state of affairs manifested in the conversion, under the light of the agent intellect: it is to affirm humanity as belonging to an existing particular.

*b. Judgment as logical verification of a reasoned conclusion*

Clearly, the conversion to the phantasm helps the intellect to judge a form’s *esse in re* only if the form in question has been apprehended from the senses. In many cases, however, the apprehended form has no directly corresponding sense experience, but has been discovered as the conclusion of syllogistic reasoning. Consequently, the intellect

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<sup>99</sup> *ST* Ia, 84.6, ad 1 [Leon. 5.324]: “Requiritur enim lumen intellectus agentis, per quod immutabiliter veritatem in rebus mutabilibus cognoscamus, et discernamus ipsas res a similitudinibus rerum.”

<sup>100</sup> See *DV* 2.6, quoted in note 94 above.

cannot “measure” such a form against sense-experience (though it can measure the individual premises in the syllogism against experience, if these were taken directly from sensations). Instead, it must verify the process of reasoning whereby this form was discovered, by measuring its reasoning against the first principles which it beholds in the light of the agent intellect.<sup>101</sup> In this way, the intellect achieves certitude regarding the truth of its own reasoning.

The work of examining judgment’s role of logical verification has been very thoroughly accomplished by Putallaz, whose conclusions I shall summarize here.<sup>102</sup> Putallaz explains that the intellect possesses truth as its natural inheritance, insofar as it is endowed with the first principles, those most certain principles deriving from the most fundamental structure of being, which are the indemonstrable first principles of all our reasoning. First principles are not, however, innate in the sense of being pre-implanted in the intellect. As I noted in Chapter III, §B.1.b, the intellect naturally possesses a “habit of first principles,” whereby it is able to apprehend the first principles spontaneously and immediately in every

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<sup>101</sup> *DV* 10.6, ad 6 [Leon. 22/2.313.268–70]: “[P]rima principia quorum cognitio est nobis innata, sunt quaedam similitudo increatae veritatis; unde secundum quod per ea de aliis iudicamus, dicimur iudicare de rebus per rationes incommutabiles vel per veritatem increatam”; see also *DV* 1.4, ad 5 [22/2.14:231–15:250]: “[V]eritas secundum quam anima de omnibus iudicat, est veritas prima. Sicut enim a veritate intellectus divini effluunt in intellectum angelicum species rerum innatae, secundum quas omnia cognoscunt; ita a veritate intellectus divini procedit exemplariter in intellectum nostrum veritas primorum principiorum secundum quam de omnibus iudicamus. Et quia per eam iudicare non possemus nisi secundum quod est similitudo primae veritatis, ideo secundum primam veritatem dicimur de omnibus iudicare”; *ST* Ia, 16.6, ad 1 [Leon. 4.213]: “[A]nima non secundum quamcumque veritatem iudicat de rebus omnibus; sed secundum veritatem primam, inquantum resultat in ea sicut in speculo, secundum prima intelligibilia.”

<sup>102</sup> For his entire treatment, which includes a detailed analysis of how first principles are known, as well as the relevant Thomistic texts, see *Le sens de la réflexion*, 131–50. See also Péghaire, *Intellectus et ratio*, 269–72, which is helpful in that it identifies a number of key texts.



act in which their terms are apprehended—indeed, Putallaz argues, in every act of apprehension whatsoever.<sup>103</sup>

These first principles guide the process of reasoning, and it is to them that the intellect “resolves” its conclusions.<sup>104</sup> As Putallaz explains, even if an apprehension of form attained by discursion is true, it

only acquires the perfect status of a recognized and judged truth (critical judgment) insofar as it is referred explicitly to the *intellectus principiorum*. The reason is that true knowledge is rooted in the vision of *intellectus*, man’s derived participation in the immutable divine truth. It is in this sense that one ought to take the claim that the human vision of truth is known in the eternal reasons and in the immutable truth.<sup>105</sup>

In other words, when the intellect affirms the truth of its conclusion, it does so by resolution to first principles: i.e., by measuring its conclusion against the standard of the first principles (which participate in the eternal reasons), which are illuminated by the agent intellect (which

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<sup>103</sup> See Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 141: “Une fois que l’être est touché dans un acte intellectuel, l’intellect reconnaît aussitôt, et avec certitude, la vérité absolue et inébranlable des principes.” In Chapter III, I argued that the first principles are known actually but implicitly whenever their terms are known (i.e., the apprehension of “whole” is already an implicit apprehension of the principle “Every whole is greater than its parts”), though I did not discuss whether the terms of the first principles are given in every apprehension. Putallaz holds that the latter is the case, but he is not clear on whether the first principles are therefore known implicitly in every apprehension, or whether every apprehension simply grants us habitual knowledge thereof (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 141). Ultimately this issue, though interesting, does not affect the outcome of the present discussion, so I set it aside for consideration at some other time. Note too that, as mentioned in Chapter II, note 107, and III, note 92, only some self-evident principles are also self-evident to all; in certain cases a principle that is objectively self-evident in itself may not be subjectively evident to everyone.

<sup>104</sup> See Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 144–45, citing *In Sent.* III.35.1.2, sol. 2 [Moos 3.1178]: “Inquisitio autem rationis sicut a simplici intuitu intellectus progreditur, quia ex principiis quae quis intellectu tenet ad inquisitionem procedit, ita etiam ad intellectus certitudinem terminatur, dum conclusiones inventae in principia resolvuntur, in quibus certitudinem habent”; see also *SCG* 3.47 [Leon. 14.128]: “Inquantum ergo quaelibet mens quicquid per certitudinem cognoscit, in his principiis intuetur, secundum quae de omnibus iudicatur, facta resolutione in ipsa, dicitur omnia in divina veritate vel in rationibus aeternis videre, et secundum eas de omnibus iudicare”; and *SCG* 4.29, cited below in note 108.

<sup>105</sup> Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 147: “[L’analyse abstraite] n’acquiert pas le statut parfait de vérité reconnue et jugée (jugement critique) tant qu’elle n’est pas accordée explicitement à l’*intellectus principiorum*. La raison en est que la connaissance vraie a sa source dans la vision de l’*intellectus*, participation dérivée en l’homme de l’immuable vérité divine. C’est dans ce sens qu’il faut entendre que la vision humaine de la vérité est connue dans les raisons éternelles et dans la vérité immuable.”

participates in the divine light).<sup>106</sup> Thus the judgment affirming the truth of a reasoned conclusion can be described as the intellect's vision of the conclusion in the light of immutable truth and the divine reasons—which is precisely how Thomas describes the judgment of the soul's nature in *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 87.1.

In sum, the judgment of verification pronounces upon the *esse in re* of that which is known, whether this is an apprehended form abstracted from an object of sense or one achieved through discursive reasoning. The intellect's apprehension of a form properly involves a restful intellection, but the weakness of the human intellect entails that its preliminary apprehensions are necessarily incomplete, so that we must engage in the discursive motion of syllogistic reasoning in order to apprehend the form more completely. Both the pre-discursive and the post-discursive apprehensions must be verified: the one according to the senses, through the conversion to phantasms, and the other according to resolution to first principles.

In both cases, judgment's measurement of truth hinges on the agent intellect, whereby the human intellect participates in the Divine light: "The intellective power judges concerning truth, not through some intelligibles existing outside, but through the light of the

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<sup>106</sup> See *DV* 11.3 [Leon. 22/2:359.240–46]: "Sic igitur homo ignotorum cognitionem per duo accipit: scilicet per lumen intellectuale et per primas conceptiones per se notas quae comparantur ad istud lumen quod est intellectus agentis sicut instrumenta ad artificem.—Quantum igitur ad utrumque Deus hominis scientiae causa est excellentissimo modo quia et ipsam animam intellectuali lumine insignivit et notitiam primorum principiorum ei impressit quae sunt quasi seminaria scientiarum." *ST* IIa-IIae, 2.3, ad 2 [Leon. 8.29]: "[S]icut homo per naturale lumen intellectus assentit principiis, ita homo virtuosus per habitum virtutis habet rectum iudicium de his quae conveniunt virtuti illi . . ."; and 171.2 [Leon. 10.367]: "[L]umen intellectuale in aliquo existens per modum formae permanentis et perfectae, perficit intellectum principaliter ad cognoscendum principium eorum quae per illud lumen manifestantur, sicut per lumen intellectus agentis praecipue intellectus cognoscit prima principia omnium eorum quae naturaliter cognoscuntur." Interestingly, the eternal light in which the agent intellect participates is said to contain all the eternal reasons; see *ST* Ia, 84.5 [Leon. 5.322]: "Ipsam enim lumen intellectuale quod est in nobis, nihil est aliud quam quaedam participata similitudo luminis increati, in quo continentur rationes aeternae."

agent intellect, which makes intelligibles.”<sup>107</sup> In order for the intellect’s proper object (natures of material objects) to be fully intelligible, the intellect must be able to grasp, not only the dematerialized forms, but their relation to *esse in re*. Thus to complete human knowledge, the intellect must be able to pronounce upon the truth of the forms it abstracts or reasons to, affirming or denying their *esse in re*. This *esse in re* is always manifested in the light of the agent intellect, participating as it does in the Divine light proceeding from God as cause of *esse*. The agent intellect is therefore the revealer of intelligibility: in its light, the intelligible species is extracted from the phantasm, the real existence of the corresponding object is manifested through a recourse to the phantasms, and the necessity of one’s reasoning is made evident through a recourse to the first principles (which were illuminated already when the agent intellect first began to abstract form from phantasms).

## **2. Judging vs. Apprehending the Soul’s Nature**

### *a. Judgment of the soul’s nature*

We can now return to the mysterious judgment by which the soul affirms the truth of its deduction of the soul’s nature and judges what the soul “ought to be,” in the light of Divine truth. From the observations above, it is clear that *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 87.1 are identifying the judgment about the soul’s nature as a verification of *esse*: this is why it is described as “the judgment whereby we pronounce that it is such as it was apprehended by the previous deduction” (*DV* 10.8). What it contributes to quidditative self-knowledge is precisely the *assent* to the truth of the deduction of the nature of the human soul as the immaterial, intellectual form of an organic body: it is, in fact, a resolution verifying the

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<sup>107</sup> *De spirit. creat.* 10, ad 8 [Leon. 24/1.113:538–41]: “[S]upra sensum est virtus intellectiva, quae iudicat de veritate, non per aliqua intelligibilia extra existentia, sed per lumen intellectus agentis, quod facit intelligibilia.”

deduction of the soul's essence. Without this assent, the deduction is idle speculation; in order to accept the conclusion and hold it as true—in order for it to count as a complete act of knowledge—the intellect must place its stamp of approval on the conclusion, judging that this soul-nature does indeed have *esse in re*. “Our intellect can err concerning certain conclusions before it resolves them according to first principles; but when this resolution has been accomplished, science is had of the conclusions, which cannot be false.”<sup>108</sup> The judgment is, in fact, what gives quidditative self-knowledge its certitude: quidditative self-knowledge attains the rank of science of the soul in the resolution to first principles.<sup>109</sup> “To have scientific knowledge of something is to know it perfectly, which is to apprehend perfectly its truth.”<sup>110</sup>

Our discussion of verification now makes clear that this resolution occurs in a twofold way. By the light of the agent intellect, the possible intellect can verify the conclusion of a deduction by verifying the premises according to the measure of sense-experience, and by verifying the process of reasoning itself according to the measure of first

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<sup>108</sup> SCG 4.92 [Leon. 15.288]: “Intellectus noster circa conclusiones aliquas errare potest antequam in prima principia resolutio fiat, in quae resolutione iam facta, scientia de conclusionibus habetur, quae falsa esse non potest.”

<sup>109</sup> *In Post. an.* I.1 [Leon. 1\*/2.5:75–6:80]: “Pars autem logice que primo deseruit processui pars iudicativa dicitur, eo quod iudicium est cum certitudine sciencie; et quia iudicium certum de effectibus haberi non potest nisi resoluendo in prima principia, pars hec analetica uocatur, idest resolutoria.” Note that SCG 3.46 repeatedly uses *scire* with reference to knowledge of what the soul is (*quid est*). For the role of judgment in establishing the scientific character of quidditative self-knowledge, see Fabro, who describes judgment of the soul's nature as “la trattazione tecnica secondo porposizioni (giudizi) scientificamente organizzate in modo da produrre la certezza oggettiva intorno ad una data natura” (“Coscienza e autocoscienza,” 109; I would not agree, however, with Fabro's characterization of apprehension vs. judgment as confused vs. distinct knowledge). Quidditative self-knowledge is therefore scientific in the broad sense of certitude and in the narrower sense of the knowledge of conclusions referred to indemonstrable principles (see *In Post. an.* I.7 [Leon. 1\*/2.31:64–69]: “[S]ciendum tamen quod hic Aristotiles large accipit scienciam pro qualibet certitudinali cognitione, et non secundum quod sciencia diuiditur contra intellectum, prout dicitur quod sciencia est conclusionum et intellectus principiorum”).

<sup>110</sup> *In Post. an.* I.4 [Leon. 1\*/2.19:82–84]: “[S]cire aliquid est perfecte cognoscere ipsum, hoc autem est perfecte apprehendere ueritatem ipsius.”

principles. The deduced apprehension of the soul's nature requires verification in precisely the same way. Yet the verification of the premises of that deduction includes an important difference: *the basic experiences on which the deduction relies as premises are not sensory experiences of a sensible object*. Rather, they are experiences of one's own inner states (I am understanding the nature of ivy, of oysters, of man), perceived directly by the intellect in their actuality. In fact, as Thomas points out, the deduction of the soul's nature relies precisely on one's understanding of what it means to know something<sup>111</sup>—but the act of knowing is not experienced by the senses. Thus the judgment of the soul's nature cannot proceed by a conversion to the phantasm: one cannot measure one's understanding of human knowledge against one's sensation of a concretely existing act of knowing, because there is no such sensation, only an intellectual experience (*intelligo me intelligere*). While no knowledge can occur without a phantasm, the standard whereby we measure our understanding of what-it-means-to-know is not the phantasm itself, for the real existence of the concrete act of knowing is not represented in any phantasm. Rather, it is directly grasped in one's experience of one's acts (even though these acts are themselves dependent on a phantasm).<sup>112</sup>

Here we finally see the full import of the claim elaborated in the first section of this chapter, that explicit self-awareness is the foundation for knowledge of the soul's nature. It is, in fact, to the standard of its own explicit self-awareness that the intellect must turn in

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<sup>111</sup> DV 10.8 [Leon. 22/2322.277–80]: “Ex hoc enim quod anima humana universales rerum naturas cognoscit, percipit quod species qua intelligimus, est immaterialis . . .”

<sup>112</sup> Note that Thomas repeatedly calls upon our “experience” of our own acts to justify his explanation of how knowledge works and what the soul is: see for instance ST Ia, 79.4 [Leon. 5.267], where he defends the existence of an agent intellect: “Et hoc experimento cognoscimus, dum percipimus nos abstrahere formas universales a conditionibus particularibus, quod est facere actu intelligibilia.”

order to verify its understanding of what-it-means-to-know. For this reason, a careful reflection on one's own acts is the key to understanding the true nature of the soul: for while one cannot be mistaken concerning one's own existence or that of one's acts (as these are directly grasped<sup>113</sup>), error can enter in when one attributes a particular nature to these acts.

With respect to verifying the process of reasoning itself, the judgment of the soul's nature unfolds in exactly the same way as does any other deduced conclusion. Here the intellect judges the logic that carries it to each stage of the deduction according to the measure of the first principles imprinted by the Divine light.<sup>114</sup> It is this last part of the verification that Thomas emphasizes in discussing the judgment of the soul's nature: "We behold this inviolable truth in its similitude which is impressed on our mind insofar as we know certain things naturally, such as those that are *per se* known, according to which we examine all other things, judging about all things according to them" (*DV* 10.8). The illumination of the Divine light through the first principles of reason gives us the assurance to state that our conclusion about the soul's nature is true and not merely speculative.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> These observations also show why Thomas's choice to highlight the judgment attached to the deduction of the soul's nature as a distinct type of self-knowledge does not preclude a prior distinct judgment of one's own existence in self-awareness. Intellection of oneself and intellection of one's nature are two distinct apprehensions with two distinct objects (the singular self and its universal nature). To judge that I the acting agent exist is not the same as to judge that a certain intellectually understood nature exists in reality: these therefore constitute two distinct judgments that in no way can supply for each other. Rather, the former constitutes the conscious affirmation of a personal mental state ("I am understanding the universal nature of 'dog'") to which the latter looks when verifying the premises of the deduction of the soul's nature ("knowledge is the apprehension of abstract natures").

<sup>114</sup> Presumably, then, those philosophers who define the human soul inaccurately as a material principle have made an error either in reasoning (thus failing to illuminate their reasoning fully by means of first principles) or in attributing the wrong nature to the act of thinking (thus failing to illuminate their own experience adequately—which is precisely the kind of error that would block them from the crucial recognition that knowledge is immaterial).

<sup>115</sup> Still strongly disagrees that judgment of the soul's nature is carried out with reference to the first principles, though I think his disagreement stems from a misapprehension of what "resolution to first principles" entails. He proposes that the first principle for judging the soul's nature would have to be something like "every intelligence returns to itself with a complete return" and points out that this principle cannot be self-evident (Still, "Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge," 86–89). Interestingly, Still

Thus the conclusion concerning the soul's nature proceeds from principles better known than the conclusion: one's own acts and existence, which are absolutely certain, and the indemonstrable first principles: it therefore enjoys scientific certitude.<sup>116</sup> From these observations, it is now evident that *SCG* 3.46 too refers to judgment of the soul's nature obliquely: "We inquire about what the soul is from acts and objects, through the principles of the speculative sciences."<sup>117</sup>

The role of the first principles in judgment also explains Thomas's peculiar handling of *De Trin.* IX, 6.9, quoted in both *DV* 10.8 and *ST* Ia, 87.1, wherein Augustine describes the knowledge, not of what sort of mind one happens to have, but "what sort of mind it ought to be." The context of this text from *De Trin.* is Augustine's distinction between knowing what is happening in one's own mind, and defining the human mind by "specific or generic cognition." Because this definition of the human mind is illuminated by inviolable truth,

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proposes as an alternative interpretation, that the judgment of the soul's nature "brings together the two elements of self knowledge otherwise separated in Aquinas's account: knowledge of the soul's nature and the particular conditions of its existence. Common self-knowledge is universal, but it is also abstracted from all actual conditions of existence. While self-cognition provides a starting point for seeking scientific self-knowledge, Augustinian self-knowledge may be intended to capture the reverse relation, connecting the rational intelligence discovered by analysis of intellectual activity to the individual thinking and knowing" (ibid., 89–90). While I agree that judgment "that the soul's nature is as it has been apprehended" must refer the knowledge of the soul's nature back to one's individual experiences, this is only half the story. In fact, whereas Putallaz focuses exclusively on verifying the conclusion against the measure of the first principles, Still focuses exclusively on verifying it against the measure of one's self-experiences. I think that judgment of the soul's nature, however, has to be both.

<sup>116</sup> *In Ethic.* VI.3 [Leon. 47/2.341:105–8]: "Oportet enim ad hoc quod aliquis sciat, quod principia ex quibus scit <sint> per aliquem modum credita et cognita etiam magis quam conclusiones quae sciuntur"; *In Post. an.* I.4 [Leon. 1\*/2.19:93–97]: "[Q]uia uero sciencia est etiam certa cognitio rei, quod autem contingit aliter se habere non potest aliquis per certitudinem cognoscere, ideo ulterius oportet quod id quod scitur non possit aliter se habere."

<sup>117</sup> *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]: "[Q]uid autem [anima] sit, inquirimus ex actibus et obiectis per principia scientiarum speculativarum."

anyone can grasp the same definition of the mind by seeing its essence (what it ought to be) in the divine ideas.<sup>118</sup>

Now, for Augustine, knowing the nature of the mind means knowing the “ideal mind” (what mind *ought* to be), beyond the particular states of particular minds. In fact, Augustine’s theory of illumination is partly driven by the claim that an essence is something eternal and unchanging, whereas individual beings are limited and changing. Thus (contrary to Aristotle) oyster-form cannot be known just by examining individual oysters, since oyster-form is on a different ontological plane from individual oysters: it is perfect and complete, eternal and immutable. This is why for Augustine, to know the human mind with a “specific or generic cognition” (i.e., to know *what it is*) is to know what the human mind *ought to be*. It is to know the Idea in which the mind participates and for whose perfection it strives. This “specific or generic cognition” of the mind is contrasted with the singular knowledge of an individual mind. Thus for Augustine, knowing what the mind ought to be in the light of inviolable truth is simply to grasp what mind is in itself by means of Divine illumination, in which the Idea in which individual human minds participates shines down upon an individual mind, so that this temporal mind can be known by means of an eternally true definition.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Augustine, *De Trin.* 9.6.9 [CCSL 50.301]: “Aliterque unusquisque homo loquendo enuntiat mentem suam quid in se ipso agatur attendens; aliter autem humanam mentem speciali aut generali cognitione definit. . . Vnde manifestum est aliud unumquemque uidere in se quod sibi alius dicenti credat, non tamen uideat; aliud autem in ipsa ueritate quod alius quoque possit intueri, quorum alterum mutari per tempora, alterum incommutabili aeternitate consistere. Neque enim oculis corporeis multas mentes uidendo per similitudinem colligimus generalem uel specialem mentis humanae notitiam, sed intuemur inuiolabilem ueritatem ex qua perfecte quantum possumus definiamus non qualis sit uniuscuiusque hominis mens, sed qualis esse sempiternis rationibus debeat.”

<sup>119</sup> For a discussion of some of the significant texts relating to Augustine’s illuminationism, see O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, 205–7; among the texts he cites, *De Genesi ad litteram* 12.31.59, *De civitate Dei* 11.27, *De Trin.* 9.9–11, and *Epistulae* 120.10, are of particular note.



Now, it seems likely that the Augustinian text in question is referring to something like the apprehension of essences, in the sense that the divine light illuminates the human knower so as to grasp the ideal essence of the human mind. Aquinas, however, takes the text to refer to a *judgment that bestows scientific certitude*. His decision to interpret the text in this way is not hard to understand. For Thomas, as a good Aristotelian, the essence signified by the definition is *in* the known object, and one therefore knows an essence by abstracting it from the object or by reasoning to it, not from looking to a higher truth in which that object participates. Metaphysically and epistemologically, Thomas cannot be self-consistent if he equates apprehension of the soul's essence with an apprehension of the "ideal mind" in the eternal reasons.<sup>120</sup>

Instead, then, Thomas restricts the knowledge of "what the soul ought to be in light of the eternal reasons" to the verificational judgment that grants scientific certitude to one's deduction of the soul's essence. This does not mean that in judgment, the philosopher finally attains the Divine Idea in which the human mind participates, since the verification of *esse in re* attains the existence of the known object, not some eternal form transcending the known object's individual instantiation. Rather, Thomas is reinterpreting what it means to know "what the mind ought to be": the "ought" (*debeat*) here refers to the necessity of the reasoning whereby one deduces the nature of the soul.<sup>121</sup> This is why he stresses in *DV* 10.8 that the "inviolable truth" by which we judge what the soul "ought" to be is nothing more

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<sup>120</sup> Interestingly, Charles Boyer argues that in *De spirit. creat.* 10, Thomas takes Augustine to be defending a view of abstractive knowledge (*Essais sur la doctrine de saint Augustin* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1932], 156–57). Boyer himself concludes that Augustine does indeed posit abstractive knowledge (166–83).

<sup>121</sup> See for instance *In Ethic.* 6, 3 [Leon. 47/2.340:53–56]: "Sed certa ratio scientiae hinc accipitur, quod omnes suspicamur de eo quod scimus quod non contingit illud aliter se habere: alioquin non esset certitudo scientis, sed dubitatio opinantis."

than the likeness of that truth “impressed on our mind” (viz., the agent intellect), which enables us to “know certain things naturally, such as those that are *per se* known, according to which we examine all other things, judging about all things according to them.” When the philosopher judges what the mind “ought to be,” therefore, he is certifying that the mind *must* have the nature such as he has apprehended it, according to a resolution to first principles.<sup>122</sup>

Thomas’s interpretation, though it seems somewhat forced, still does not distort the text as much as it might seem on first glance. In fact, it has long been a matter of scholarly debate whether for Augustine, illumination applies to the apprehension of essences, or to the judgment of eternal truths, or both.<sup>123</sup> Gilson, for instance, defines Augustinian illumination almost exclusively as a matter of judgment.<sup>124</sup> O’Daly, however, argues that for Augustine, the Divine light renders both apprehension *and* judgment of eternal truths possible.<sup>125</sup> Thus Aquinas’s reading of *De Trin.* IX, 6.9 as referring to judgment rather than apprehension is at least a legitimately defensible interpretation of Augustine’s illuminationism.

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<sup>122</sup> In addressing the question of why this judgment is said to concern “what the soul ought to be,” Lambert offers a different explanation, that the judgment is directed towards those aspects of the soul’s essence (immateriality and intellectuality) that most closely “approximate the soul to the divine” (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 250). I should also note McKian’s interpretation, according to which the “judgment of the soul’s nature” indicates that reflecting on the conditions of judgment is an important part of the discursive process towards quidditative self-knowledge (“The Metaphysics of Introspection,” 109). This interpretation, however, cannot be sustained, as it does not account for what the texts clearly describe as a verificational judgment *of the soul’s nature*; it also seems to confuse resolution to first principles with self-knowledge.

<sup>123</sup> For a brief analysis of the scholarly debate over whether illumination is a matter of intuiting essences or judging eternal truths, see O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, 206–7, n. 122. For a more in-depth analysis of the various interpretations of Augustinian illuminationism among German authors of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see C.E. Schuetzinger, *The German Controversy on Saint Augustine’s Illumination Theory* (New York: Pageant Press, 1960). Finally, a very thorough conceptual outline of the nine main ways of interpreting Augustine’s theory of illumination is found in F. Cayré, *Initiation à la philosophie de saint Augustin* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1947), 215–43.

<sup>124</sup> See Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, ch. 5, especially p. 84: “Augustine’s interest lies not so much in the formation of a concept as in the formation of a knowledge of truth”; and 89: “Whenever Augustine speaks of knowledge impressed on us by divine illumination, the context enables us to conclude that by this knowledge he means the foundation of this or that class of possible true judgments.”

<sup>125</sup> O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, 205–6.

*b. Development of doctrine in the judgment of the self*

Our discussion of judgment has already laid out all the principles necessary for understanding why the judgment of the soul's nature is so seldom mentioned in the Thomistic texts. Judgment naturally accompanies apprehension because conscious thinking is always an active engagement with the world.<sup>126</sup> The explicit consideration of any object involves an assent or dissent: the soul does not simply receive forms passively, but perceives the truth thereof, judging their *esse in re*. Thus it is not surprising that Aquinas generally does not trouble to distinguish quidditative self-knowledge into its two components of apprehension and judging. One may take for granted that when the soul apprehends its nature, it is also judging that its nature is, in fact, "as it has been apprehended" (unless the soul mistrusts the process of discursion that led to this apprehension—at which point it might suspend judgment pending further reasoning). Thus there is no pressing reason to distinguish judgment of the soul's nature specially from apprehension of the soul's nature.<sup>127</sup> In fact, it is only in *DV* 10.8 that Thomas singles judgment out for treatment as a distinct type of self-knowledge. In *ST* Ia, 87.1, Thomas refers to it only as "the judgment and efficacy of that cognition whereby we know the nature of the soul," highlighting it as an aspect of quidditative self-knowledge.

But why then does Aquinas bother to mention judgment of the soul's nature at all in these two texts? In *DV*, at least, the article on self-knowledge comes in the context of q. 10, which treats issues relating to the Augustinian view of "mind." Thus since Aquinas is above all in dialogue with Augustine in this text, he may have felt obligated to resolve all the

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<sup>126</sup> See texts cited in Chapter II, note 31.

<sup>127</sup> As Lambert puts it: "Perhaps the straightforwardness of this application explains why Aquinas mentioned the judgment in so few places" (*Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 249).

problems posed by Augustinian texts, including the illuminationist claim that knowledge of the soul's nature is knowledge of the ideal mind in the Divine Ideas. In addition, *DV* 10.8 is especially concerned to catalog the types of self-knowledge exhaustively.

It is less clear why the issue should arise in *ST* Ia, 87.1. In fact, it occupies a surprisingly large part in Thomas's discussion there of quidditative self-knowledge and is introduced immediately upon introducing knowledge of the soul's nature. Moreover, he introduces it almost as though conceding to an adversary: "The intellect knows itself universally, insofar as we consider the nature of the human mind from the act of the intellect. *But it is true that* the judgment and efficacy of this cognition . . . belongs to us according to the derivation of the light of our intellect from divine truth, in which the reasons of all things are contained."<sup>128</sup> Perhaps, then, opponents of Thomas had used *De Trin.* 9.6.9 against his thesis of self-knowledge *per actum*. In this respect, it is significant, I think, that the only two instances in which Thomas mentions judgment of the soul's nature are those in which he treats this Augustinian text. This is not to say that the judgment of the soul's nature was merely invented to patch over Aquinas's differences with Augustine, for as we have seen, it is a necessary dimension of the Thomistic theory of quidditative self-knowledge, mandated by the principles of his general theory of knowledge. But Thomas is only impelled to discuss it under the pressure of Augustine's clearly illuminationist

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<sup>128</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: "Alio modo, in universali, secundum quod naturam humanae mentis ex actu intellectus consideramus. Sed verum est quod iudicium et efficacia huius cognitionis per quam naturam animae cognoscimus, competit nobis secundum derivationem luminis intellectus nostri a veritate divina, in qua rationes omnium rerum continentur."

insistence in *De Trin.* 9.6.9 that quidditative self-knowledge is procured in the light of divine truth.<sup>129</sup>

The Thomistic doctrine concerning the apprehension and the judgment of the soul's nature, then, can be summarized as follows. The philosopher apprehends the nature of the soul as the conclusion of an arduous process of reasoning. Through judgment, he affirms the scientific truth of the deductively-achieved conclusion by measuring the truth of the premises according to the soul's experience of its own acts, and by measuring the necessity of his reasoning resolutely according to the first principles of reason. Quidditative self-knowledge, or science of the soul, includes both the apprehension and the judgment. It is the light of Divine truth, in which the agent intellect participates, that makes possible this foray into the innermost depths of one's being. As a finite participation in the omniscience of God as cause of all *esse*, the agent intellect illuminates *esse in re* so that the philosopher can measure his conclusions concerning the soul's nature against the standard of what-is, separating truth from falsity. It is because this participated light is so weak, however, that a true definition of the human soul is so hard to attain.

### C. Judgment and the *reditio completa*

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<sup>129</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange reaches a similar conclusion regarding Thomas's treatment of *De Trin.* 9.6.9 ("Utrum mens," 43). Romeyer takes this analysis farther than I would, arguing that Augustine makes a positive contribution to Thomas's doctrine of judgment: "Sous les auspices d'Aristote, [l'acte d'intellection humaine] se parfait par l'influence d'Augustin" ("Connaissance de l'esprit humain" [1928], 87). In the opposite direction, Wébert argues that "en dépit des citations répétées, cette vue augustinienne n'a pas d'influence sur la constitution de la psychologie thomiste" ("Reflexio," 316); he is right in the sense that Thomas steadfastly rejects an illuminationist view of the apprehension of essences; still, Thomas does try to accommodate *De Trin.* 9.6.9 by restricting it to the judgment of the soul's nature according to first principles.

We have now concluded our discussion of Thomas's main division of self-knowledge into perception of the singular existing self (self-awareness, both habitual and actual), and understanding of the common nature of the human soul (quidditative self-knowledge, both apprehension and judgment). It is well-known, however, that in addition to these four types of self-knowledge, Putallaz has claimed to have found a fifth, namely, "reflexion in the strict sense." According to Putallaz, this reflexion occurs in—and is indeed identical with—every intellectual judgment, and constitutes what Thomas describes as the "complete return" (*reditio completa*). As Putallaz treats this issue at considerable length and adduces strong textual support, his interpretation requires special consideration.<sup>130</sup> I will therefore present Putallaz's position and offer a critique, concluding with a discussion of what *reditio completa* is, for Thomas.

### 1. Putallaz on Reflexion in the Strict Sense

Putallaz argues that the four kinds of self-knowledge identified in DV 10.8 fail to capture an important phenomenon of human knowing: "[T]here is a place in man's intellectual activity for a reflexion, an eminently concrete operation, whose act, unlike that of prereflexive knowledge, is distinct from the direct act [viz., the act directed towards an extramental object], and whose terminus is not posed as an ob-ject, nor as a quiddity, nor as the object of abstract analysis [viz., quidditative self-knowledge]."<sup>131</sup> Noting that the word

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<sup>130</sup> Putallaz's discussion of the role of reflexion in judgment draws inspiration from Charles Boyer's article, "Le sens d'un texte de Saint Thomas, 'De Veritate, q. 1, a. 9,'" *Gregorianum* 5 (1924): 424–43, but Putallaz's argument is presented with greater precision and a better grasp of the cognitive issues involved. Consequently, I shall focus on Putallaz rather than Boyer here.

<sup>131</sup> Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 149: "En effet, il y a place, dans l'activité intellectuelle de l'homme, pour une réflexion, opération éminemment concrète, dont l'acte, contrairement à ce qui se passe dans la connaissance préreflexive, est distinct de l'acte direct, et dont le terme n'est posé ni comme ob-jet, ni comme quiddité ou objet d'analyse abstraite. Part of the reason that Putallaz considers DV 10.8's four kinds of self-knowledge to be incomplete is that he deems actual self-awareness to be prereflexive (i.e., implicit), leaving

*reflexio* does not appear in the main texts on self-knowledge, but that it does appear separately in other texts,<sup>132</sup> he suggests that it constitutes a distinct type of self-knowledge—in fact, the missing fifth type that he has identified.

This *reflexio*, Putallaz argues, is precisely the *reflexio* that Thomas associates with the judgment of *esse in re*. For Thomas, “truth is the relation of conformity, adequacy, fidelity, of an act to a thing.”<sup>133</sup> The intellect is already “true” in a broad sense when it is conformed through apprehension to some extramental thing.<sup>134</sup> Truth in the strict sense, however, belongs to the judgment of *esse in re*, insofar as in judgment, the intellect knows this relation of conformity between itself and its object: “But to know this aforementioned relation of conformity is nothing other than to judge that it is or is not so in the thing.”<sup>135</sup>

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the text without any account of an act that is specifically explicitly directed toward the soul itself (110–11). But the fifth type of self-knowledge that he proposes does not really fit this bill either.

<sup>132</sup> *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 3 [Mand. 1.406]: “Et ideo dicendum, quod potentiae immateriales reflectuntur super sua objecta; quia intellectus intelligit se intelligere, et similiter voluntas vult se velle et diligit se diligere. Cujus ratio est quia actus potentiae immaterialis non excluditur a ratione objecti. . . . et propter hoc, lib. *De causis*, prop. 15, dicitur quod cujuscumque actio reedit in essentiam agentis per quamdam reflexionem” (cited by Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 152, n. 124); *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3 [Moos 3.703]: “[A]nimam reflecti per cognitionem supra seipsam, vel supra ea quae ipsius sunt, contingit dupliciter.—Uno modo secundum quod potentia cognoscitiva cognoscit naturam sui, vel eorum quae in ipsa sunt; et hoc est tantum intellectus cujus est quidditates rerum cognoscere. . . . Alio modo anima reflectitur super actus suos cognoscendo illos actus esse” (cited by Putallaz, 157, nn. 137 and 138); *In Post. an.* I.1 [Leon. 1\*/2.3:12–17]: “Ratio autem non solum dirigere potest inferiorum partium actus, set etiam actus sui directiva est: hoc enim est proprium intellectivae partis ut in se ipsam reflectatur, nam intellectus intelligit seipsum et similiter ratio de suo actu ratiocinari potest” (cited by Putallaz, 153, n. 130); *DP* 7.6 [Marietti, 201]: “Ex hoc enim quod intellectus in se ipsum reflectitur, sicut intelligit res existentes extra animam, ita intelligit eas esse intellectas” (cited by Putallaz, 155, n. 134); *DV* 1.6, ad 2 [Leon. 22/1.24:173–75]: “[Q]uia intellectus reflectitur in se ipsum et intelligit se sicut et alias res ut dicitur in III De anima . . .” (cited by Putallaz, 156, n. 136).

<sup>133</sup> Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 173: “Le vrai n’est donc rien d’autre, apparemment, que le rapport de conformité, d’adéquation, de fidélité d’un acte à une chose.” He cites *In Perierm.* I.3 [Leon. 1\*/1.16:118–20]; *DV* 1.1.

<sup>134</sup> He cites *In Perierm.* I.3 [Leon. 1\*/1.16:151–57]: “[U]nde sensus dicitur uerus quando per formam <suam> conformatur rei extra animam existenti. Et sic intelligitur quod sensus proprii sensibilis sit uerus. Et hoc etiam modo intellectus apprehendens quod quid est absque compositione et diuisione semper est uerus”; and *In Met.* VI.4, no. 1234.

<sup>135</sup> *In Perierm.* I.3 [Leon. 1\*/1.17:167–69]; Latin cited in note 76 above; *In Met.* VI.4, no. 1235 [Marietti, 311]: “Et ideo, licet sensus de sensibili possit esse uerus, tamen sensus veritatem non cognoscit, sed solum intellectus: et propter hoc dicitur quod verum et falsum sunt in mente”; and *ST* Ia, 16.2 (Latin cited in note 76 above).

Putallaz concludes that this judgment *is* reflexion, or at least “intimately connected” to reflexion.<sup>136</sup>

Putallaz’s justification of this position relies mainly upon *DV* 1.9:

[Truth] is known by the intellect insofar as the intellect reflects upon its act, non only insofar as it knows its act, but insofar as it knows its relation (*proportio*) to the thing, which indeed cannot be known unless the nature of that act is known, which cannot be known except if the nature of the active principle is known, which is the intellect itself, whose nature is to conform to things: whence in this way the intellect knows truth because it reflects upon itself. . . . Although the sense judges truly about things, it does not know the truth by which it judges truly: for although the sense knows that it senses, it does not know its nature, and consequently neither the nature of its act, nor its relation (*proportio*) to the thing, nor, therefore, its truth. The reason is that . . . intellectual substances return to their essence by a complete return (*reditio completa*): in knowing something placed outside themselves, they proceed in some way outside themselves; but insofar as they know that they know, they now begin to return to themselves, because the act of cognition is the intermediary between the knower and the known. But this return is completed insofar as they know their own essences: whence it is said in the *Liber de causis* that whatever knows its essence is returning to its essence by a complete return.<sup>137</sup>

According to Putallaz’s interpretation, this text claims that judgment is (or involves) a reflexion by which the soul must grasp not only its act but also its own nature, in order to judge its conformity to its object.<sup>138</sup> He finds confirmation of this claim in the fact that *DV*

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<sup>136</sup> See Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 182–89; here 188, 189. Also see Boyer, “Le sens de *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 9,” 428: “Le jugement est cette réflexion en acte.”

<sup>137</sup> *DV* 1.9 [Leon. 22/1.29:22–55]: “[Veritas] cognoscitur autem ab intellectu secundum quod intellectus reflectitur super actum suum, non solum secundum quod cognoscit actum suum sed secundum quod cognoscit proportionem eius ad rem, quae quidem cognosci non potest nisi cognita natura ipsius actus, quae cognosci non potest nisi natura principii activi cognoscatur, quod est ipse intellectus, in cuius natura est ut rebus conformetur: unde secundum hoc cognoscit veritatem intellectus quod supra se ipsum reflectitur. . . . etsi enim sensus vere iudicat de rebus, non tamen cognoscit veritatem, qua vere iudicat; quamvis enim sensus cognoscat se sentire, non tamen cognoscit naturam suam, et per consequens nec naturam sui actus, nec proportionem eius ad res, et ita nec veritatem eius. Cuius ratio est, quia illa quae sunt perfectissima in entibus, ut substantiae intellectuales, redeunt ad essentiam suam reditioe completa: in hoc enim quod cognoscunt aliquid extra se positum, quodam modo extra se procedunt; secundum vero quod cognoscunt se cognoscere, iam ad se redire incipiunt quia actus cognitionis est medius inter cognoscentem et cognitum; sed reditus iste completur secundum quod cognoscunt essentias proprias: unde dicitur in libro *De causis* quod ‘omnis sciens essentiam suam est rediens ad essentiam suam reditioe completa.’” See also *In Met.* VI.4, no. 1236 [Marietti, 311]: “[I]n hac sola secunda operatione intellectus est veritas et falsitas, secundum quam non solum intellectus habet similitudinem rei intellectae, sed etiam super ipsam similitudinem reflectitur, cognoscendo et diiudicando ipsam.”

<sup>138</sup> Putallaz warns, however, that this judgment/reflexion/reditio “ne peut pas être conçue comme un super-acte, extérieur à moi, par lequel je jugerais de la chose en soi, de ma représentation, et du rapport de cette copie à son modèle . . . la présente réflexion n’est pas un acte de philosophie critique qui fonderait l’objectivité



1.9 concludes with a reference to *reditio completa*, in which the knower returns to himself in knowing his own essence. He thus concludes that reflexion is “the intellect’s concrete act of return upon itself: a return that bears simultaneously on its act, on the *species*, and even unto its own essence or nature in its dynamism . . . this is what the Proclean tradition calls a *reditio completa*.”<sup>139</sup> This judgment/reflexion/*reditio*, he argues, is Thomas’s missing fifth type of self-knowledge.

One might object, of course, that ordinary everyday judgment cannot be made to depend on anything like a quidditative grasp of one’s intellectual nature. Putallaz concedes this point,<sup>140</sup> proposing instead that *DV* 1.9 uses the word ‘nature,’ not in the sense of “common nature” (equivalent to essence or quiddity), but in the sense of a “dynamism proper to the concrete substance or individual, the first substance, itself a real principle of movement.”<sup>141</sup> To understand the act of something is to understand that it is made for such an act; thus in understanding that I understand, I know that the intellect is “made to attain the truth.”<sup>142</sup> The “knowledge of one’s nature” included in judgment/reflexion/*reditio*, then,

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du connaître; elle est l’acte concret par lequel j’atteins l’objet, mais l’objet dans sa similitude, en tant qu’être-intelligé” (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 185).

<sup>139</sup> Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 181–82: “Il faut affirmer énergiquement que Thomas d’Aquin se réfère ici à un acte concret de retour de l’intellect sur lui-même: retour portant simultanément sur son acte, sur la *species*, et jusqu’à son essence ou sa nature dans son dynamisme; c’est bien de réflexion au sens strict dont on parle, c’est-à-dire de ce que la tradition proclusienne nomme une ‘*reditio completa*’”; see also Boyer, “Le sens de *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 9,” 443.

<sup>140</sup> For discussion of the problem, see Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 189–91; see also 181, 194, and 282.

<sup>141</sup> Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 195: “Le term ‘nature’ signifie un dynamisme propre à la substance concrète ou individuelle, substance première, elle-même principe réel du mouvement . . . Voilà pourquoi ‘connaître la nature de l’intellect’ ne signifie pas exactement ‘connaître son essence’; connaître la nature de l’intellect signifie saisir le principe du dynamisme intellectuel qui conduit l’intellect à se conformer, par nature à ce qui est.” At 192–96, he adduces several texts in which Thomas offers various definitions of the term ‘nature’; see *ST* Ia, 29.1, ad 4 and IIIa, 2.1; *In Met.* V.5, nos. 808–826, and XII.12, no. 2634; *De unione Verbi incarnati* 1.1.

<sup>142</sup> Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 198–99.

is the recognition that the act of knowing in which one perceives the singular intellect is the act for which the intellect is designed by nature.<sup>143</sup>

## 2. Difficulties with Putallaz's Interpretation of Reflexion

The highlights of Putallaz's discussion of "reflexion in the strict sense" (*Le sens de la réflexion*, ch. 4, §5) can therefore be summarized by the following four points:

- (1) Every intellectual judgment is a reflexion of the intellect upon itself together with its object;
- (2) This reflexion necessarily includes a cognition of one's concrete nature;
- (3) This cognition of one's concrete nature is what Thomas means by *reditio completa*.
- (4) This judgment/reflexion/*reditio* is a distinct type of operation, not reducible to any of the four kinds of self-knowledge.<sup>144</sup>

The main thrust of my response to Putallaz is to argue that while (1) is probably defensible, neither (2), (3), or (4) can be upheld.

Regarding point (1): Putallaz makes an excellent case to show that Thomistic judgment involves some sort of reflexion upon oneself. The text that he cites from *In Perierm.* seems definitive: "To know the foregoing relation of conformity [i.e., one's own conformity to the thing] is nothing other than to judge that this is or is not so in reality (*ita esse in re vel non esse*): which is to compose and divide; and therefore the intellect only knows truth by composing and dividing through its judgment."<sup>145</sup> In order to engage in verificational judgment, the intellect must perceive its own knowledge together with the existing thing under the single aspect of their relation of conformity. Judgment is therefore at least reflexive to that extent, and perhaps judgment itself may even validly be called a reflexion.

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<sup>143</sup> Boyer addresses this problem in "Le sens de *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 9," 437–43, and answers it in the same way. In judgment, "[l']intelligence saisit] son mouvement naturel, sa destination propre, son aptitude à se conformer aux choses. Elle n'apprend de la sorte ni sa simplicité, ni son immatérialité, ni aucune autre de ses prérogatives" (440).

<sup>144</sup> Points (1) and (2) are endorsed by Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas*, 250–56.

<sup>145</sup> *In Perierm.* I.3, cited in note 76 above.

But regarding point (2)—where Putallaz, appealing to *DV* 1.9, describes this reflexion as involving cognition of the “concrete nature” of the intellect and its act—I must register serious disagreement. Suppose that, having abstracted the essence of dog from a sensible particular, Fido, one judges this essence to have *esse in re*: “Fido is just as we apprehended”; “Fido is a dog.” Clearly, this judgment requires that the intellect perceive a singular, present relation of conformity between itself-in-act and Fido. Since one of the terms of the relation is the knowing intellect itself, some sort of reflexion is clearly required. But the knowledge that this conformity is what my intellect is made *for* seems to be superfluous. In fact, it would be necessary only if the intellect had no access to the sensible singular, no “connection” to the phantasm. Then it could never judge the *esse in re* of the apprehended form without knowing that knowledge of reality is its natural act and that therefore its apprehensions are always or for the most part in conformity with reality. But for Thomas, the human intellect is not locked inside itself, measuring its truth according to its own orientation to truth.<sup>146</sup> Rather, the *esse in re* of the apprehended form can only be judged by the measure of the corresponding sense-object.<sup>147</sup> In fact, there is no textual evidence that judgment requires reflexion at any level other than the perception of one’s singular act. (I will discuss the apparent exception of *DV* 1.9 in a moment.)

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<sup>146</sup> As, interestingly enough, Boyer seems to imply when he concludes: “C’est à l’intelligence de rassurer l’intelligence” (“Le sens de *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 9,” 443). Donnell critiques this implication as “subversive of realism in that it subordinates our certitude regarding being as first principle of knowledge to a certitude regarding the self as oriented to being” (“St. Thomas on Reflection and Judgment,” 234).

<sup>147</sup> I think that here we find a corollary of the Thomistic rejection of illuminationism. An illuminationist psychology needs no intellectual access to the sensible particular in order to judge one’s apprehensions: the truth of one’s judgments is guaranteed by the Divine light. Thomas, however, is (as Bérubé notes; see *La connaissance de l’individuel*, 41–42) quite possibly the first major medieval thinker to insist upon some intellectual access to the singular by way of the conversion to phantasms. I would argue that the main reason for this insistence is the need to explain particular judgments, which Thomas repeatedly justifies by arguing for a conversion to the phantasms; see for instance *In Sent.* IV.50.1.3, esp. ad 2 s.c.; *DV* 10.5; and *ST* Ia, 86.1.

Furthermore, knowing the “concrete nature” of the intellect as “made for truth” seems to presuppose some degree of philosophical reasoning. Putallaz suggests that to perceive the intellect in its act of knowing *is* to perceive its being-made-for-knowing. He compares this to vision, whose “nature and end are given simultaneously in the conscious act of seeing: in opening my eyes and perceiving, I know that my eyes are made to see.”<sup>148</sup> But to perceive some entity-in-act is not necessarily to perceive that this entity is naturally ordered towards that act. In perceiving a bird hopping along, dragging its wing, I cannot instantly know whether this act is natural to this kind of bird without broader experience and inductive reasoning. But even if Putallaz’s claim applies only to perceiving the teleology of one’s own acts (vision, intellection), it is still doubtful that in the very act of seeing, a three-year-old knows that her eye is *made for* vision, or that in the act of pronouncing that “Fido is a doggie,” she knows that her intellect is *made for* knowing. In fact, the prephilosophical mind does not distinguish between individual faculties such as intellect, imagination, will, sense-appetite. Rather, acts are experienced simply as belonging to oneself, “I” the agent: “I want *x*,” “I am afraid of *x*,” “I see *x*,” “I understand *x*.” If Putallaz were right, one ought to perceive the concrete nature of all one’s conscious acts, not just vision and intellection—i.e., to perceive that “I want *x*” would be to perceive that “my will is made for desiring the good.” But as anyone who has taught freshmen knows, it takes some philosophical effort to distinguish between the faculties.

Neither does it help to propose that the perception that “I want *x*” equates with the much less precise prephilosophical perception that “I am made for desiring the good.” If the

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<sup>148</sup> Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 198–99: “La nature et sa finalité me sont données simultanément dans l’acte conscient de voir: en ouvrant les yeux et en percevant, je sais que mes yeux sont faits pour voir.”

perception of an act includes the perception that one is ordered naturally to that act, one would then be unable to distinguish which acts are teleologically fulfilling and which are not—i.e., “I am made for knowing the truth” would have the same status as “I am made for hating obnoxious metro riders” or “I am made for enjoying hallucinogens.” One might perhaps argue that in perceiving my act, I perceive merely that I have the capacity for that act, i.e., the fact that I do know truth or hate obnoxious fellow metro riders manifests my ability to do so. But the performance of these acts in itself does not manifest whether we *ought* to do them (i.e., whether they are the dynamic fulfilment of a natural telos), which is the point at stake. At one point, Putallaz claims that the recognition of one’s dynamic nature is just “instinctive.”<sup>149</sup> But there seems to be no mechanism in Thomistic psychology to account for such an instinct.

Regarding point (3), that the reflexion that constitutes (or grounds) judgment is in fact the *reditio completa*, again I find myself in disagreement.<sup>150</sup> This claim relies again on DV 1.9, where Thomas says that the intellect is able to “know the truth by which it judges” by knowing its nature and the nature of its act because, unlike the senses, it is able to “return to its essence by a complete return (*reditio completa*).” But DV 1.9 itself contains evidence suggesting that reflexion is not to be identified with *reditio completa*. At the end of this text, *reditio completa* is explicitly described as a knowledge of one’s essence: “But this return is complete insofar as they know their own essences: whence it is said in the *Liber de causis* that whatever knows its essence is returning to its essence by a complete return.” By describing it as a “complete” return to one’s essence, Thomas seems to be suggesting that

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<sup>149</sup> See Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 208.

<sup>150</sup> Still agrees: “This does not entail that full self-reflexivity is equivalent to the complete return, only that the former is a condition of the latter” (“Aquinas’s Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 137).

this *reditio* occurs when the soul attains a full quidditative understanding of its essence.

Indeed, this interpretation is verified by other texts on *reditio completa*.<sup>151</sup> For instance, the Commentary on the *Liber de causis* describes *reditio completa* as a scientific knowledge of one's essence.<sup>152</sup> Again, in *DV* 2.2 and 10.9 Thomas states that *reditio completa* is achieved by reasoning discursively from object to act to power to essence—the same process by which quidditative self-knowledge was said to be attained in *DV* 10.8.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, if *reditio* is discursive, it cannot be identified with judgment/reflexion, since Thomas repeatedly distinguishes the operation of judgment from the operation of reasoning.<sup>154</sup> Further, for Thomas, *reditio completa* belongs to all intellectual beings and therefore to separate substances as well.<sup>155</sup> But separate substances do not judge, because they have no need to compose and divide.<sup>156</sup>

Thus *reditio completa* cannot be identified with reflexion/judgment. For if they are the same, then either *reditio completa* does not involve quidditative self-knowledge (a

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<sup>151</sup> Still too holds that “a key issue in the response [of *DV* 1.9] is scientific self-knowledge” (“Aquinas’s Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 139; see also 124–25).

<sup>152</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15 [Saffrey, 90]: “Et quod hoc debeat vocari reditus vel conversio, manifestat per hoc quod, cum anima scit essentiam suam, *sciens et scitum sunt res una*, et ita *scientia* qua scit *essentiam suam*, id est ipsa operatio intelligibilis, *est ex ea in quantum est sciens et est ad eam in quantum est scita*.”

<sup>153</sup> See *DV* 2.2, ad 2, cited above in note 27, and *DV* 10.9 [Leon. 22/2.328:194–207]: “Sed ista *reditio* incomplete quidem est in sensu, complete autem in intellectu qui *reditione completa* redit ad sciendum essentiam suam. . . . Unde actio intellectus nostri primo tendit in ea quae per phantasmata apprehenduntur, et deinde redit ad actum suum cognoscendum; et ulterius in species et habitus et potentias et essentiam ipsius mentis.” For texts outlining the reasoning process whereby the soul’s nature is discovered, see notes 26, 27, and 28 above.

<sup>154</sup> See *In Post. an.* I.1 [Leon. 1\*/2.4:42–5:49]: “[S]ecunda uero operatio intellectus est compositio uel diuisio intellectuum, in qua est iam uerum et falsum. . . . Tercius uero actus rationis est secundum id quod est proprium rationis, scilicet discurrere ab uno in aliud, ut per id quod est notum deueniat in cognitionem ignoti”; as well as *ST* Ia, 58.4 and *In De Div. Nom.* II.2.

<sup>155</sup> See *Lib. de caus.*, prop. 7 [Pattin, 62]: “Cum ergo intelligentia sit secundum hunc modum, penitus divisionem non recipit. Et significatio [quidem] illius est *reditio* sui super essentiam suam, scilicet quia non extenditur cum re extensa, ita ut sit una suarum extremitatum secunda ab alia”; and Thomas’s commentary on this proposition; as well as *DV* 1.9 itself. For the *reditio* in God, see *DV* 2.2, ad 2; *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 1.

<sup>156</sup> See *ST* Ia, 58.4.

position manifestly contradicted by all Thomas's discussions of *reditio completa*), or else "knowing the intellect's nature" includes quidditative self-knowledge, an obvious absurdity that Putallaz rejects.<sup>157</sup>

If Putallaz's identification of judgment, reflexion, and *reditio completa* are to be rejected, then, how are we to interpret *DV* 1.9? Without taking too much time on this point, I propose the following tentative interpretation, which I believe is more in accord with the rest of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge. At the beginning of the article, Thomas says that truth is in the intellect

as following the act of the intellect and as known by the intellect: it follows the operation of the intellect insofar as there is a judgment of the intellect that a thing exists; but it is known by the intellect insofar as the intellect reflects upon its act, not only insofar as it knows its act but insofar as it knows its relation (*proportio*) to the thing, which cannot be known unless the nature of its act is known, which cannot be known except if the nature of the active principle is known, which is the intellect, whose nature it is that it should conform to things.<sup>158</sup>

Notice that the judgment of existence is already presented in connection with "truth as *following* the act of the intellect." Reflection is only mentioned in connection with the "truth as *known* by the intellect." I would argue that this second instance refers, not to a judgment of truth, but to a quidditative knowledge of truth. It makes sense that Thomas then

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<sup>157</sup> One should also keep in mind the fact that Thomas's own discussions of quidditative self-knowledge repeatedly use the phrase "knowing the soul's/mind's nature" to indicate an essential knowledge that includes the soul's quiddity and essential properties. See *DV* 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322.275–77 and 296–99]: "Quod patet intuendo modum quo philosophi naturam animae investigaverunt. . . . Si vero consideretur cognitio quam de natura animae habemus quantum ad iudicium quo sententiamus ita esse, ut deductione praedicta apprehenderamus . . ."; *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.356]: "Unde et multi naturam animae ignorant, et multi etiam circa naturam animae erraverunt. Propter quod Augustinus dicit, X de Trin., de tali inquisitione mentis, non velut absentem se quaerat mens cernere; sed praesentem quaerat discernere, idest cognoscere differentiam suam ab aliis rebus, quod est cognoscere quidditatem et naturam suam."

<sup>158</sup> *DV* 1.9 [Leon. 22/1.29:16–31]: "Dicendum quod veritas est in intellectu et in sensu, sed non eodem modo. In intellectu enim est sicut consequens actum intellectus et sicut cognita per intellectum: consequitur namque intellectus operationem secundum quod iudicium intellectus est de re secundum quod est; cognoscitur autem ab intellectu secundum quod intellectus reflectitur super actum suum, non solum secundum quod cognoscit actum suum sed secundum quod cognoscit proportionem eius ad rem, quae quidem cognosci non potest nisi cognita natura ipsius actus, quae cognosci non potest nisi natura principii activi cognoscatur, quod est ipse intellectus, in cuius natura est ut rebus conformetur."

goes on to link this knowledge of truth to quidditative self-knowledge and even *reditio completa*, because truth is defined precisely in relation to the intellect.<sup>159</sup> Thus I would agree with Putallaz that when Thomas says that in this knowledge of truth the intellect knows its “relation” (*proportio*) to the thing, *proportio* here does not mean a present relation to a specific object, but an essential aptitude for truth, a natural symmetry between the intellect and reality<sup>160</sup>; and I would go further to argue that this natural symmetry is known through quidditative self-knowledge.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, I would argue that this essential aptitude is not known in the judgment of *a present conformity to a given object*; rather, it is a prerequisite for knowing *the nature of truth*.<sup>162</sup>

Lastly, if points (2) and (3) cannot be upheld, it is difficult to defend point (4), i.e., that judgment/reflexion is a distinct fifth type of self-knowledge. Moreover, Thomas himself does not consistently use the term *reflexio* with reference to judgment, or even to

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<sup>159</sup> DV 1.1 [Leon. 22/1.5:159–61]: “Convenientiam vero entis ad intellectum exprimit hoc nomen verum.”

<sup>160</sup> In fact, Thomas not only uses *proportio* to refer to a relation, but also, quite frequently, to refer to a natural order; see for instance SCG 3.54 [Leon. 14.150]: “Proportio autem intellectus creati est quidem ad Deum intelligendum, non secundum commensurationem aliquam proportionem existente, sed secundum quod proportio significat quamcumque habitudinem unius ad alterum, ut materiae ad formam, vel causae ad effectum.”

<sup>161</sup> Putallaz counters that this view reduces reflexion to an abstract analysis of the nature of the intellect; and I would agree that for at least this instance of reflexion, this is exactly right. Moreover, it is unproblematic, unless one assumes, as Putallaz does, that reflexion can only refer to a judgment of the singular reality of one’s conformity to a specific object and one’s concrete nature (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 184–85, n. 231). One might respond that Putallaz is assuming a particular definition of the term ‘reflexio’ and then using that definition to interpret the very text that is supposed to validate this definition. Even if judgment does require a reflexion on the “intellect’s own [singular] substance,” that does not mean that this must be what Thomas means every time he uses the word ‘reflexio’ in DV 1.9 or elsewhere. Indeed, Thomas himself identifies abstract analysis of the nature of the intellect as a type of reflexion; see note 163 below.

<sup>162</sup> This is precisely the interpretation that Desmond Connell outlines, “St. Thomas on Reflection and Judgment,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 45 (1978): 242–43. This article as a whole provides a convincing argument that the distinction between truth-following-intellection and truth-as-intellected in DV 1.9 is not parallel to the distinction between possessing truth and knowing/judging truth in ST Ia, 16.2 [Leon. 4.208, cited in note 76 above] and In Met. VI.4, no. 1236 [Marietti, 311, cited in note 137 above], contrary to the claims of Boyer in “Le sens de *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 9,” esp. 424–30. In fact, Thomas frequently does not make clear whether a certain act of knowing is knowledge *an est* or knowledge *quid est*; so it is not impossible that some references to “knowledge of truth” indicate the judgment of a present relation of conformity (*an est veritas*), while others indicate the cognition of the nature of truth (*quid est veritas*).



refer to the intellect's grasp of its own act / concrete nature. Indeed, he identifies quidditative knowledge of the nature of the intellect as a type of reflexion.<sup>163</sup> He also uses the term *reflexio* to describe the will's desire for its own willing (or the reflexion of love upon itself),<sup>164</sup> as well as the intellect's knowledge of the singular.<sup>165</sup> In fact, it seems that "reflexion," for Thomas, is a broad term referring simply to any act in which the intellect turns its attention away from the extramental world onto itself, or the act of any immaterial power returning to make itself its own object,<sup>166</sup> or even the intellect's ability to perceive what is happening elsewhere in the soul.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *In Sent.* III.23.1.2, ad 3, cited above in note 132; and *SCG* 2.75 [Leon. 13.475]: "[N]on tamen removetur quin per reflexionem quandam intellectus seipsum intelligat, et suum intelligere, et speciem qua intelligit. Suum autem intelligere intelligit dupliciter: uno modo in particulari, intelligit enim se nunc intelligere; alio modo in universali, secundum quod ratiocinatur de ipsius actus natura."

<sup>164</sup> *ST* IIa-IIae, 25.2 [Leon. 8.199]: "Sed amor etiam ex ratione propriae speciei habet quod supra se reflectatur; quia est spontaneus motus amantis in amatum. Unde ex hoc ipsum quod amat aliquis, amat se amare"; *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 3, cited above in note 132.

<sup>165</sup> *DV* 10.5; and *In De an.* III.2, where Thomas even says that the intellect "returns" (*redit*) to the phantasms [Leon. 45/1.211:182–86]: "Cognoscit . . . singulare per quandam reflexionem in quantum redit supra fantasmata a quibus species intelligibiles abstrahuntur."

<sup>166</sup> See *DV* 22.12 [Leon. 22/3.692.98–107]: "Potentiis autem animae superioribus, ex hoc quod immateriales sunt, competit quod reflectantur super seipsas; unde tam voluntas quam intellectus reflectuntur super se, et unum super alterum, et super essentiam animae, et super omnes eius vires. Intellectus enim intelligit se, et voluntatem, et essentiam animae, et omnes animae vires; et similiter voluntas vult se velle, et intellectum intelligere, et vult essentiam animae, et sic de aliis"; *In Post. an.* I.1, cited above in note 132.

<sup>167</sup> Similarly, Wébert distinguishes different ways in which the soul can be said to act reflexively. In the broadest sense, any power that turns to the act of another power as its object is acting reflexively (i.e., the intellect knowing the act of the will, the will desiring the act of the intellect, the common sense perceiving the acts of the senses); in this sense, reflexion is not restricted to immaterial powers. More narrowly, he distinguishes "réflexion-consideration," "une réflexion méthodique, scientifique" whereby the intellect discovers the nature of its act and of itself, from "réflexion-reploiement." The latter is a "perception *distincte*" of one's act and of oneself, the agent: this is "le mode le plus parfait de réflexion et le plus fécond" (see "Reflexio," 313–20, and the summary at 324). Still agrees that reflexion in the context of self-knowledge refers either to "the phenomenon of self-reflexivity, or the intellect's grasping itself in the act of thinking" ("Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge," 117). In the latter way, reflexivity belongs only to those powers which are included in their own objects (121–23). More specifically, "reflexivity is the intellect's concomitant knowledge of its own act of thinking whatever it thinks of, with no direct passage from the knowledge of its act to a knowledge of its nature" (124). I am not sure that reflexion should be so strictly identified with actual self-awareness, however, in view of the texts cited above in note 163.

In conclusion, *reditio completa*, then, far from being a special act of reflexion, includes two returns: the ontological and the operational. The former, the “return according to substance,” merely refers to the soul’s ontological self-subsistence. The latter, the “return according to operation,” is actually a type of self-knowledge, namely, the intellectual operation of knowing the soul’s essence quidditatively and scientifically. Thus the return according to operation, broadly speaking, is not a fifth type of self-knowledge, but falls into the second main category of Thomas’s division of self-knowledge (*quid sit anima*). Due to its scientific character, it includes both the third and fourth types of self-knowledge (apprehension and judgment of the soul’s essence). Moreover, it specifically constitutes the actual exercise of this quidditative knowledge, rather than merely its habitual possession. Indeed it constitutes the fullest and most perfect actualization of the soul in self-knowledge.

I will discuss these two returns and how they complement each other in more detail in Chapter V, §B.1. For now it is enough to note that Thomas’s text, following Proclus, discusses *reditio completa* according to the order of discovery. The fact that the soul knows its own essence manifests that in doing so, it engages in a cognitive return to itself. This cognitive return in turn manifests the soul’s substantial return to itself. The implication is that the soul’s knowledge of its own essence is in some way perfective, completing its substantial return with a full cognitive return; moreover, the substantial return is what offers the possibility of a cognitive return. This explains the opening sentence of the proposition: “Every knower who knows his own essence returns to his essence with a complete return.”<sup>168</sup> In fact, simply by existing, the human soul is already returning to its essence

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<sup>168</sup> *Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15 [Pattin, 79]: “Omnis sciens qui scit essentiam suam est rediens ad essentiam suam reditione completa.” Saffrey’s edition, however has the *Lib. de caus.* opening with the proposition:

according to substance (first act); but in knowing its own essence it completes this return also according to operation (second act). *Reditio completa* signifies, then, the perfect correspondence of being and knowing.

The theme of substantial vs. cognitive return echoes a theme noted in Chapter III, where habitual self-knowledge was seen to have both a cognitive and an ontological dimension. Indeed, a closer examination at Thomas's discussions of the nature of the soul reveals that the soul's very nature is that of a self-knower. Thus our next and final chapter, Chapter V, will briefly examine these issues and explain the way in which self-knowledge can said to be constitutive of the intellectual soul.

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"Omnis sciens scit essentiam suam, ergo est rediens ad essentiam suam reditione completa" [88]; according to Pattin, 14, this latter reading is found in ms. Toledo, Bibl. del Cabildo 97-1. In *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, Thomas quotes this opening sentence in the third sentence of his commentary on prop. 15, but the quote differs in different editions of the *Sup. Lib. de caus.* According to the Parma edition (1867) and the Marietti edition (1955), Thomas's commentary quotes the text as given by Pattin ("Omnis sciens qui scit essentiam suam . . .") [Parma 21.742; Marietti, 88, no. 301]. Saffrey's edition, however, lists all the manuscripts of Thomas's commentary as quoting the version from the *Lib. de caus.* Toledo ms. ("Omnis sciens scit essentiam suam . . . [88]"); Saffrey notes that a different reading is suggested by O. Bardenhewer, *Die pseudo-aristotelische Schrift Über das reine Gute bekannt unter dem Name Liber de causis* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagschandlung, 1882). Now, this difference is significant, because the Toledo version lends itself to the interpretation that *every* act of knowledge includes a knowledge of one's own essence and a complete return (something much closer to Putallaz's interpretation), whereas Pattin's restricts the *reditio completa* to only those knowers who happen to be knowing their own essence, which makes more sense in the context of the rest of Thomas's commentary. It also accords with the text cited in most other Thomistic references to prop. 15 (*In Sent.* II.19.1.1 and *ST* Ia, 14.2, arg. 1, with equivalent formulations appearing in *DV* 1.9 and *DV* 2.2, arg. 2 and ad 2); Saffrey's version appears only in *DV* 8.6, arg 5 s.c. Regardless of how the text appeared in the version of the *Lib. de caus.* with which Thomas was familiar, it should be noted that nowhere in *Sup. Lib. de caus.* does Thomas develop the notion that all knowledge includes an element of scientific self-knowledge; in fact, this would be seriously opposed to his view of human self-knowledge. Thus I am inclined to believe that the text before Thomas was more likely the one given by Pattin ("Omnis sciens qui scit . . .").

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN PERSONHOOD**

#### **Introduction**

The inquiries of the last four chapters have shown that Thomas's theory of self-knowledge is a force to be reckoned with. Developed through a serious, thoughtful, and original appropriation of both Augustinian and Aristotelian principles, it offers a nuanced account of the relevant psychological phenomena. In this final chapter, I would like to explore the significance of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge, as presented above, in a wider area of his thought: his philosophy of human nature and personhood. Already we have seen Thomas making an interesting link between self-knowledge and the intellectual nature of the human being. For instance, in *DV* 10.8, it appeared that habitual self-awareness could be interpreted from either a cognitive or an ontological perspective. And in the Commentary on the *Liber de causis*, quidditative self-knowledge and the soul's self-subsistence together constituted the "complete return" which is proper to all knowers. Thomas's curious and persistent hints regarding the relationship between self-knowledge, intellectuality, and self-subsistence deserve a closer investigation. Upon closer scrutiny, it becomes clear that Thomas's theory of self-knowledge provides a psychological account of human personhood.

The first section of this chapter, therefore, will outline Thomas's theory of metaphysical personhood. The second section will examine the relationship between "reflexivity" and human personhood from a metaphysical point of view, exploring the way in which Thomas's metaphysical definition of the person as "an individual substance of a

rational nature” is linked to self-knowledge. It will also return to a theme from Chapter III to discuss how the human intellect is defined by its disposition to turn back upon oneself—a reflexivity referred to earlier as habitual self-awareness. The third section will analyze how reflexivity defines personal identity and human experience, followed by a fourth examining how embodiment affects reflexive experience.<sup>1</sup>

### A. How Thomas Defines the Human Person

To understand Thomas’s definition of the human person, we first need to understand the distinction he makes between natures and supposits. In commenting on *Met. V*, Thomas presents two modes of substance. The first is first substance, “that which is ultimately made the subject in propositions, such that it is not predicated of anything else . . . And this is because it is a this-something (*hoc aliquid*), as though subsisting in itself, and because it is separable, because it is distinct from all things and not communicable to many.” The second mode comprises “that by which something is,” which most properly refers to the essence or quiddity of a thing, but also includes “the form and species of each thing.”<sup>2</sup> These two modes of substance are commonly distinguished as supposit and nature.

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<sup>1</sup> While I will focus above all on human personhood in this chapter, it is worth noting that if the principles discussed below are adapted to account for the fact that *actual quidditative self-knowledge* (rather than just a disposition to self-awareness) is essential to God and the angels, one might draw similar conclusions concerning these separate substances.

<sup>2</sup> *In Met. V.10*, nos. 903–4 [Marietti, 242]: “[S]ubstantia duobus modis dicitur: quorum unus est secundum quod substantia dicitur id quod ultimo subiicitur in propositionibus, ita quod de alio non praedicetur, sicut substantia prima. Et hoc est, quod est hoc aliquid, quasi per se subsistens, et quod est separabile, quia est ab omnibus distinctum et non communicabile multis. . . . Sed etiam forma et species uniuscuiusque rei, ‘dicitur tale’, idest substantia. In quo includit et secundum et quartum modum. Essentia enim et forma in hoc conveniunt quod secundum utrumque dicitur esse illud quo aliquid est.”

Wippel has distinguished two ways in which Thomas understands the term “supposit” as “that which is” (*quod est*), i.e. “that which subsists in the order of being.”<sup>3</sup> In the first sense, “just as ‘that which is’ may be taken as signifying a concrete subject which exists, but with an emphasis on its quidditative aspect, so the term ‘supposit’ may be taken as signifying this same subject with this same quidditative emphasis along with the additional implication that the subject is ontologically complete and incommunicable.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, a supposit may be considered insofar as it is an impredicable first substance, that which subsists in the category of substance, where further subdivision is no longer possible, due to its incommunicability. Here, supposit is composed of the nature and that which individuates it. In material supposits, these components are essential form plus matter. Simple supposits such as angels, however, do not contain matter, but are individuated by themselves. Consequently in an angel, the supposit *is* the nature, which exists only *as individual*.

The second way of understanding “supposit” is as “that which *is*,” in the sense of a “concrete existing entity . . . [ which] includes its act of being (*esse*) in addition to its nature or essence.”<sup>5</sup> This view focuses on supposits as singular (and again incommunicable) *existents* rather than as *individuals in the category of substance*. Here again material supposits will be distinct from their individuated natures. But in this view, even angelic supposits will be distinct from their individual natures, because now “supposit” will be taken

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<sup>3</sup> Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 250. This view of supposit is held in, for instance, *In Sent.* III.5.1.3; *SCG* 4.55; *DP* 9.1; *De spirit. creat.* 5, ad 9; *In De an.* III.2; *ST* Ia, 3.3. For discussions of the distinction between supposit and nature, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 238–53; and Thomas U. Mullaney, “Created Personality: The Unity of Thomistic Tradition,” *The New Scholasticism* 29 (1955): 369–402.

<sup>4</sup> Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 250.

<sup>5</sup> Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 251; this view is expressed, he argues, in *Quodl.* 2.2.2.

to include *esse*, and the angelic *esse* is distinct from the angelic essence. Only in God are essence and *esse* identical.

These two views highlight the fact that for Thomas, supposits are incommunicable wholes. They are incommunicable above all because of their completeness, whether this be taken as the completeness of a substance that can be predicated of nothing else, or also the more strict completeness of an entity that contains all the relevant metaphysical principles. Either way, however, it is important to note that the individuated nature is a formal part of the supposit in either sense.

This constitutes the metaphysical background for Thomas's formal definition of personhood as a special kind of supposit, a definition borrowed from Boethius: "The name 'person' is the special name for an individual of a rational nature."<sup>6</sup> In the wake of phenomenological and personalist investigations of the person, this definition may seem to fall short of the reality of personhood. Does the person have no special status in comparison to any other individual? In fact, Thomas is at pains to explain why there should be a

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<sup>6</sup> Boethius, *Liber de persona et duabus naturis contra Eutychen et Nestorium*, III, in *Opuscula sacra*, ed. H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand, and S.J. Tester, Loeb Classical Library 74 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 84:1-5: "Quocirca si persona in solis substantiis est atque in his rationabilibus, substantiaque omnia natura est nec in universalibus sed in individuis constat, reperta personae est definitio: 'naturae rationabilis individua substantia.'" (The same reading appears in the more recent edition by C. Moreschini; see Boethius, *Opuscula theologica* [Leipzig: Saur, 2000], 214.) Cf. *DP* 9.2 [Marietti, 228]: "Dicendum quod rationabiliter, individuum in genere substantiae speciale nomen sortitur: quia substantia ex propriis principiis individuatur,—et non ex alio extraneo,—sicut accidens ex subiecto. Inter individua etiam substantiarum rationabiliter individuum in rationali natura, speciali nomine nominatur, quia ipsius est proprie et vere per se agere, sicut supra dictum est. . . . ita hoc nomen persona, est speciale nomen individui rationalis naturae." See also *ST* Ia, q. 29, here especially a. 3 [Leon. 4.331]: "[P]ersona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura." Notice that Boethius actually speaks of a *natura rationabilis*, though Thomas cites it as *natura rationalis*. Also, Thomas is careful to qualify Boethius's definition to make clear that only an individual of a *complete* human nature, viz., a supposit, can be called a person (and that therefore Christ's human nature, though individual, does not count as a human person); see the texts cited in the following two notes. For a discussion of the theological background of Boethius' definition, and Thomas's appropriation/modification thereof, see Joseph W. Koterski, "Boethius and the Theological Origins of the Concept of Person," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 78 (1994): 203–224; a more general summary of the development of the notion of personhood up to Aquinas can be found in Mary T. Clark, "An Inquiry into Personhood," *The Review of Metaphysics* 46 (1992): 3–27.

“special name for an individual of a rational nature,” but not for individuals of other natures. His standard explanation is as follows:

As it is proper to an individual substance to exist *per se*, so too it is proper to it to act *per se*: for nothing acts except a being-in-act . . . . But to act *per se* befits substances of a rational nature in a more excellent way than others. For only rational substances have dominion over their act, insofar as in them there is acting and not-acting; whereas other substances are more acted upon than they act. And therefore it was fitting that the individual substance of a rational nature have a special name.<sup>7</sup>

Here Thomas defines individual substances in terms of their independent subsistence: they exist *per se*, in themselves (i.e., they are supposita in the second sense above, concrete existents encompassing the entirety of an entity’s nature, individuating matter, *esse*, and accidental forms).<sup>8</sup> But only in rational beings does the mode of acting most perfectly follow the mode of existing, because rational beings can choose whether to act or not. This gives rational substances a special ontological status, the entitative perfection of a substance whose operation is perfectly in harmony with its being.

A person is incommunicable to the highest degree, because besides being subsistent and non-assumable, it is complete.<sup>9</sup> In discussing the *human* person, Thomas also notes that in order to be a person, the particular substance of a rational nature must “have the complete

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<sup>7</sup> DP 9.1, ad 3 [Marietti, 226]: “[S]icut substantia individua proprium habet quod per se existat, ita proprium habet quod per se agat: nihil enim agit nisi ens actu; et propter hoc calor sicut non per se est, ita non per se agit; sed calidum per calorem calefacit. Hoc autem quod est per se agere, excellentiori modo convenit substantiis rationalis naturae quam aliis. Nam solae substantiae rationales habent dominium sui actus, ita quod in eis est agere et non agere; aliae vero substantiae magis aguntur quam agant. Et ideo conveniens fuit ut substantia individua rationalis naturae, speciale nomen haberet.” See also DP 9.2, cited above in note 6, and ST IIIa, 16.12, ad 2 [Leon. 11.218]: “[S]ubstantia individua quae ponitur in definitione personae, importat substantiam completam per se subsistentem separatim ab aliis. Alioquin, manus hominis posset dici persona, cum sit substantia quaedam individua: quia tamen est substantia individua sicut in alio existens, non potest dici persona.”

<sup>8</sup> One could, of course, translate *per se* as “through itself,” but I prefer to use “in itself,” since “through itself” seems to connote a radical independence that created substances cannot have.

<sup>9</sup> In Sent. III.5.2.1, ad 2 [Moos 3.200]: “[T]riplex incommunicabilitas est de ratione personae: scilicet *partis*, secundum quod est completum; et *universalis*, secundum quod est subsistens; et *assumptibilis*, secundum quod id quod assumitur transit in personalitatem alterius et non habet personalitatem propriam.” Presumably this threefold incommunicability belongs to any supposit.



nature of the species. Whence a hand or foot cannot be called a hypostasis or person.

And in the same way, neither can the soul [be called a person] because it is a part of the human species.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, a person is a *supposit* in the first sense of the word described above, as an individual in the category of substance (including the nature plus the individuating matter). The “rational nature” that belongs to man is the nature of an embodied spirit. It is true that one part of man, the soul, can be detached from the other parts without being destroyed; that it subsists in itself and can even be called a *hoc aliquid* in a highly reduced sense.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, that part does not completely express what it means to be human. As we have seen, just being an individual existent is not good enough to qualify as a supposit: under both views outlined above, supposits (and therefore persons) must include a *complete nature*. The soul does not possess a complete nature; indeed, as a subsisting substantial form, it tends towards its body and is incomplete when separated from

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<sup>10</sup> *ST Ia*, 75.4, ad 2 [Leon. 5.201]: “[N]on quaelibet substantia particularis est hypostasis vel persona: sed quae habet completam naturam speciei. Unde manus vel pes non potest dici hypostasis vel persona. Et similiter nec anima, cum sit pars speciei humanae.” See also *In Sent.* III.5.3.2, arg. 2 s.c. [Moos 3. 206]: “Persona habet rationem completi et totius”; III.6.1.1.1, ad s.c. [Moos 3.227]: “[E]x hoc enim quod persona est individuum rationalis naturae, quae est completissima, et ubi stat tota intentio naturae, habet quod significet completissimum ultima completionem”; *SCG* 4.26 [Leon. 15.102]: “Non tamen haec tria sunt una natura: quia intelligere mentis non est eius esse, nec eius velle est eius esse aut intelligere. Et propter hoc etiam mens intellecta et mens amata non sunt personae: cum non sint subsistentes. Mens etiam ipsa, in sua natura existens, non est persona: cum non sit totum quod subsistit, sed pars subsistentis, scilicet hominis”; *SCG* 4.38 [Leon. 15.135]: “[H]ypostasis sit completissimum in genere substantiae, quod dicitur *substantia prima*”; *QDDA* 1 [Leon. 24/1.7:197–200]: “Individuum autem in genere substantiae non solum habet quod per se possit subsistere, sed quod sit aliquid completum in aliqua specie et genere substantiae.” See Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 38–39.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas distinguishes between two senses in which something can be called a subsistent or a *hoc aliquid*: see *ST Ia*, 75.2, ad 1 [Leon. 5.196]: “[H]oc aliquid potest accipi dupliciter: uno modo, pro quocumque subsistente; alio modo, pro subsistente completo in natura alicuius speciei. Primo modo, excludit inhaerentiam accidentis et formae materialis: secundo modo, excludit etiam imperfectionem partis. Unde manus posset dici *hoc aliquid* primo modo, sed non secundo modo. Sic igitur, cum anima humana sit pars speciei humanae, potest dici *hoc aliquid* primo modo, quasi subsistens, sed non secundo modo: sic enim compositum ex anima et corpore dicitur *hoc aliquid*.” When Thomas describes the soul as subsisting, then, he means it in the first sense: see for instance *SCG* 2.68 [Leon. 13.440]: “Non autem impeditur substantia intellectualis, per hoc quod est subsistens, ut probatum est, esse formale principium essendi materiae, quasi esse suum communicans materiae.” And when he denies that the soul subsists, it is in the second sense, namely, as a supposit: see *SCG* 4.26 above, note 10. Note that in *QDDA* 1, Thomas restricts *hoc aliquid* to the second sense, arguing that the soul subsists, but is not a *hoc aliquid*; see Bazán, “Thomas’ Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism,” 114–17.

the body.<sup>12</sup> Thus it is the subsisting human as an embodied whole, not the subsisting soul separated from the body by death, that constitutes a person.

The importance of this point cannot be overestimated. As Thomas frequently emphasizes, the human being is a substantial union of soul and body. Union with the body is essential and natural. Without my body, I cannot be a particular instance of humanity, nor a singular substance manifesting what it means to be human. Loss of the body is just as much a mutilation, a loss of the integrity of the whole human being, as is the loss of one's limbs or one's vision (indeed, it is much more so). In this way, Thomas's analysis of human personhood is perfectly consistent with his view of what it means to be human.

Yet to contemporary readers, Thomas's notion that separated souls lose their personhood seems absurd. Surely, if the separated soul persists after death, so does the "I"; surely, my personal identity is not lost along with the body. For one thing, punishment and reward in the next life would be vacuous if the "I" of the separated soul were not the very same "I" or individual free agent who chose to commit sins or perform virtuous deeds on earth. And it is hard to believe that the separated soul's acts of knowledge do not belong to the same *person*, the *agent* who also engaged in the act of thinking while on earth. Even

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<sup>12</sup> *SCG* 2.81 [Leon. 13.505]: "Formam igitur et materiam semper oportet esse ad invicem proportionata et quasi naturaliter coaptata: quia proprius actus in propria materia fit . . . non tamen ista diversitas [animarum separatarum] procedit ex diversitate principiorum essentialium ipsius animae, nec est secundum diversam rationem animae; sed est secundum diversam commensurationem animarum ad corpora; haec enim anima est commensurata huic corpori et non illi, illa autem alii, et sic de omnibus. Huiusmodi autem commensurationes remanent in animabus etiam pereuntibus corporibus: sicut et ipsae earum substantiae manent, quasi a corporibus secundum esse non dependentes. Sunt enim animae secundum substantias suas formae corporum: alias accidentaliter corpori unirentur, et sic ex anima et corpore non fieret unum per se, sed unum per accidens. Inquantum autem formae sunt, oportet eas esse corporibus commensuratas"; *ST* Ia, 29.1, ad 5 [Leon. 4.328]: "[A]nima est pars humanae speciei, et ideo, licet sit separata, quia tamen retinet naturam unibilitatis, non potest dici substantia individua quae est hypostasis vel substantia prima; sicut nec manus, nec quaecumque alia partium hominis. Et sic non competit ei neque definitio personae, neque nomen"; *QDDA* 1, ad 10 [Leon. 24/1.12:417–19]: "[C]orrupto corpore non perit ab anima natura secundum quam competit ei ut sit forma." See a good analysis of this in Bazán, "Thomas's Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism," 122–26.

Thomas admits that the separate soul retained the intelligible species and habits acquired during its earthly life. How then can he say that the thinker is no longer the same person, or even no longer a person at all? Is the separated soul of Mother Teresa not, in fact, Mother Teresa?

Here we see a crucial divergence between the contemporary and the Thomistic view of personhood. The contemporary tendency is to view the person from a psychological perspective as the self, the subject of experience, the self-conscious agent, the “I.”<sup>13</sup> I will call this “psychological personhood” or “selfhood.” Thomas clearly has no such thing in mind when he states that the human person must be an embodied spirit. To treat the texts given above as though they made some claim about the persistence of the “I” or the “self” is, in fact, to equivocate on the word ‘person.’ In discussing the relationship of person to nature, Thomas is articulating the exigencies of a metaphysical, not a psychological, reality. To be a human person simply means to be an instance of human nature. I will call this “metaphysical personhood.” And since the essence of humanity involves having a body, the soul on its own cannot count as an instance of human nature. The same would apply if a severed hand could subsist and have life on its own, apart from the body; it would not *be an individual human*; rather, it would be a detached, self-subsistent part of a human being.

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<sup>13</sup> Crosby, for instance, argues that one ought to study human beings “not only in terms of substance, potentiality, rationality, and the like, but also in terms of subjectivity, that is, in terms such as self-presence, inwardness, self-donation. Only by probing the subjectivity of human beings can we understand them in all their personhood”; see John F. Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 84; Crosby here relies on Karol Wojtyla, “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in Man,” in *Analecta Husserliana*, vol. 7 (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1978), 107–114. The notion of subjectivity as definitive of personhood is in some authors emphasized to such an extent that Romano Guardini, *The World and the Person* (Chicago: Regnery, 1965): 215–16, even asks, “Can we, while doing justice to the concept of ‘person,’ speak meaningfully of ‘two persons’? . . . Here reason balks” (cited here according to the altered translation in Crosby, 51).

Similarly, the separated soul, though existing on its own, is only *part* of an individual human.

From the fact that Thomas understands the word ‘person’ metaphysically as an individual instance of a complete human nature, one should not conclude, however, that he has no notion or account of psychological personhood, or that for Thomas personal identity is lost at death when metaphysical personhood is lost.<sup>14</sup> In fact, for Thomas, psychological personhood is rooted in the soul’s disposition to self-knowledge, which is what grants the soul subjectivity: the ability to approach the world as an “I.” Selfhood belongs to the soul and is not corrupted with the composite, precisely because the intellective soul is immaterial and is therefore the only part of the human being that can return to itself completely; psychologically speaking, the soul continues to operate as a personal agent after death. It is thus the psychological dimension of self-awareness, rooted in the metaphysical foundation of the soul’s immateriality and incommunicability, that grants the human being his or her personal identity, or psychological personhood. This is why, when one takes the first step on the road to quidditative self-knowledge by asking, “What kind of being am I,” the final answer concerns the nature of the soul: “An immaterial, intellectual form of an organic body.”<sup>15</sup> The “I” in the sense of the perduring first-person agent or principle of action, is the intellective soul insofar as it is reflexive.

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<sup>14</sup> Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 34, argues, “If the subject is taken to signify interiority, individuality, self-possession, self-identity, personality, we think that such a notion is found in Aquinas. Only the term, subjectivity, given to connote this reality is absent in his writings. . . . The moderns define the human subject more in its psychological sense whereas Aquinas would elaborate the ontological or metaphysical meaning of it. This does not mean however that he ignored the psychological aspect of the human personality. In fact he had an extraordinary grasp of the facts of consciousness and knows precisely what psychological presence is . . . Only, he did not view it in the same way as the moderns, for whom the thinking subject is the typical being, autonomous and self-sufficient and measuring truth in its own terms.”

<sup>15</sup> See the discussion of the origin of quidditative self-knowledge in Ch. IV, §A.1.

For this reason, one cannot understand the Thomistic notion of personhood without a clear grasp of his theory of self-knowledge. In fact, self-knowledge is a crucial component of the way in which Thomas describes human personhood, both metaphysically and psychologically. Metaphysically, a person is an individual supposit of a rational nature. This rational nature, in human beings, consists of having a body animated by a soul that is unique insofar as it is intellective and capable of subsisting separately. But these are precisely the characteristics that Thomas explicitly connects to the soul's disposition for self-knowledge. Thus self-knowledge enters into Thomas's metaphysical view of personhood insofar as it necessarily flows from the "rational nature" of which the human person is an individual instance (to be discussed in §B below).

It is again precisely in Thomas's theory of self-knowledge that one can find his understanding of psychological personhood and personal identity. In fact, his theory is designed precisely to explain one's personal experience of reality as a subject, an "I" or "self"; it also has important connections to personal identity and the unity of consciousness. Thomas's theory of psychological personhood thus flows from his theory of metaphysical personhood (as discussed in section C below). Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will use the term "human person" in the metaphysical sense to indicate an individual of a human nature, but one must always keep in mind that human nature necessarily implies psychological personhood, and that selfhood belongs to the human being precisely because the rational soul is immaterial and therefore reflexive.

## **B. Self-Knowledge as Essential to the Metaphysical Definition of Personhood**

### ***1. Reditio completa and Self-Subsistence***

For Thomas, self-knowledge belongs to man's rational nature. The disposition towards self-knowledge is more than just an accident or even a proper accident; it belongs to the very essence of humanity. Intellectuality and self-subsistence necessarily imply the disposition for self-knowledge; to say "man is rational and therefore able to know himself" is more like saying "man is embodied and therefore has dimensive quantity" (dimensive quantity belonging to the essence of body) than like saying "man is a mammal and therefore has hair" (hair being merely accidental to body). One could still be a mammal even if one's hair were burnt off. But dimensive quantity is inseparable from embodiment. Similarly, actual self-awareness (at least the implicit kind) is inseparable from actual knowing; and the habitual disposition to self-knowledge is inseparable from the potency for knowing. And nothing can be self-subsistent without knowing itself, at least habitually.

The connection between self-subsistence, intellectuality, and self-knowledge is most clearly manifested in Thomas's discussion of *reditio completa* in his Commentary on the *Liber de causis*. I begin here with the connection between self-subsistence and self-knowledge. As I mentioned in Chapter I, §B.6, Thomas identifies three principles as the rational skeleton of the *Liber*'s argument concerning the *reditio completa*. 1) The soul knows its essence; 2) Therefore the soul returns to itself by a complete return (*reditio completa*) according to both substance and operation; 3) Therefore the soul is separable from a body.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15 [Saffrey, 90–91]: "His igitur visis, considerandum est quod in hoc libro tria ponuntur. Quorum primum est quod anima *sciat essentiam suam*; de anima enim est intelligendum quod hic dicitur. Secundum est quod ex hoc concluditur, quod *redeat ad essentiam suam reditione completa*. . . . Ex hoc autem quod secundum suam operationem redit ad essentiam suam, concludit ulterius quod etiam secundum *substantiam suam est rediens ad essentiam suam*; et ita fit reditio completa secundum operationem et substantiam. . . . Et hoc potest esse tertium, quod scilicet *anima sit separabilis a corpore*."

The argument that Thomas is tracing here hinges upon the return according to substance—for whatever knows its essence is operationally completing the return according to substance; and this substantial return is what demonstrates the capacity of the soul. It remains for us to examine the question: What exactly is this return according to substance, and why does it imply that the soul is separable and immortal?

In a number of texts, Thomas answers that to return to one's essence according to substance is to subsist in oneself, to sustain oneself: paradoxically, to *return* to oneself according to substance is to be ontologically *fixed* in oneself:

- 1) *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15: And then [Proclus] explains what it is to return to one's essence according to substance. For those things are said to be turned (*converti*) to themselves according to substance that subsist in themselves (*per seipsa*), having fixity in such a way that they are not turned to some other thing that sustains them, as in the conversion of accidents to subjects; and therefore this belongs to the soul and to everything that knows itself, because every such thing is a simple substance, sufficing unto itself through itself, as though not needing a material support.<sup>17</sup>
- 2) *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 3: [To return to one's essence] is to be subsisting in itself, not laid down upon anything else, namely, not depending on matter.
- 3) *In Sent.* II.19.1.1: Something is said to return completely to its essence whose essence is standing fixed, not laid down upon something else.
- 4) *DV* 2.2, ad 2: The return to one's essence in the *Liber de causis* means nothing other than the subsistence of a thing in itself. For forms that do not subsist in themselves are poured out upon another and in no way gathered unto themselves; but forms that subsist in themselves are poured out upon other things, by perfecting them or by flowing into them, in such a way that they remain in themselves.

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<sup>17</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15 [Saffrey, 91]: "Et exponit consequenter quid sit *redire* secundum substantiam *ad essentiam suam*. Illa enim dicuntur secundum substantiam ad seipsa *converti* quae subsistunt per seipsa, habentia *fixionem* ita quod non convertantur ad aliquid aliud sustentans ipsa, sicut est conversio accidentium ad subiecta; et hoc ideo convenit animae et unicuique scienti seipsum, quia omne tale *est substantia simplex, sufficiens sibi per seipsam*, quasi non indigens materiali sustentamento." The vocabulary of "fixity" is taken from the *Lib. de caus.* itself, in prop. 7 [Pattin, 62–63]: "Et significatio quidem illius est reditio sui super essentiam suam, scilicet quia non extenditur cum re extensa, ita ut sit una suarum extremitatum secunda ab alia. Quod est quia quando vult scientiam rei corporalis < . . . > non extenditur cum ea, sed ipsa stat fixa secundum suam dispositionem; quoniam est forma a qua non pertransit aliquid"; and prop. 15 [Pattin, 79–80]: "Et non significo per reditionem substantiae ad essentiam suam, nisi quia est stans, fixa per se, non indigens in sui fixatione et sui essentia re alia rigente < Pattin notes: for *erigente*, which is the reading given by Saffrey, p. 91. Pattin refers the reader to Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis* (1888–87), vol. 6, p. 188, col. 3> ipsam, quoniam est substantia simplex, sufficiens per seipsam."

- 5) *ST Ia*, 14.2, ad 1: To return to one's essence is nothing other than for a thing to subsist in itself. For a form, insofar as it perfects matter by giving it being (*esse*), is in some way poured out upon [the matter]; but insofar as it has being (*esse*) in itself, it returns to itself.<sup>18</sup>

These texts offer two graphic models for the “return.” In the “overflow” model (*DV* 2.2, ad 2; *Ia*, 14.2), form “pours out *esse*” upon the matter, so that matter in some way clings parasitically to the fixity that form has in itself (de-pending upon form). In receiving being from matter, matter thus turns back toward, or looks up toward, form. In the “foundation” model (*In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 3, and II.18.1.1; *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15), self-subsisting form provides a stability and fixity upon which matter leans. In commenting on prop. 15, Thomas likens the relationship between matter and form to that of substance and accidents. Accidental form turns back to substantial form for its existence. Matter, similarly, turns back to form for its existence. Both models offer the same insight: form, as act, is the source of being for matter (potency).

It is important to note that the return according to substance applies *only to those forms that, while bestowing being upon matter, at the same time subsist in themselves*. The above text from *ST Ia*, 14.2 states this point most clearly: a form goes forth to matter in “pouring itself out” upon matter; but only self-subsisting forms also return in their being to

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<sup>18</sup> *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 3 [Mand. 1.406]: “[E]t propter hoc, lib. *De causis*, prop. 15, dicitur quod cujuscumque actio redit in essentiam agentis per quamdam reflexionem, oportet essentiam ejus ad seipsam redire, id est in se subsistentem esse, non super aliud delatam, id est non dependentem a materia”; *In Sent.* II.19.1.1 [Mand. 2.482]: “Et dicitur redire complete ad essentiam, ut ibi Commentator exponit, cujus essentia est fixa stans, non super aliud delata”; *DV* 2.2, ad 2 [Leon. 22/1.45:229–46:241]: “Sed tamen sciendum, quod reditio ad essentiam suam in libro de causis nihil aliud dicitur nisi subsistentia rei in seipsa. Formae enim in se non subsistentes, sunt super aliud effusae et nullatenus ad seipsas collectae; sed formae in se subsistentes ita ad res alias effunduntur, eas perficiendo, vel eis influendo, quod in seipsis per se manent; et secundum hunc modum Deus maxime ad essentiam suam redit, quia omnibus providens, ac per hoc in omnia quodammodo exiens et procedens, in seipso fixus et immixtus ceteris permanet”; *ST Ia*, 14.2, ad 1 [Leon. 4.168–69]: “[R]edire ad essentiam suam nihil aliud est quam rem subsistere in seipsa. Forma enim, in quantum perficit materiam dando ei esse, quodammodo supra ipsam effunditur: in quantum vero in seipsa habet esse, in seipsam redit.”



themselves. In other words, some substantial forms, like those of animals, are indeed the source of being for the composite; but their own being is in some way dependent on (or in the language of the metaphor, “turned back toward”) the composite. *DV* 2.2, ad 2, cited above, suggests that these lesser forms pour themselves out completely into matter without retaining any independence from matter.<sup>19</sup> This is why they have no operation apart from a bodily organ.<sup>20</sup> Such forms are thus corrupted when the composite is corrupted.<sup>21</sup> The being of a self-subsisting form, however, even at it is shared matter, retains an independence and sufficiency of its own. Its being is not dispersed into that which it supports (for the soul, the material body; for God, creatures), but “returns to itself,” supporting itself in self-subsistence.<sup>22</sup> Such a form possesses its being in itself while bestowing being upon its matter and accidents, like a buoy that holds itself up in the water while supporting various signal-lights—or to use a more medieval example, like the earth fixed firm in the center of the universe, neither rising nor falling, immobile but supporting all the creatures that live in it.

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<sup>19</sup> See also *DEE* 4 [Leon. 43.376:49–54]: “[F]orma enim in eo quod est non habet dependentiam ad materiam. Sed si inueniantur alique forme que non possunt esse nisi in materia, hoc accidit eis secundum quod sunt distantes a primo principio quod est actus primus et purus”; and *DEE* 4 [Leon. 43.377:192–378:198]: “Et ideo post istam formam que est anima inueniuntur alie forme plus de potentia habentes et magis propinque materie, in tantum quod esse earum sine materia non est; in quibus esse inuenitur ordo et gradus usque ad primas formas elementorum, que sunt propinquissime materie.”

<sup>20</sup> *ST* Ia, 75.3 [Leon. 5.200]: “[A]nima sensitiva non habet aliquam operationem propriam per seipsam, sed omnis operatio sensitivae animae est coniuncti. Ex quo relinquitur quod, cum animae brutorum animalium per se non operentur, non sint subsistentes: similiter enim unumquodque habet esse et operationem.”

<sup>21</sup> See *SCG* 2.68 [Leon. 13.441] and *DEE* 4 [Leon. 43.377:147–378:201], where Thomas outlines a hierarchy of forms based on how completely they are immersed in matter.

<sup>22</sup> Dhavamony comments, “Thus a being whose form also subsists in itself, subsists more perfectly than the one whose form does not subsist in itself. Matter, so to say, alienates being from itself; it makes being not to be adequate to its specific form; it disperses it in space and time; it is the reason why being could undergo action from external things and also why it could be dissolved” (*Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 45).

To summarize, then, Thomas's "return according to substance" describes the soul's self-subsistence. This return is not operational, a going forth towards and returning from the senses in knowledge and self-knowledge; rather it is ontological, defining the soul as a self-subsisting being, a substance.<sup>23</sup> Self-subsistence can be described in other ways, of course: the language of return constitutes "a manner of speaking"<sup>24</sup> about self-subsistence. Yet Thomas seems not to have thought the language of return ill-suited to capture the reality of self-subsistence, for he uses it explicitly to describe what it means to be an intellectual substance, in at least five texts outside his Commentary on the *Liber de causis*.<sup>25</sup> It indicates an ontological completeness, a self-sufficiency, an inviolable distinctness, a wholeness that constitutes the unity proper to being. A self-subsisting form is not "hooked into" anything else; it does not cling to another for being. It "has itself," ontologically. Simply, *it is itself*—and the reduplication implied in this statement, "it is itself," is, I think, precisely the reason that such a form can aptly be described as "returning" to itself in its being. The "return" involves, not a motion, but an independence or self-identity that belongs to a self-subsisting substance. One cannot say of an accident that "it exists in itself"; accidents only "are" as hinging upon another. In reality, there is no subsisting "red"—there is only a red

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<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that this does *not* imply that the soul is a subsistent in the sense of a supposit or substance of a complete nature; see texts cited above in note 11.

<sup>24</sup> See *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 1 above in note 18. Note too that *DV* 2.2, ad 2, refers to prop. 15 as a *locutio metaphorica* [Leon. 22/1.45:205–9]: "[L]ocutio haec qua dicitur, quod sciens se, ad essentiam suam redit, est locutio metaphorica; non enim in intelligendo est motus, ut probatur in VII physicorum." Aquinas says this, however, in reference to the exitus-reditus image as used to describe self-knowledge in general, in order to avoid attributing discursion to Divine self-knowledge.

<sup>25</sup> In addition to the texts cited in note 18 above, see *DV* 1.9 [Leon. 22/1.23:43–45]: "[I]lla quae sunt perfectissima in entibus, ut substantiae intellectuales, redeunt ad essentiam suam reditione completa."

thing.<sup>26</sup> That which returns to itself according to its substance, then, possesses its being in itself; it has independent self-identity.<sup>27</sup>

Now, quidditative self-knowledge enters the picture precisely as the *operational completion of this substantial return*.<sup>28</sup> The “return according to substance” belongs to a self-subsisting form in the order of first act, insofar as the *esse* of such a form does not depend on its union with matter. This independence in being is mirrored by a corresponding independence in operation. It is for this reason that self-subsisting substances, which are therefore necessarily immaterial, are also necessarily intellectual, for the operation of the intellect is independent from matter.<sup>29</sup> It is also independent in another sense, in being free. Thus Thomas explains that “in a more special and perfect way the particular and the individual is found in rational substances, which have dominion over their act, and do not only act, as other things do, but act through themselves. But acts are in singulars.” This is

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<sup>26</sup> See *ST* Ia, 29.1 [Leon. 4.327]: “Substantia enim individuatur per seipsam, sed accidentia individuatur per subiectum, quod est substantia: dicitur enim haec albedo, inquantum est in hoc subiecto.”

<sup>27</sup> The characterization of the soul as returning to itself substantially, as a self-subsisting substance, echoes the way in which Thomas talks about the human soul elsewhere. The soul is the source of the *esse* of the composite: *De unit. int.* 1 [Leon. 43.298:648–9]: “[C]ompositum est per esse eius [i.e., animae].” Yet it is also itself a self-subsisting substance (though not, as I have emphasized, a supposit): *ST* Ia, 75.2 [Leon. 5.196]: “[N]ecesse est dicere id quod est principium intellectualis operationis, quod dicimus animam hominis, esse quoddam principium incorporeum et subsistens”; *SCG* 2.68 [Leon. 13.440]: “Nihil igitur prohibet substantiam intellectualem esse formam corporis humani, quae est anima humana.” Nevertheless, the soul cannot be a substance of a complete nature, since it is naturally a *substantial form* and therefore has a natural commensuration to its body (see texts in note 12).

<sup>28</sup> Confusion on this point, reinforced by the focus on self-subsistence in *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 1, and *DV* 2.2, ad 2, might lead one to believe that the *reditio ad essentiam* is nothing more than self-subsistence. Rather, there are actually two *reditiones ad essentiam*—one according to substance (self-subsistence) and one according to operation (quidditative self-knowledge). Putallaz argues against this reduction in *Le sens de la réflexion*, 165–70.

<sup>29</sup> Conversely, at the lowest end of the spectrum, we find the forms of elements, whose ontological proximity to matter is mirrored in the operation of such entities: “. . . usque ad primas formas elementorum, que sunt propinquissime materie: unde nec aliquam operationem habent nisi secundum exigentiam qualitatum actiuarum et passiuarum et aliarum quibus materia ad formam disponitur” (*DEE* 4 [Leon. 43.378:197–201]).

precisely what justifies giving substances of a rational nature the status of “persons.”<sup>30</sup>

A soul is not a person, ontologically speaking, because it is not an individual substance of a rational nature (supposit). Yet it *is* an individual rational substance and hence it acts through itself, since it possesses intellect and will.<sup>31</sup> As always, the mode of being and the mode of operation are proportionate to each other; the independence of one is mirrored in the independence of the other.<sup>32</sup>

It is significant that when one searches through Thomas’s texts for discussions of the soul’s independence in operation, reflexivity figures prominently. For one thing, Thomas attributes the soul’s autonomy over its act precisely to the immateriality and resulting reflexivity of the intellectual soul: “Reason is not only able to direct the acts of the inferior parts, but it also directs its own act. For this is proper to the intellective part, that it is reflected back on itself: for the intellect understands itself, and similarly reason can reason about its own act.”<sup>33</sup> In fact, it is because the intellect and will, as immaterial powers, can include themselves and each other in their own proper objects, that the human soul has

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<sup>30</sup> *ST Ia*, 29.1 [Leon. 4.327]: “Sed adhuc quodam specialiori et perfectiori modo invenitur particulare et individuum in substantiis rationalibus, quae habent dominium sui actus, et non solum aguntur, sicut alia, sed per se agunt: actiones autem in singularibus sunt. Et ideo etiam inter ceteras substantias quoddam speciale nomen habent singularia rationalis naturae. Et hoc nomen est persona.” See also *DP* 9.1, ad 3 [Marietti, 226], cited in note 7 above. Dhavamony argues that this is why the human individual (person) has special uniqueness; see *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 48–49.

<sup>31</sup> See also *De virt.* 1.1 [Marietti, 709]: “Potentiae vero illae sunt *agentes et actae* quae ita moventur a suis activis, quod tamen per eas non determinantur ad unum; sed in eis est agere, sicut vires aliquo modo rationales.”

<sup>32</sup> *De spirit. creat.* 2 [Leon. 24/2.29:300–307]: “Et quia esse rei proportionatur eius operationi . . . cum unumquodque operatur secundum quod est ens, oportet quod esse animae humanae superexcedat materiam corporalem. . . . In quantum igitur supergreditur esse materia corporalis, potens per se subsistere et operari, anima humana est substantia spiritualis.”

<sup>33</sup> *In Post. an.* I.1 [Leon. 1\*/2.3:12–17]: “Ratio autem non solum dirigere potest inferiorum partium actus, sed etiam actus sui directiva est. Hoc enim est proprium intellectivae partis, ut in seipsam reflectatur: nam intellectus intelligit seipsum et similiter ratio de suo actu ratiocinari potest.”

autonomy of action, acting through itself.<sup>34</sup> Because intellection and willing are good, the will can move the intellect to attend to different objects, and itself to exercise a choice, granting the soul an autonomy of intellection and willing. And because intellection and willing are intelligible, the intellect can know and reflect upon them in order to attain quidditative self-knowledge. In his most mature treatment of free decision, Aquinas treats it precisely in terms of this refluent or reflexion of the immaterial powers of the soul upon themselves: in an act of free decision, the intellect moves the will by specifying its object and the will moves itself by exercising an act of willing. But since acts of the intellect are good and thus fall under the object of the will, the will too can move the intellect to consider other alternatives, so that it is not determined by whatever the intellect first presents.<sup>35</sup> Thus the soul's operational autonomy is preserved, corresponding to its ontological autonomy as a

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<sup>34</sup> DV 22.12 [Leon. 22/3.642:98–117]: “Potentiis autem animae superioribus, ex hoc quod immateriales sunt, competit quod reflectantur super seipsas; unde tam voluntas quam intellectus reflectuntur super se, et unum super alterum, et super essentiam animae, et super omnes eius vires. Intellectus enim intelligit se, et voluntatem, et essentiam animae, et omnes animae vires; et similiter voluntas vult se velle, et intellectum intelligere, et vult essentiam animae, et sic de aliis. Cum autem aliqua potentia super aliam fertur, comparatur ad eam secundum suam proprietatem: sicut intellectus cum intelligit voluntatem velle, accipit in seipso rationem volendi; unde et ipsa voluntas, cum fertur super potentias animae, fertur in eas ut in res quasdam quibus convenit motus et operatio, et inclinatur unamquamque in propriam operationem. Et sic non solum res exteriores movet voluntas per modum causae agentis, sed etiam ipsas animae vires”; DM 6, ad 18 [Leon. 23.152:645–52]: “[I]pse intellectus intelligit se ipsum per actum suum qui non est sensui subiectus; similiter etiam et interiorem actum voluntatis intelligit in quantum per actum intellectus quodammodo movetur voluntas, et alio modo actus intellectus causatur a voluntate, ut dictum est, sicut effectus cognoscitur per causam et causa per effectum.” On the topic of the “refluent” of the powers upon each other, see Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 123–26, and Wébert, “Reflexio,” 313–15.

<sup>35</sup> See DM 6 [Leon. 23.149:339–81]: “Si ergo consideremus motum potentialium anime ex parte obiecti specificantis actum, primum principium motionis est ex intellectu: hoc enim modo bonum intellectum movet etiam ipsam voluntatem. Si autem consideremus motus potentialium anime ex parte exercitii actus, sic principium motionis est ex voluntate. . . . Quantum ergo ad exercitium actus, primo quidem manifestum est quod voluntas movetur a se ipsa: sicut enim movet alias potentias, ita et se ipsam movet. . . . sicut enim homo secundum intellectum in via inventionis movet se ipsum ad scientiam, in quantum ex uno noto in actu venit in aliquid ignotum quod erat solum in potentia notum, ita per hoc quod homo aliquid vult in actu, movet se ad volendum aliquid aliud in actu. . . . Cum ergo voluntas se consilio moveat, consilium autem est inquisitio quedam non demonstrativa set ad opposita viam habens, non ex necessitate voluntas seipsam movet”; and Wébert, “Reflexio,” 314–15, and 324: “La réflexion par ‘réfluent’ d’une puissance spirituelle sur l’autre est tout autre chose: l’immatérialité de l’intelligence et de la volonté, leur inclusion mutuelle (voluntas est in ratione) assurent l’unité de l’activité spirituelle, et rend possible le choix libre.”

self-subsisting substance. An early reference to prop. 15 of the *Liber de causis* even characterizes this reflexive ability of immaterial powers to count among their objects their own acts and the acts of other parts of the soul, as an element in the soul's operational return to itself, proper to the soul as a subsisting being.<sup>36</sup>

The soul's operational independence (in the sense of autonomy) is therefore manifested in reflexive acts, including acts of free decision. But to act freely is not yet to complete the return to oneself. For a return unifies the soul with itself, and this self-unification is only completed with the reflexion of an act of quidditative self-knowledge. When one knows one's own quiddity, one not only *is* oneself, but one now *knows* oneself. The order of being and knowing converge. The unity that a self-subsisting form possesses in the fixity of its being is now manifested on the level of its knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

The convergence of being and knowing begins already with self-awareness, when the soul perceives its singular self in its own acts, as Thomas states in *DV* 1.9: "Insofar as [intellectual substances] know something placed outside themselves, they proceed outside themselves in some way; but insofar as they cognize themselves cognizing (*se cognoscere*), they already begin to return to themselves, because the act of cognition is the intermediary between knower and known." But a complete return means that the soul turns back upon itself fully, knowing not only its singular acts, but its own essence, the remote principle of

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<sup>36</sup> *In Sent.* I.17.1.5, ad 3 [Mand. 1:406]: "Cujus ratio est, quia actus potentiae immaterialis non excluditur a ratione objecti. Objectum enim voluntatis est bonum; et sub hac ratione diligit voluntas omne quod diligit; et ideo potest diligere actum suum inquantum est bonus; et similiter est ex parte intellectus; et propter hoc Lib. de Caus. prop. 15, dicitur quod cujuscumque actio redit in essentiam agentis per quamdam reflexionem, oportet essentiam ejus ad seipsam redire, idest in se subsistentem esse, non super aliud delatam, idest non dependentem a materia."

<sup>37</sup> Putallaz comments: "Le retour opératif sur sa propre essence apparaît en effet comme le mode même de la subsistance spirituelle, dont l'archétype parfait est le premier intellect, Dieu lui-même, dont participe le plus petit des intellects, l'âme humaine" (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 171).

those acts: “That return is completed insofar as they cognize their own essences.”<sup>38</sup>

Likewise in *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15, Thomas argues that the completion of the return is the “return according to operation,” which occurs when the soul exercises “scientific knowledge of its own essence.”<sup>39</sup> Immaterial form as act finally and fully returns to itself in quidditative self-knowledge: it is the being-in-act of the intellectual form that offers substantial fixity (*qua* form) and grants the soul the potency for knowledge (*qua* intellectual form). When the soul has scientific knowledge of its essence, it returns fully to itself, to the root of its operation in its very essence. In quidditative self-knowledge, the soul returns to itself operationally to know itself as it is ontologically: the immaterial form that returns to itself according to substance insofar as it subsists. “The operation of a thing manifests its substance and being (*esse*): for each one operates insofar as it is a being, and the proper operation of a thing follows its proper nature.”<sup>40</sup> Self-subsistence therefore calls for

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<sup>38</sup> *DV* 1.9 [Leon. 22/1.23:43–55]: “Cuius ratio est quia illa quae sunt perfectissima in entibus, ut substantiae intellectuales, redeunt ad essentiam suam reditione completa: in hoc enim quod cognoscunt aliquid extra se positum, quodam modo extra se procedunt; secundum vero quod cognoscunt se cognoscere, iam ad se redire incipiunt quia actus cognitionis est medius inter cognoscentem et cognitum; sed reditus iste completur secundum quod cognoscunt essentias proprias, unde dicitur in libro *De causis* quod ‘omnis sciens essentiam suam est rediens ad essentiam suam reditione completa.’” It should be noted, however, that to interpret the incipient or incomplete return as referring to actual self-awareness seems to imply that *DV* 1.9, at least, attributes to the senses actual self-awareness or at least a perception of one’s existing act—a position that may be in conflict with texts such as *In Sent.* III.23.1.2. See discussions in Still, “Aquinas’s Theory of Human Self-Knowledge,” 128 and 131–39; and Putallaz, *Le sens de réflexion*, 39–69. Both suggest that there is inconsistency, or at best, development, in Thomas’s thought on this point. I am not sure the answer is so simple—but space prevents me from exploring this problem here.

<sup>39</sup> *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 15 [Saffrey, 90]: “[E]rgo patet quod in hoc quod *sciens scit essentiam suam*, *redit*, id est convertitur, *per operationem suam intelligibilem ad essentiam suam*, intelligendo scilicet eam. Et quod hoc debeat vocari reditus vel conversio, manifestat per hoc quod, cum anima scit essentiam suam, *sciens et scitum sunt res una*, et ita *scitia* qua scit *essentiam suam*, id est ipsa operatio intelligibilis, *est ex ea in quantum est sciens et est ad eam in quantum est scita*.”

<sup>40</sup> *SCG* 2.79 [Leon. 13.498]: “Operatio enim rei demonstrat substantiam et esse ipsius: quia unumquodque operatur secundum quod est ens, et propria operatio rei sequitur propriam ipsius naturam”; see also *ST* Ia, 75.2 [Leon. 5.196], cited below in note 42; and Ia, 75.3 [Leon. 5.200]: “[S]imiliter enim unumquodque habet esse et operationem.” See Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 59.

quidditative self-knowledge as the fullest manifestation and completion of a substance's ontological independence.

While self-subsistence precedes quidditative self-knowledge ontologically, quidditative self-knowledge precedes self-subsistence in the order of discovery. It is in the act of knowing its own essence that the soul most perfectly manifests the fact that unlike the souls of brute animals, it is self-subsisting and not dispersed thoroughly into matter. Thus quidditative self-knowledge is the marker of self-subsistence. The structure of Thomas's reasoning in commenting on prop. 15 is now clear. The first Proclean claim (the soul knows its own essence) implies the second (the soul enjoys a complete return according to operation *and substance*). Once it is clear that the return according to substance describes the soul as a self-subsisting form, the third claim follows instantly, since it is obvious that such a substance, "not needing material support," must be "separable from the body."<sup>41</sup> The argument that Thomas attributes to Proclus here is thus simply a more precise version of an argument for the separability of the soul that Thomas himself uses frequently elsewhere: if one can find in the human soul any operation that occurs independently of a corporeal organ, this indicates that its very being or substance is independent from the body. The soul must therefore subsist and be capable of existing separately from the body.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See notes 17 and 16 above and compare *SCG* 2.79 [Leon. 13.498]: "Ostensum est enim supra omnem substantiam intellectualem esse incorruptibilem. Anima autem hominis est quaedam substantia intellectualis, ut ostensum est. Oportet igitur animam humanam incorruptibilem esse."

<sup>42</sup> To mention only a few: *SCG* 2.69 [Leon. 13.447]: "Verificantur enim etiam si dicatur quod intellectiva potentia, quam Aristoteles vocat *potentiam perspectivam*, non sit alicuius organi actus quasi per ipsum suam exercens operationem. Et hoc etiam sua demonstratio declarat: ex operatione enim intellectuali qua omnia intelligit, ostendit ipsum immixtum esse vel separatum; operatio autem pertinet ad potentiam ut ad principium"; *ST* Ia, 75.2 [Leon. 5.196]: "Ipsum igitur intellectuale principium, quod dicitur mens vel intellectus, habet operationem per se, cui non communicat corpus. Nihil autem potest per se operari, nisi quod per se subsistit. Non enim est operari nisi entis in actu: unde eo modo aliquid operatur, quo est. Propter quod



Of course, any corporeally independent operation at all will serve to prove the separability of the human soul. But how can we tell that a given operation, such as intellectual knowledge, occurs independently of the body? One argument that Thomas uses, following Aristotle, is that intellectual knowledge is capable of extending to all things and must therefore be immaterial.<sup>43</sup> As is fitting, however, quidditative self-knowledge is the clearest indicator of the soul's subsistence, since, as Thomas notes in several texts, including his commentary on prop. 7, only those things that are immaterial can completely return to themselves.<sup>44</sup> If the soul used a corporeal organ in order to know, quidditative self-knowledge would be impossible, since the soul could never completely return to itself in knowledge. Thus the soul must be immaterial, self-subsisting, and therefore immortal.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Thomas identifies self-knowledge as the perfection of autonomous operation, or life: "Therefore the supreme and perfect grade of life is the one that is according to the

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non dicimus quod *calor* calefacit, sed *calidum*.—Relinquitur igitur animam humanam, quae dicitur intellectus vel mens, esse aliquid incorporeum et subsistens."

<sup>43</sup> See SCG 2.69, cited in note 42 above.

<sup>44</sup> See *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 7 [Saffrey, 52]: "*Et significatio quidem illius, scilicet quod intelligentia non sit corpus, est reditio super essentiam suam, id est quia convertitur supra seipsam intelligendo se, quod convenit sibi quia non est corpus vel magnitudo habens unam partem ab alia distantem. Et hoc est quod subdit: scilicet quia non extenditur, extensione scilicet magnitudinis, cum re extensa, id est magnitudinem habente, ita quod sit una suarum extremitatum secunda ab alia, id est ordine situs ab alia distincta.*" See also DV 1.9, cited above in note 38; and *In Sent.* II.19.1.1 [Mand. 2.481–83]: "Hanc autem opinionem Aristoteles, sufficienter infringit, ostendens intellectum habere esse absolutum, non dependens a corpore; propter quod dicitur non esse actus corporis; et ab Avicenna dicitur non esse forma submersa in materia; et in libro de causis dicitur non esse super corpus delata. Hujus autem probationis medium sumitur ex parte operationis ejus. Cum enim operatio non possit esse nisi rei per se existentis, oportet illud quod per se habet operationem absolutam, etiam esse absolutum per se habere"; as the third proof that the intellect's operation is independent of the body, Thomas goes on to propose: "[I]ntellectus intelligit se; quod non contingit in aliqua virtute cujus operatio sit per organum corporale; cujus ratio est, quia secundum Avicennam, cujuslibet virtutis operantis per organum corporale, oportet ut organum sit medium inter ipsam et objectum ejus."

<sup>45</sup> One cannot, however, read the texts as arguing that every self-subsisting form actually does complete the return according to operation. This is what Dhavamony seems to think, probably because he construes this return as one of consciousness rather than quidditative self-knowledge: "Thus self-sufficiency, spirituality, individuality, subjectivity are brought to the luminous plane of consciousness in such a way that the spiritual subject possesses himself, interiorises himself, and becomes master of himself . . . The two kinds of return according to one's operation and essence are only two moments in one and the same act of reflection" (*Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 81–82). But rather, it can only be said that any knower that knows his own essence must be self-subsisting.

intellect, for the intellect reflects upon itself, and can know itself.”<sup>46</sup> Self-knowledge is therefore the most perfect of operations and most fittingly manifests the perfection of an entity’s being.

At this point, it might be objected that this treatment of self-subsistence as a self-identity or “return according to substance,” completed by the operational return in quidditative self-knowledge, is inconsistent with an important principle of Thomistic metaphysics. For Thomas, there is no such thing as a completely independent created substance. All creatures depend on the Creator for their *esse* at every moment.<sup>47</sup> Thus true self-subsistence belongs only to God.

In answer: we have already noted that there is a hierarchy of forms.<sup>48</sup> But more specifically, there is also a hierarchy of self-subsisting forms. God alone is completely ontologically independent and is therefore the most perfectly self-subsisting being: “[T]o subsist in oneself belongs most of all to God. Whence according to this manner of speaking, he is most of all one who returns to his essence (*rediens ad essentiam suam*), and one who

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<sup>46</sup> *SCG* 4.11 [Leon. 15.32]: “Est igitur supremus et perfectus gradus vitae qui est secundum intellectum: nam intellectus in seipsum reflectitur, et seipsum intelligere potest.” Interestingly, in this text Thomas has just distinguished intellection from the next lower level of vital operation (sensation) by pointing out that sensation goes forth into another, in words that echo on the operational level his distinction between the dispersal into matter of material forms, and the return to oneself of self-subsisting forms: “[N]on tamen est omnino vita perfecta, cum emanatio semper fiat ex uno in alterum.”

<sup>47</sup> *DEE* 4 [Leon. 43.377:135–41]: “Ergo oportet quod omnis talis res cuius esse est aliud quam natura sua habeat esse ab alio. Et quia omne, quod est per aliud, reducitur ad illud quod est per se sicut ad causam primam, oportet quod sit aliqua res que sit causa essendi omnibus rebus eo quod ipsa est esse tantum”; *ST* Ia, 8.3 [Leon. 4.87]: “[Deus] est in omnibus per essentiam, inquantum adest omnibus ut causa essendi, sicut dictum est”; *ST* 45.4 [Leon. 4.468]: “[C]rearum est quoddam fieri, ut dictum est. Fieri autem ordinatur ad esse rei. Unde illis proprie convenit fieri et creari, quibus convenit esse. Quod quidem convenit proprie subsistentibus: sive sint simplicia, sicut substantiae separatae; sive sint composita, sicut substantiae materiales. Illi enim proprie convenit esse, quod habet esse; et hoc est subsistens in suo esse. . . . Proprie vero creata sunt subsistentia.”

<sup>48</sup> See texts mentioned in note 21 above.

knows himself.”<sup>49</sup> Not surprisingly, this perfectly self-subsisting being (whose being is perfectly one) also enjoys perfect operational independence, knowing himself and all things through his own essence. Moreover, he enjoys the most perfect self-knowledge, to the extent that his very being *is* his own act of self-knowing.

Yet this is not to deny that lesser forms also possess genuine, though lesser, self-subsistence, with corresponding degrees of self-knowledge.<sup>50</sup> God grants created intellectual substances (angels and humans) their own independence and integrity as self-identical beings. Thus from the perspective of the soul as a being, it truly subsists in itself and enjoys a return according to substance, which is completed in quidditative self-knowledge. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the soul as a creature, this self-subsistence depends utterly on God as *ipse Esse subsistens*, who is the ground and source of all created *esse*. Thus the human soul as creature must be perfected by returning operationally to the Creator: in order to achieve a complete return, it must contemplate God. Only then does it finally attain in second act the true source of its being, the ultimately fixed Substance whence the soul derives its own created substantial fixity. Only then do the orders of created being and knowing perfectly coincide, and only then does the soul know

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<sup>49</sup> *ST* Ia, 14.2, ad 1 [Leon. 4.169]: “Per se autem subsistere maxime convenit Deo. Unde secundum hunc modum loquendi, ipse est maxime rediens ad essentiam suam, et cognoscens seipsum.” See also *DV* 2.2, ad 2, which describes God as the most fixed of substances and therefore the one who “most returns to his essence” [Leon. 22/1.46:238–41]: “Deus maxime ad essentiam suam redit, quia omnibus providens, ac per hoc in omnia quodammodo exiens et procedens, in seipso fixus et immixtus ceteris permanet.”

<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, in the text just quoted from *SCG* 4.11 [Leon. 14.32], Thomas then goes on to distinguish various grades of intellectual life according to differing degrees of self-knowledge, linking them to their diverse grades of being: “Sed et in intellectuali vita diversi gradus inveniuntur. Nam intellectus humanus, etsi seipsum cognoscere possit, tamen primum suae cognitionis initium ab extrinseco sumit: quia non est intelligere sine phantasmate, ut ex superioribus patet.—Perfector igitur est intellectualis vita in angelis, in quibus intellectus ad sui cognitionem non procedit ex aliquo exteriori, sed per se cognoscit seipsum. Nondum tamen ad ultimam perfectionem vita ipsorum pertingit: quia, licet intentio intellecta sit eis omnino intrinseca, non tamen ipsa intentio intellecta est eorum substantia; quia non est idem in eis intelligere et esse, ut ex superioribus patet.—Ultima igitur perfectio vitae competit Deo, in quo non est aliud intelligere et aliud esse, ut supra ostensum est, et ita oportet quod intentio intellecta in Deo sit ipsa divina essentia.”

itself fully for the participated being that it is. Perfectly self-subsisting Divine being perfectly returns to itself in the identity of the Divine essence and the Divine self-knowledge. Likewise, the Divine being, as participated by creaturely *esse*, returns to itself in the contemplation of God (itself a participation in Divine knowing) by his creatures.

In fact, Thomas is well aware of these two levels at which the human soul can complete its return to the ground of its being. It is for this reason that in a very dense passage from his Commentary on *De Div. Nom.* IV.7, Thomas goes beyond the *reditio completa* of the *Liber de causis* to describe quidditative self-knowledge as the merest beginning stage of what he calls the soul's *convolutio* or *revocatio* or circular motion ("circular" here indicating an action that has perfect uniformity<sup>51</sup>), contemplated in contemplating the Divine unity. This text, which is worthy of much more detailed investigation than I can provide here, outlines four stages in the soul's turning-back to the ground of its being, by which the soul's circular motion is perfected. In the first stage, the soul turns back to the fixity of first principles from its dispersal in discursive motion. In the second stage, "it is gathered to itself for the first time, considering what it has in its nature that allows it to know." Third, "having been made uniform," it lifts up its gaze to the angelic substances; finally, it attains contemplation of God.<sup>52</sup> As it thus moves from the

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<sup>51</sup> *In De div. nom.* IV.7 [Marietti, 121, no. 375]: "[C]um enim motus Angeli et animae sit operatio eius, circularitas autem motus rationem uniformitatis exprimat, necesse est eo modo circularem motum Angelo et animae attribuire, inquantum competit eis uniformitas intellectualis operationis." Note that only an immaterial being is capable of circular motion, because only an immaterial being can return to itself completely and become wholly one with itself. Material beings are prevented from doing so by the extension of spatial parts, which can never be fully unified with each other. The significance of the imagery of circular motion with respect to immateriality seems to derive from the fact that a point that traverses a circle touches *all* points in the circle. See *ST Ia*, 7.3 [Leon. 4.76]: "[I]n motu circulari oportet quod una pars corporis transferatur ad locum in quo fuit alia pars."

<sup>52</sup> *In De div. nom.* IV.7 [Marietti, 121–22, no. 376]: "[M]otus circularis animae est secundum quod ab exterioribus intrat ad seipsam et ibi uniformiter convolvitur, sicut in quodam circulo, secundum suas

multiplicity of sense-objects to the unity of first principles to the increasing simplicity of spiritual substances (beginning with itself), its contemplation becomes correspondingly more uniform and its circular motion is thus more perfect.<sup>53</sup>

This accounts fits in perfectly to Thomas's view of quidditative self-knowledge as the completion of the substantial return. Self-subsisting forms are more unified than wholly material forms, because their being is not dispersed in matter, but remains whole and inviolate in themselves. (Another way to put this is to say that self-subsisting forms are necessarily immaterial.<sup>54</sup>) This self-unification is completed in their return to themselves in quidditative self-knowledge. Insofar as the soul has its own integrity as a self-subsisting being, then, it completes this being by returning to its own essence in quidditative self-knowledge. But the soul, as a creature, cannot be self-subsisting to the highest degree, since

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intellectuales virtutes; quae quidem convolutio dirigit virtutem animae, ut non erret: manifestum est enim quod anima, discurrendo de uno ad aliud sicut de effectu in causam vel de uno simili ad aliud vel de contrario in contrarium, ratiocinatur multipliciter; sed omnis ista ratiocinatio diiudicatur per resolutionem in prima principia, in quibus non contingit errare, ex quibus anima contra errorem defenditur, quia ipsa prima principia simplici intellectu absque discursu cognoscuntur et ideo eorum consideratio, propter sui uniformitatem, circularis convolutio nominatur. Per hanc ergo convolutionem, primo congregatur ad seipsam, considerans id quod in natura sua habet ut cognoscat; deinde, sic uniformis facta, unitur per huiusmodi convolutionem, unitis virtutibus, scilicet angelicis, inquantum per similitudinem huius uniformis apprehensionis, uniformitatem Angelorum aliquo modo considerat; et ulterius per istam convolutionem, manuducitur *ad pulchrum et bonum*, idest Deum, *quod est super omnia existentia* et est maxime *unum et idem* et est *sine principio et interminabile*, quae pertinent ad rationem circuli, ut dictum est; et ideo circularitas motus animae, completur in hoc quod ad Deum manuducit." See parallel texts in *ST* IIa-IIae, 180.6 [Leon. 10.430–31] and *DV* 10.8, ad 10 [Leon. 22/2.323:386–91].

<sup>53</sup> The increasing uniformity of the soul as it attains perfection is discussed in *ST* IIa-IIae, 180.6, ad 2 [Leon. 10.431], which follows Dionysius in identifying two obstacles that must be removed in order for the soul to gain uniformity. The first is the multiplicity of sense-objects, from which the soul must withdraw into itself ("[P]rimo ponit in motu circulari animae introitum ipsius ab exterioribus ad seipsam"). Second is the discourse of reason, from which the soul must turn to contemplation of simple truth, such as first principles ("[N]ecessaria est uniformis convolutio intellectualium virtutum ipsius, ut scilicet, cessante discursu, figatur eius intuitus in contemplatione unius simplicis veritatis"). When this is done, the soul can achieve truly angelic uniformity by contemplating God ("[T]ertio ponitur uniformitas conformis Angelis, secundum quod, praetermissis omnibus in sola Dei contemplatione persistit. Et hoc est quod dicit, deinde, sicut uniformis facta, unite, idest conformiter, unitis virtutibus, ad pulchrum et bonum manuducitur").

<sup>54</sup> See *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 7 [Saffrey, 52]: "Et quia posset aliquis credere quod intelligentia extenderetur intelligendo corpora quasi contingendo ipsa, hoc excludit . . . sed *ipsa stat fixa secundum suam dispositionem*, id est non distrahitur in diversas partes. Et hoc probat per hoc quod subdit: *Quoniam est forma a qua non pertransist aliquid*. . . . Ex quo concludi potest quod intelligentia non sit corpus."

it relies on God as the cause of its *esse*. Insofar as its self-subsistence constitutes a participation in the Divine self-subsistence, it must be further fulfilled in a contemplation of God that is a participation in the Divine self-knowledge. Then it achieves, not just unity with itself, but unity in the highest degree, because it contemplates Divine being, which alone fully returns to itself, being fixed and self-sufficient in the highest degree.<sup>55</sup> Thomas thus consistently holds the principle that the ground of one's being (that which grants the return according to substance) is what determines the ultimate goal of contemplative "return."

To summarize, then, self-subsistence and the possibility of quidditative self-knowledge are not just co-consequences of the soul's immateriality. Rather, the return of quidditative self-knowledge completes the return of self-subsistence and manifests it. The ontological reduplication involved in being oneself is fully accomplished in the cognitive reduplication of knowing oneself.<sup>56</sup> In quidditative self-knowledge, the order of being is perfectly manifested in the order of knowledge when the soul returns cognitively to the essence from whence its act springs.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> DV 2.2, ad 2, cited above in note 49.

<sup>56</sup> See Peifer, *Concept in Thomism*, 155: "When the intellect knows itself it is not sufficient that it be itself in its physical existence and in the physical identity which it has with itself, but it is necessary that it be itself according to a new mode of psychic existence in the act of knowing. The intellect is by its physical existence, and exists without its being thought. When it thinks of itself, it is necessary that the intellect have itself within itself as a known in a knower, doubled, as it were, and reflected in itself. Obviously, the duplication is not of the intellect; no two intellects result from the reflex knowledge. The duplication is of existence: that of the intellect as it is a thing, and that of the intellect as it is an object known in a knower."

<sup>57</sup> In my opinion, this helps to explain why Thomas's *ex professo* discussions of self-knowledge never discuss the *reditio completa*, and why so many of the *reditio* discussions (such as DV 2.2 and ST Ia, 14.2, ad 1) focus on Divine self-subsistence rather than Divine self-knowledge). In fact, the whole discussion of *reditio* is geared towards presenting the soul's ontological and operational autonomy, with special emphasis on proving the soul's self-subsistence, immateriality, and separability. The language of *reditio* has nothing to do with the questions of what types of self-knowledge exists or how each type unfolds, and everything to do with the question of how quidditative self-knowledge operationally manifests a form's self-subsistence. *Reditio completa* therefore constitutes a metaphysical, rather than a psychological, theme.

## 2. *Intellectuality and Self-Knowledge*

We turn now to the soul's status as the lowest in the hierarchy of intellects. We have seen that quidditative self-knowledge is the completion of the soul's subsistence as an immaterial being. In addition to this teleological orientation towards self-knowledge, the soul also possesses a disposition to self-knowledge as part of its formal constitution. Because all immaterial beings are intellects, the soul is an intellect. But *qua* intellect, it must be a self-knower, for the capacity—if not the actuality—of self-knowledge pertains properly to intellectuality. In fact, for Thomas, to be an intellect most fully and properly means to know oneself actually through one's essence, and to know all things actually in oneself, as God does.<sup>58</sup> In a lesser sense, being an intellect means knowing oneself actually and being *able* to know all things (some things actually through their essence and other things through naturally infused species), as angels do.<sup>59</sup> In God and angels, then, self-knowledge has primacy over knowledge of other things, because of the essential actuality of the separate intellect. But at the lowest possible level of intellectuality, wherein the human intellect stands to intelligible form as prime matter stands to real form, the situation is reversed.<sup>60</sup> Human self-knowledge depends on the knowledge of extramental things, in

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<sup>58</sup> *ST* Ia, 14.2 [Leon. 4.168]: “Cum igitur Deus nihil potentialitatis habeat, sed sit actus purus, oportet quod in eo intellectus et intellectum sint idem omnibus modis: ita scilicet, ut neque careat specie intelligibili, sicut intellectus noster cum intelligit in potentia; neque species intelligibilis sit aliud a substantia intellectus divini”; see also *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.355]: “Essentia igitur Dei, quae est actus purus et perfectus, est simpliciter et perfecte secundum seipsam intelligibilis. Unde Deus per suam essentiam non solum seipsum, sed etiam omnia intelligit.”

<sup>59</sup> *ST* Ia, 87.1 [Leon. 5.355]: “Angeli autem essentia est quidem in genere intelligibilium ut actus, non tamen ut actus purus neque completus. Unde eius intelligere non completur per essentiam suam: etsi enim per essentiam suam se intelligat angelus, tamen non omnia potest per essentiam suam cognoscere, sed cognoscit alia a se per eorum similitudines.”

<sup>60</sup> On the human soul as prime matter in the order of intellects, see Lambert, “Aquinas’ Comparison of the Intellect to Prime Matter,” 80–99; *SCG* 3.46 [Leon. 14.123]; *DV* 8.6 [Leon. 22/2.238:152–57]: “[S]ic est in genere intelligibilium aliquid ut actu tantum, scilicet essentia divina; aliquid ut potentia tantum, ut intellectus possibilis; quod hoc modo se habet in ordine intelligibilium sicut materia prima in ordine sensibilium”; *DV*

which the intellect, in knowing its object, becomes intelligible to itself. Thus to be an intellect in this most reduced way means to have a *potency* to knowing all being (the human soul is not an intelligence, but rather only has an intellectual *power*<sup>61</sup>), which includes a *habitual* awareness of oneself. Yet in the order of being, the intellect is closer to itself than to other objects (because, as self-subsisting, it *is* itself). Paradoxically enough, in fact, this is precisely why the soul cannot have even the most basic self-awareness before it is actualized by some extramental object—on account of the human intellect’s weakness, the more proximate is the less known.<sup>62</sup>

While much could be said about what it means to be an intellect, I will focus only on one point that is relevant to the present inquiry: as I have repeatedly emphasized throughout this dissertation, for Thomas, following Aristotle, knowledge is always accompanied by self-knowledge.<sup>63</sup> “It is a characteristic mark of every spirit to be at once knower and known.”<sup>64</sup> The human soul can only be intellectual if it is immaterial, for a material composition would interfere with its reception of form.<sup>65</sup> But since every received form also

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10.8 [Leon. 22/2.322:258–66]; *De unit. int.* 1 [Leon. 43.295:386–91 and 408–9]: “Quia ergo omnia cognoscit, concludit [referring to Aristotle *De an.*, 429a21–24] quod non contingit ipsum habere aliquam naturam determinatam ex naturis sensibilibus quas cognoscit, ‘sed hanc solam naturam habet quod sit possibilis’, id est in potentia ad ea que intelligit, quantum est ex sua natura. . . . intellectus non habet naturam in actu”; *In De an.* II.6 [Leon. 45/1.94:173–90]; *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:87–217:206]. Bazán, “Thomas’s Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism,” 120–22, has interestingly argued that to call the human soul the “last of the intellects” is misleading because it might suggest that the soul is a complete substance. He thus says that it is more accurate to call it a subsistent substantial form. I do think, though, that Thomas makes great effort to hedge these claims by emphasizing that the soul is not a complete substance, and that therefore this terminology should be accepted along with Thomas’s qualifications.

<sup>61</sup> *ST* Ia, 79.1, ad 4 [Leon. 5.259]: “[N]on oportet quod intellectus sit substantia animae, sed eius virtus et potentia.”

<sup>62</sup> *In De an.* II.6 [Leon. 45/1.94:186–90]: “Si autem directe essenciam suam cognosceret anima per se ipsam, esset contrarius ordo observandus in anime cognitione, quia quanto aliquid esset propinquius essencie anime, tanto per prius cognosceretur ab ea.”

<sup>63</sup> See the discussion of *In De an.* III.3, in Ch. I, §B.5.

<sup>64</sup> Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 73.

<sup>65</sup> See the discussion of the errors of the ancients, who thought that the soul must be materially constituted of everything that it knows; *DV* 2.2 [Leon. 22/1.44:149–56]; *ST* Ia, 84.2 [Leon. 5.315–16]; *In De*



constitutes an actualization of the intellect itself, the intellect is illuminated to itself whenever it knows anything at all. Reflexivity follows upon immateriality. Thomas notes in his Commentary on the *Liber de causis* that only an immaterial power is reflexive, because only an immaterial power can bend back upon itself: the material sense-powers are prevented by the spatiality of the bodily organ from engaging in reflexion.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, only the act of intellection, which alone among human acts is a totally immaterial act, is reflexive. It is only in this fully immaterial act that the soul can bend back upon itself to know not only its object, but itself.

In fact, I think it can be argued that it is the human intellect's *potency* for knowledge that grants it a *habitual disposition* for self-awareness. Immateriality is coextensive with intellectuality. Thus from the very fact that the human soul is immaterial, it must be intellectual; and from the very fact that it is intellectual, it must be disposed for self-awareness. Indeed, there can be no such thing as a sheer potency for self-awareness, for the human intellect is immaterial and self-identical. If it were not, it could not be an intellect. But in being immaterial and self-identical, it already fulfils in its very essence the subjective requirements for self-awareness (as discussed in Chapter III, §B.2). Conversely, because the human intellect is like prime matter, in essential potency to intelligible form, its essential condition with respect to self-awareness can be no more than habitual. If it were essentially in act, like the angelic intellect, then it would already be actually intelligible to itself, since

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*an.* III.4 [Leon. 45/1.203–4]. Thomas's description of the ancients is derived from *De an.* I.2, 404b8 or 405b12; see Bonino, *De la science en Dieu*, 389, n. 36, for the historical background of this critique.

<sup>66</sup> See *Sup. Lib. de caus.*, prop. 7 [Saffrey, 51–52]. See also Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion*, 53–4; and Wébert, “Reflexio,” 322–23. Due to constraints of space, I continue to set aside the question of whether the senses are genuinely capable of reflecting upon their own acts in the same way that the intellect is, as noted in note 34 above.

its actualization in knowing is all that it lacks for actual self-awareness. Potency for knowledge entails habitual self-awareness; actual knowing entails actual self-awareness.<sup>67</sup>

This explains why habitual self-awareness is essential to the human soul (see Chapter III, §B.2). As an immaterial, intellectual being, it is necessary that the human intellect know itself in its acts; if it were not able to do so, it would not be an intellect at all, for the intellectual reception of form is identical with the intellect's actualization for self-awareness, and neither can exist without the other. Thus, *in order to be what it is*, the intellect must be ordered in such a way as to be able to enter into self-awareness whenever it is actualized by a species from without. Its nature as intellect demands this order. But (unlike the case of angelic infused species) the internal ordering necessary to ready the soul for self-awareness is fully compatible with the soul's finite essence. Thus this ordering towards self-awareness or reflexivity is an essential part of what it means to be a human soul.<sup>68</sup> The intellect's transparency to other forms on the level of potency entails a transparency to itself on the level of habit.

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<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, Thomas says that if a species possessed the light of the agent intellect in itself, it would have the character of a habit, insofar as it would be a principle of act: *In Sent.* I.3.5.1, ad 1 [Mand. 1:124]: “[S]i aliqua species esset quae in se haberet lumen [intellectus agentis], illud haberet rationem habitus, quantum pertinet ad hoc quod esset principium actus. Ita dico, quod quando ab anima cognoscitur aliquid quod est in ipsa non per sui similitudinem, sed per suam essentiam, ipsa essentia rei cognitae est loco habitus. Unde dico, quod ipsa essentia animae, prout est mota a seipsa, habet rationem habitus.” This is especially intriguing, for the soul itself does possess the light of the agent intellect in itself. And in *ST* Ia, 87.1, Thomas argues that the soul knows its individual self through itself precisely insofar as it is the principle of its acts (“Nam ad primam cognitionem de mente habendam, sufficit ipsa mentis praesentia, quae est principium actus ex quo mens percipit seipsam. Et ideo dicitur se cognoscere per suam praesentiam” [Leon. 5.356]). Thus it makes sense that the essence of the soul stands in the place of a habit for self-awareness, and that it be actualized whenever the light of the agent intellect is shining on anything. Thus the human soul, insofar as it possesses an agent intellect (which is what allows it to know at all; for the possible intellect, joined to a body, would never be able to know anything on its own), essentially includes an essential ordering towards self-awareness.

<sup>68</sup> it should be recalled that because of the human intellect's essential passivity, this essential ordering to self-awareness does not imply that the soul is self-aware *per essentiam*, since self-awareness also requires the actualization of the intellect as object, in knowing a form. In an angel, in contrast, the essential ordering to self-knowledge results in the angel knowing itself *per essentiam*, because the angelic intellect is already permanently in a state of actuality.

Thomas's metaphysical definition of the person as "an individual substance of a rational nature," then, implies that habitual self-knowledge belongs to the essence of the person as intellectual, and that the ontological independence of the soul is completed by its cognitive return to its own nature (*reditio completa*). Interestingly, however, the source of this teleological orientation towards self-knowledge lies in the nature of the soul as such, which is why the soul continues to be a self-knower after death. I will return to the relationship between self-knowledge and the soul vs. the soul-body composite in section D. But first, we must examine the implications of self-knowledge for Thomas's psychological view of personhood.

### C. Self-Knowledge as Thomas's Psychological View of Personhood

Contemporary definitions of personhood generally focus on subjectivity, which includes attributes such as "interiority, individuality, self-possession, self-identity, personality."<sup>69</sup> Paralleling the incommunicability of metaphysical personhood, psychological personhood involves experiencing the world from a unique and irrepeatable first-person viewpoint, one which cannot be shared by anyone else.<sup>70</sup> No one can have *my* experiences; other people can have similar experiences, or they can believe what I tell them about my own experiences, but they cannot actually *have* them from my perspective. This first-person perspective is, moreover, consistent across one's life. Thus in discussing

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<sup>69</sup> Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 34.

<sup>70</sup> This incommunicability of the personal viewpoint would have been familiar to Thomas from Augustine, *De Trin.* 9.6.9 [CCSL 50.301]: "Sed cum se ipsam nouit humana mens et amat se ipsam, non aliquid incommutabile nouit et amat. Aliterque unusquisque homo loquendo enuntiat mentem suam quid in se ipso agatur attendens; aliter autem humanam mentem speciali aut generali cognitione definit. Itaque cum mihi de sua propria loquitur, utrum intellegat hoc aut illud an non intellegat, et utrum uelit an nolit hoc aut illud, credo . . . Vnde manifestum est aliud unumquemque uidere in se quod sibi alius dicenti credat, non tamen uideat."

psychological personhood, the question of main concern is: Why does the person experience the world in a way that is both aware and self-aware from a single unified and persistent perspective? This question breaks down into three distinct questions:

- (1) *Being a Subject.* What accounts for the fact that human experience always takes place from the viewpoint of a subject? Why is it the case that in every intentional act, the person is aware of other things always *as other*, as distinct from oneself, the one experiencing?
- (2) *The First-Person Viewpoint.* What accounts for the fact that one experiences oneself, the subject of one's experience, as "I," in the first person?
- (3) *Unity of Consciousness.* What accounts for the continuity in this first-person viewpoint? This continuity can be considered in terms of (a) the uniting of multiple perceptions into a single experience, or (b) the continuity of the "I" viewpoint through multiple experiences across time

As we have seen, Thomas uses the term "person" in an exclusively metaphysical sense to indicate a special type of individual. He does not pose these three problems in the context of personhood; neither does he provide them with *ex professo* treatment. But I argue that he does recognize these problems and that his theory of self-knowledge is designed in order to explain the psychological phenomena from whence they arise. The basis for this explanation is a fundamental principle that has been frequently highlighted in earlier chapters, namely that agents are perceived *in* their operations. Once this principle is accepted, a theory of the human person as an aware and self-aware identity follows smoothly.

### ***1. Selfhood and the "I"***<sup>71</sup>

It is a fascinating fact about human experience that the unique viewpoint from which it occurs is always the viewpoint of a self. No matter how many times my attention is drawn to a pie, no matter how absorbed I am in contemplating and desiring that pie, I never confuse

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<sup>71</sup> I here characterize the perceiver as "self" or "subject," and the perceived as "other," *not* as "object." The reason is that "object," for Thomas, simply means the terminus of action, and in knowledge, the *id quod cognoscitur*. The self can also be the *id quod cognoscitur*, but this is not the same as the "objectification" of the self in the modern sense.

myself with it. It is always perceived as other. In fact, otherness is an ineliminable aspect of every entity that one perceives; the entity perceived is always “it.”<sup>72</sup> Conversely, even when I turn my attention inward to examine my conscience or reflect upon my acts, I always encounter myself as “I,” the subject of those acts—i.e, as the one perceiving, never as some perceived other.

Thomas never explicitly discusses this phenomenon, but from his explanation of the relationship between self-knowledge and knowledge of the other, one can derive a simple response. Every intellectual act contains an ineradicable duality: it encompasses knower and known together at once. No matter how intently the intellect’s attention is trained upon the known, its gaze encompasses its own self, the knower. And conversely, no matter how intently the intellect’s attention is trained back upon itself, its gaze still encompasses the other, the entity whose form actualizes the intellect. Thus every outer-directed act includes a reference to the self, the knower; and every introspective act includes a reference to the extramental other.

This account relies on two elements in Thomas’s theory of self-knowledge that have been noted many times in the previous chapters. First, the very definition of knowledge, for Thomas, is the act in which the knowing intellect becomes one with the known.<sup>73</sup> The possible intellect takes on (intentionally) the form of the known object as its own form; in

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<sup>72</sup> Or in interpersonal perception, as “you,” a significant point that I will not here address, as I have not found an account of it in Thomas.

<sup>73</sup> *SCG* 2.98 [Leon. 13.582]: “[Aristoteles] ponit quod intelligere contingit per hoc quod intellectum in actu sit unum cum intellectu in actu.” See *De an.* 430a2–3 [*nova translatio*, Leon. 45/1.214]: “In hiis que sunt sine materia, idem est intelligens et quod intelligitur”; and Thomas’s commentary thereupon in *In De an.* III.3 [Leon. 45/1.216:68–78]: “Quod probat ex hoc quod intellectum in actu et intelligens in actu sunt unum, sicut et supra dixit quod sensibile in actu et sensus in actu sunt unum. . . . et ideo hic dicit quod *in hiis que sunt sine materia*, id est si accipiamus intelligibilia actu, *idem est intelligens et quod intelligitur*, sicut idem est senciens in actu et quod sentitur in actu.”

knowing a tree, the intellect intentionally becomes what the tree really is.<sup>74</sup> Thus any act of knowing the self must also be an act of knowing the other, and vice versa. It is in fact noteworthy that for Thomas, the Divine intellect, pure actuality at the pinnacle of the intellectual hierarchy, knows all things *in knowing itself*. Divine self-knowledge includes knowledge of others (insofar as God knows his essence as imitable by others). At the bottom of the intellectual hierarchy, the reverse is true: the human intellect, which like prime matter is in a state of essential potency to form, is only illuminated to itself when it is actualized by knowing some other entity. In both cases, however, self-knowledge and knowledge of others are simply two aspects, distinct only in reason, of the same act of knowing.

Thus awareness of the extramental object and awareness of the self are complementary dimensions of the same act; together they constitute the act of knowing. Given Thomas's very Aristotelian account of intellection as the assimilation of knower to known, it would be contrary to the immaterial nature of the intellect for an act of knowledge to be opaque to the knower. In this respect, the human intellect in the act of knowing is exactly like a beam of light, which only becomes visible together with the object it illuminates. Outer space is dark, despite the fact that light is always passing through it, because it contains nothing to reflect the light. Light and the visible are simultaneously illuminated when light strikes the potentially visible, making both actually visible.

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<sup>74</sup> See *DV* 10.4, ad 5 [Leon. 22/2.308:176–80]: “[Q]uamvis qualitates corporales non possint esse in mente, possunt tamen <in> ea esse similitudines corporearum qualitatum, et secundum has mens rebus corporeis assimilatur”; *ST Ia*, 14.1, ad 3 [Leon. 4.167]: “[S]citum enim est in sciente secundum modum scientis”; *ST Ia*, 75.5 [Leon. 5.202]: “Sic autem cognoscitur unumquodque, sicut forma eius est in cognoscente”; *ST Ia*, 87.1, ad 3 [Leon. 5.356]: “[I]ntellectus in actu est intellectum in actu, propter similitudinem rei intellectae, quae est forma intellectus in actu.”

It is to account for this fact that Thomas's theory of human self-knowledge necessarily includes an account, though limned ever so faintly, of implicit actual self-awareness (as discussed in Chapter III, §C). A more powerful intellect would be able to consider explicitly everything represented in an act of knowing (which for God means knowing all things in Himself). But for the human intellect, while both the self and the other are co-illuminated in a single act of knowing, only one of the two can be known explicitly at a time, depending on the direction of intellectual attention.<sup>75</sup> Self-awareness never occurs apart from an act of knowing some other, because the intellect only knows itself in its acts.

Second, the intellect's co-awareness of itself and the other is confirmed by the fact that—as discussed earlier—the human intellect's essential condition is to be in potency to know all forms, but habitually disposed to know itself. This means that the intellect-as-knower fulfils all the conditions for self-knowledge, but the intellect-as-known (because of its essential potency) does not. Consequently, whenever the intellect is actualized in knowing another, the obstacle on the side of the intellect-as-known is overcome. In fulfilling in this way all the conditions for intelligibility and intellection, both as known and knower, the intellect necessarily and instantaneously knows itself whenever it knows anything at all.

It is therefore evident that Thomas's implicit self-awareness provides some sort of account of the phenomenon of human subjecthood. Intellectuality necessarily implies the capacity for subjecthood, because actual intellection is always ineliminably twofold,

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<sup>75</sup> While Thomas does not discuss this issue, it seems reasonable to assume that Divine knowledge would be entirely explicit, because otherwise there would be a change in the Divine intellect from explicit to implicit knowledge. Probably, then, Thomas would restrict implicit knowledge to intellects not powerful enough to attend to the entirety of the form represented in the act of knowing.

illuminating the knowing intellect and its known object. The intellect is aware of a tree *precisely as other* because in the act of knowing the tree, intellect and tree are simultaneously grasped. The intellect's awareness of the tree thus takes place against the backdrop of its awareness of itself. And conversely, the intellect is aware of itself *precisely as self or subject* because it is aware of itself in conjunction with the object known in the act in which it is rendered intelligible to itself. (This is why Thomas says that the human intellect knows itself in its act of knowing another. The intellect always knows itself *as informed by the form of another*.) No matter whether a given act is directed towards the intellect itself or towards the other, this dimension of duality remains. The experience of subjecthood is indissociable from the experience of otherness, and vice versa.<sup>76</sup>

## **2. The First-Person Problem**

A further key aspect of psychological personhood is that the subject that the intellect perceives in conjunction with the other in every act of knowing is experienced *in the first person*. The subject is "I," perennially distinct from the other, "it." In Chapter II, §C.2.a, I examined the problem of whether Aquinas's theory of self-knowledge is constitutionally incapable of explaining the fact that one attains oneself as agent in the first person. Indeed, if self-awareness involves reasoning discursively from one's act to oneself, it would be impossible ever to attain oneself in the first person, since an effect perceived independently of the agent gives no indication as to whether the agent is oneself or another. I argued then that Aquinas avoids this trap by positing the non-discursivity and the pre-discursivity of self-

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<sup>76</sup> For this reason, I disagree with Dhavamony's argument that when the intellect explicitly knows itself as object, it is attaining itself "as something distinct and opposed to itself" (*Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 67). This would be to know oneself in the third person; but this contradicts experience, as well as basic principles of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge (see below, §2).



awareness. Now, however, we must examine what features of self-awareness allow each intellect, in grasping its singular self, to grasp it as *myself*, i.e., in the first person.

Some authors have attributed the intellectual perception<sup>77</sup> of oneself in the first person to habitual self-awareness.<sup>78</sup> But as habitual self-awareness does not constitute any sort of actual cognition, this explanation seems inadequate. In my opinion, a quite different Thomistic solution can be sketched at two distinct but complementary levels. The first is this: first-person awareness derives from the ontological identity of knower and known. In self-awareness, I, the perceiver, *am* I, the perceived. Self-awareness is the only instance in which knower and known are ontologically one and the same entity; thus it makes sense that the soul attains itself in a way that reflects this ontological fact, i.e., in the first person.

The solution offered on this first level of analysis is complemented—or rather buttressed—by a second consideration. One might object that so far I have merely claimed that the soul must know itself in the first person because it *is* itself, without showing why knowledge must follow being in this case. With or without ontological self-identity, is there some cognitive factor that prevents the soul from perceiving itself merely as one more entity among many, in the third person? Why do I not perceive myself in the act of knowing as “she knows” rather than “I know”?

A response might be framed as follows. For one thing, if the soul perceived itself as “she” rather than “I,” it would be perceiving itself as other, distinct from itself, and would therefore have a false perception. But the soul is not mistaken in apprehension. And even if

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<sup>77</sup> I continue to use perception in the sense of actual self-awareness, as we have seen Thomas use it when he refers to the soul’s perception “that it exists”—see Chapter II, §C.1.

<sup>78</sup> Goehring, for instance, cites habitual self-awareness as the source of “the ability to attribute acts or functions to myself” (“Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness,” 11).

one were to argue that one could falsely *judge* oneself to be distinct and other, Thomas seems to rule out this possibility in arguing that self-awareness is the most certain of knowledge.<sup>79</sup> Here, if anywhere, we can expect human knowledge to be infallible.

But even more importantly, the soul's self-awareness *must have a radically different character* from the apprehension of anything else, precisely because of the relationship of the subject to the act of knowing. Here it is helpful to emphasize once again the way in which intellect and the extramental entity are one in the act of knowing. In fact, a matter-form relationship is evinced in intellection at two different levels. First, the intelligible-in-act—the object *qua* known, united intentionally to the intellect-in-act at the moment of knowing by the mediation of the species<sup>80</sup>—is related differently to the intellect than to the object. The form of the intelligible-in-act is contributed by the light of the agent intellect; whereas the matter is contributed by the object itself. In other words, the act of intelligibility is conferred by the agent intellect's illumination, but the content of the act (i.e., the referent, that-which-is-made-intelligible) is conferred by the object. Together, they constitute one single intelligible-in-act, i.e., the object *qua* known.<sup>81</sup> (It is for this reason that explicit attention to the extramental entity always precedes explicit attention to the

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<sup>79</sup> *DV* 10.8, ad 2 [Leon. 22/2.323:335–39]: “[N]ullus unquam erravit in hoc quod non perciperet se vivere, quod pertinet ad cognitionem qua aliquis singulariter cognoscit quid in anima sua agatur,” and ad 8 s.c. [Leon. 22/2.325:521–5]: “Secundum hoc scientia de anima est certissima quod unusquisque in se ipso experitur se animam habere et actus animae sibi inesse”; *In De an.* I.1 [Leon. 45/1.5:93–95]: “[Q]uia et certa est (hoc enim quilibet experitur in se ipso, quod scilicet habeat animam et quod anima uiuificet.”

<sup>80</sup> *ST* Ia, 14.2 [Leon. 4.168]: “Unde dicitur in libro *de Anima*, quod sensibile in actu est sensus in actu, et intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu. Ex hoc enim aliquid in actu sentimus vel intelligimus, quod intellectus noster vel sensus informatur in actu per speciem sensibilis vel intelligibilis.”

<sup>81</sup> See Chapter III, §C.2.b, esp. note 156 for a more complete citation and discussion of *DV* 8.14, ad 6 [Leon. 22/2.265:265.260–266:270]: “Si enim aliqua duo ita se habeant quod unum sit ratio intelligendi aliud, unum eorum erit quasi formale, et aliud quasi materiale; et sic illa duo sunt unum intelligibile, cum ex forma et materia unum constituatur. Unde intellectus quando intelligit aliquid per alterum, intelligit unum tantum intelligibile, sicut patet in visu: lumen enim est quo videtur color, unde se habet ad colorem ut formale; et sic color et lumen sunt unum tantum visibile, et simul a visu videntur.”

knowing subject: the attention of the intellect is naturally drawn to the extramental, since it provides the entire material content of the act.) Thus in the union of the possible intellect with the intelligible-in-act, which occurs in the reception of the intelligible species, the intellect cannot help but see its own light, which is united to the object as form to matter, making the object intelligible. What is important here is that the way in which the intellectual light is included in the intelligible is *different* from the way in which the object is included in it. The object is made known in the representative material content of the intelligible, imported into the intellect from without. It is the foreignness of this material content that allows the intellect to perceive the object as other (“it”). The light of the agent intellect, however, is perceived as the formality of the act. (This is probably why it is so difficult to discuss the agent intellect philosophically; it is just as difficult to know the agent intellect as it is to see light, because they are completely transparent to their objects.)

A second matter-form relationship is evinced in the union of the possible intellect to the intelligible-in-act when it receives the species. Aquinas frequently says that the possible intellect stands to the species (which is the means whereby the intelligible-in-act is united to the intellect-in-act) as prime matter does to a form.<sup>82</sup> Thus the possible intellect is the matter, and the species is the form, of the act of knowing. Thus the possible intellect-in-act is manifested in the act of knowing *in a different way* than the intelligible-in-act. The former appears as the knower, the matter; the latter appears as the known, represented in the form. Therefore it makes sense for the possible intellect to perceive itself, the agent and

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<sup>82</sup> See for instance *In Sent.* IV.49.2.1 [Parma 7/2.1199]: “In intellectu autem oportet accipere ipsum intellectum in potentia quasi materiam, et speciem intelligibilem quasi formam; et intellectus in actu intelligens erit quasi compositum ex utroque”; *In De an.* III.1 [Leon. 45/1.206:323–26]: “[S]pecies igitur intelligibilis non est forma intellectus possibilis nisi secundum quod est intelligibilis actu, non est autem intelligibilis actu nisi secundum quod est a fantasmatis abstracta.”

receiver of the knowing act, and the extramental known as being in radically different relations to the act. It is this difference in perception that is captured by the distinction between the first and third person.

Thus if the intellect is to know itself at all, it must know itself, not from an outside standpoint, but from the *inside* of its knowledge. After all, there is no outside vantage point from which the intellect could look at itself, since the act in which it is aware of itself, being an immanent act, remains within itself, and being an immaterial act, is wholly grasped by itself. Similarly, if the eye were immaterial it would see itself seeing, but not as though standing outside itself to behold itself, *because it simply does not have that kind of perspective on itself*. The notion that self-awareness is a “standing outside” oneself is understandably attractive, since our experience of material objects offers no examples of entities that wholly reappropriate themselves. Material objects, by reason of their extension in matter, cannot return to themselves completely. Thus it is difficult to grasp what it means for an immaterial being to see itself entirely in its act without shifting its perspective. Yet as Aquinas points out frequently, the ability to return to oneself wholly is precisely a key characteristic of immaterial beings.<sup>83</sup> Thus the intellect must take a first-person perspective on itself: in perceiving itself, it cannot step outside itself and perceive itself as other, because it simply cannot leave any of itself behind itself to look at from outside.

### **3. *Unity of Consciousness***

The human ability to have a conscious “first-person viewpoint” is, then, something that Thomas’s theory of self-knowledge accounts for. But the Thomistic texts also offer a fairly straightforward path through the convoluted question of how this viewpoint remains

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<sup>83</sup> See for instance texts cited above in notes 17 and 44.

continuous in and through the entirety of one's experience, known as the problem of the unity of consciousness. This problem can be broken down into two sub-problems.

The first is the question of how multiple perceptions on various levels are all united into a single experience, a single viewpoint. The introduction to this dissertation already discussed how unity is achieved for Thomas on the level of sense-perception: the common sense, by perceiving the activities of each sense, unifies them all into a single whole. Thus the sound of rustling, the green color, the rough feel of the bark, are all perceived in a single perception as belonging to a single tree. For this reason, the common sense is, for Thomas, the seat of sense-awareness. But the human being's knowledge of the tree includes the additional dimension of intellection: unlike animals, human beings perceive the tree as rustling, green, rough, *and* having a nature in common with other trees. The ultimate source of unity within each human experience, then, cannot be the common sense, since the latter operates only on the sensory level.

Here again, one can turn to the principles of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge for enlightenment. In fact, the intellect can be actualized, not only by forms of an extramental object, but by any intentional act of the soul: "The intellect understands itself, and the will, and the essence of the soul, and all the powers of the soul."<sup>84</sup> It is easy to see why the intellect can perceive the act of the will, for such an act would fulfil all the conditions for

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<sup>84</sup> DV 22.12, cited in note 34 above; DV 10.8 [Leon. 22/2.321:222–5]: "[I]n hoc enim aliquis se percipit animam habere et vivere et esse quod percipit se sentire et intelligere et alia huiusmodi vitae opera exercere; unde dicit philosophus in IX Ethicorum: *sentimus autem quoniam sentimus; et intelligimus quoniam intelligimus; et quia hoc sentimus, intelligimus quoniam sumus*. . . . et ideo anima pervenit ad actualiter percipiendum se esse per illud quod intelligit vel sentit." See also ST Ia-IIae, 112.5, ad 1 [Leon. 7.327]: "[I]lla quae sunt per essentiam sui in anima, cognoscuntur experimentaliter cognitione, inquantum homo experitur per actus principia intrinseca, sicut voluntatem percipimus volendo, et vitam in operibus vitae."

intelligibility, being immaterial, present, and actual. Thus the intellect perceives the act of will whenever present.<sup>85</sup>

But the intellect's perception of the acts of the external and internal sensitive powers is a little more complicated. Presumably there are sense-acts of which intellectual consciousness is never achieved, as in the case of someone who successfully navigates a car along a familiar road while intently pondering a philosophical problem and arrives home without any memory of how he got there. When one *does* enjoy intellectual awareness of acts of sense, however, it seems that at the very minimum, the intellect must be able to perceive the acts of imagination and common sense. It must perceive the act of imagination because the agent intellect and the imagination are in close collaboration—the imagination presents a phantasm to the agent intellect, and the agent intellect abstracts a form therefrom. Without the presentation of a phantasm, there is no actual consideration; the phantasm is the source of content for the species, which informs the possible intellect. And the possible intellect must also perceive the act of the common sense, because this is the only way that the intellect can know its object *as existing and present*. The common sense provides a consciousness of “undergoing and being acted upon” by some present object of sense.<sup>86</sup> If

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<sup>85</sup> See *ST* Ia, 87.4 [Leon. 5.363]: “Unde inclinatio naturalis est naturaliter in re naturali; et inclinatio quae est appetitus sensibilis, est sensibiliter in sentiente; et similiter inclinatio intelligibilis, quae est actus voluntatis, est intelligibiliter in intelligente, sicut in principio et in proprio subiecto. . . . Quod autem intelligibiliter est in aliquo intelligente, consequens est ut ab eo intelligatur. Unde actus voluntatis intelligitur ab intellectu, et in quantum aliquis percipit se velle; et in quantum aliquis cognoscit naturam huius actus . . .”; *DM* 6, ad 18, and *DV* 22.12, cited in note 34 above.

<sup>86</sup> R.W. Schmidt, “The Evidence Grounding Judgments of Existence,” in *An Etienne Gilson Tribute*, ed. C.J. O’Neil (Milwaukee, Wisc.: Marquette University Press, 1959), 228; see also “Where there is a hierarchy of cognitive powers, the higher can have consciousness of the activity of the lower” (*ibid.*). This article is a very interesting treatment of how sense and intellect can perceive dynamic existence; Schmidt suggests that in order to perceive existence in this way, one must cognize a cognitive power acting (233–34); the first part of call for the perception of existing therefore seems to be the common sense. This implication is drawn out more explicitly in Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 36, who suggests that at the level of the common sense “one is also aware that one’s power of sense perception is being acted upon by some object. . . . But the

the intellect could perceive only the act of imagination, it would never be able to distinguish the imaginative reality of a goatstag from the existential reality of a rose currently being seen. Thus I would argue that intellectual perception of the acts of these two internal senses, at least, is the reason that the soul perceives itself “through [the fact] that it understands or senses” (or, in an alternate translation, “through that which it understands or senses”), as *DV* 10.8 states.<sup>87</sup>

And it is here, I argue, that one can find Thomas’s explanation for the unity in a single human perception of a tree as green, rustling, rough, desirable for shade, possessing a certain nature, and other than oneself. Simply, in abstracting the form of the tree from the phantasm presented by the imagination, the intellect perceives all of the following from its vantage point as the highest power of the soul: the act of the imagination wherein all the tree’s sensible forms are united in a single phantasm, the unified sense-awareness of the *sensus communis*, the act of the will desiring the tree as suitable for shelter, the common nature of the tree, and its own singular self, actualized in the act of knowing the tree. On account of its immateriality, then, the intellectual power is the ultimate unifying principle of human experience: it perceives the acts of the lower parts of the soul (at least whenever it is abstracting a species from a phantasm), as well as the act of the will and its own act.<sup>88</sup> By

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raw material is now at hand for the intellect to advert to the fact that the senses are perceiving some object and for it to judge that the thing in question actually exists.”

<sup>87</sup> See note 84 above.

<sup>88</sup> Some may find the formulation of layered perceptions as an excessive complication of human experience, but for Thomas it is clearly necessary in order to explain how a single entity is experienced in a unified way according to very different aspects that cannot all be perceived by a single finite power. Moreover, it is important to remember that for Thomas, in perceiving an act of imagination, the intellect does not *terminate* at the phantasm informing the active imagination, because the phantasm itself is a means of knowing and therefore leads to the object. Thus all these layered perceptions ultimately terminate at the object (some only obliquely), constituting a single unified perception of the object, not a series of stacking perceptions terminating at different acts of the souls.

including its own act reflexively within its gaze, the intellect is thus able to encompass the entirety of human experience, granting human experience a unique quality of self-possession in addition to its unity.

While the first dimension of the “problem of unity of consciousness” examines the unity of the “I-viewpoint” in a single experience involving multiple levels of perception, the second dimension of this problem raises the question of how this single “I-viewpoint” remains the same across time. Human experience is not a disconnected sequence of individual perceptions, but has an element of consistency: I, the subject who am thinking about philosophy right now, am the same subject who heard a bird singing a moment ago. These experiences have a continuity insofar as they are both experienced as *mine* and remembered as mine; the same “I” appears as the subject of my every conscious act. Each individual experience of mine, then, has a place in a larger whole that is tied together by belonging to one and the same subject across time. Parsing this phenomenon and explaining it is quite possibly the most difficult issue involved in psychological personhood. I will only briefly sketch the basic outline of what I construe as Thomas’s solution to this problem.

To begin, a comment regarding habitual self-awareness and the unity of consciousness across time is in order. Some authors have argued that habitual self-awareness is Thomas’s account of the unity of consciousness. For instance, McKian, following Rabeau, argues:

St. Thomas, while asserting that man knew himself through his acts of understanding something other, was unwilling to admit that the man apprehended himself only within the limits of the object whose species determined his intellect to act. To make such an admission would imply that man’s intellectual life consisted in a succession of intelligible species, without his having any unity of consciousness to organise the various acts of understanding. While the mind knows itself as actualised through the intentional reception of the form of the object, St. Thomas is careful to insist that what the intentional form has determined to intelligible act is precisely the mind as a faculty and a manifestation of the soul which abides



with the individual all his life as his substantial form. Hence, the soul continues to know itself as the same substance, rendered actually intelligible to itself once for all, through all the succeeding acts of understanding different objects.<sup>89</sup>

In this view, habitual self-awareness guarantees that I experience my acts as following an orderly sequence, because even when I am not thinking, I have some sort of ongoing, single habitual purchase on myself that serves to link up my acts.

Now, it is true that in order for all my experiences to be unified according to a single first-person viewpoint, it is necessary that there be some sort of continuity among them. But one must carefully analyze what kind of continuity would be required. For McKian-Rabeau, unity of consciousness across time seems to require a continuous matrix of self-awareness as the background within which every act occurs. The ongoing permanence of habitual self-awareness, even in sleep or under anaesthesia, would then guarantee that no act is experienced as episodically detached from any preceding or following acts, since a single unbroken subliminal experience of self (“once for all”) serves to link individual acts to each other and to the agent, the self. (One could illustrate this view with reference to a patchwork quilt: one only knows that a given square belongs to the quilt *if one sees it actually sewn into*

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<sup>89</sup> McKian, “The Metaphysics of Introspection,” 105. Rabeau, whom McKian cites, holds that “La saisie actuelle de la *species* est, en effet, entourée, comme d’un halo, par la connaissance habituelle de mon âme. S’il n’y avait que la présence d’une *species*, immobile, limitée, exclusive, il n’y aurait pas connaissance de moi. . . . C’est parce que l’essence de l’âme est présent à soi, que l’âme est capable d’accomplir l’opération de la *conversio*” (Gaston Rabeau, *Species, Verbum: L’activité intellectuelle élémentaire selon S. Thomas d’Aquin* [Paris: Vrin, 1938], 90). Putallaz, too, mentions unity of consciousness when introducing habitual self-awareness, but does not appear to propose habitual self-awareness as the explanation for unity of consciousness across time. Rather, he seems to be merely referring to one’s unified self-experience in order to propose that awareness of the object alone does not explain self-awareness, but that self-awareness is only possible if intentional knowing of an object is correlated with a disposition to know oneself: “Au travers des multiples expériences psychologiques, dont la diversité et la succession devraient éparpiller la conscience, j’ai conscience que c’est *moi* qui pose ces actes, un moi identique à lui-même et permanent. La seule présence de la chose extramentale et la réalisation de l’acte intentionnel ne suffisent certainement pas à expliquer la conscience de soi. En effet, de même que, dans toute connaissance il faut nécessairement que l’ob-jet soit *présent* à la conscience d’une façon ou d’une autre, de même, dans la connaissance de soi, il faut que le *moi* soit *présent* d’une certaine manière à lui-même: c’est cette présence originelle que Thomas d’Aquin appelle ‘connaissance habituelle’ de soi” (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 92–93).

*the quilt*.) This view is problematic in that it seems to entail the notion that habitual self-awareness is a permanent subliminal self-experience. But I have already shown in Chapter III that there is no ongoing semi-operational self-awareness; habitual self-awareness is a disposition, an ordering towards operation, and nothing more.

Instead, I would argue that unity of consciousness across time requires the following type of continuity: there must be some element in every act of sensing, knowing, or willing that is the same, and this element must be *recognized as* being the same. This element would, of course, be the first-person “me,” the subject—so that each act is perceived as *my* sensing, *my* knowing, *my* willing. In my opinion, three elements of Thomas’s theory of knowledge are needed in order to account for this phenomenon: first, his theory of implicit self-awareness; second, his theory of intellectual memory in its dependence on implicit self-awareness; and third, a principle that Thomas’s general theory of knowledge assumes, namely, that the intellect is capable of perceiving sameness and identity.

First, implicit self-awareness in every conscious (i.e., intentional) act provides the continuous element in one’s conscious experience. The repeated reference in every conscious act to “I,” the acting subject, is what anchors every intentional act in a single persisting viewpoint. Because subject and object are indissociably paired in all intentional experiences, if there were any experience in which the subject were *not* perceived, the object could not be perceived as object, and consequently the intellect could not be aware of it. Awareness cannot be unglued from self-awareness; and it is the consistency of this self-

awareness that provides the unity of awareness.<sup>90</sup> Thus the conscious “viewpoint” which constitutes psychological personhood is a single viewpoint, precisely because the perspective does not change. And the perspective does not change because there is a single first-person element within that perspective that remains identical with itself. Dhavamony aptly summarizes how this unity of perspective, deriving from the indissociability of explicit awareness and implicit self-awareness, is a fulfilment of the soul’s self-subsistence:

The apperception of the actual subject and the knowledge of the object are one and the same act. Metaphysically this can explain why it is that the human soul which subsists in itself ontologically, subsists in itself at the conscious level too and is grasped in every psychic activity. Simplicity at the level of existing is manifested at the level of acting. We can say it is the functional unity of the thinking subject in objective knowledge itself.<sup>91</sup>

Second, this constant element of subjectivity in every intentional act is *experienced* as a single continuous viewpoint *over time*, because of the reflexive character of intellectual memory. As I have noted before (Chapter III, §A.2.b), for Thomas, the possible intellect is retentive and can therefore be described as intellectual memory. But intellectual abstraction strips away all elements of material particularity, including time, from the phantasm. Thus it seems that it should be impossible to remember intellectually, because memory necessarily includes some sense of time—the use of the stored intelligible species of the Pythagorean theorem without any link to time would be experienced as though one were learning the theorem for the first time.<sup>92</sup> It is intrinsic to the very notion of remembering *x* that one should know that one has learned *x before*.

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<sup>90</sup> Putallaz notes that self-awareness is what gathers together and unifies awareness of one’s object, which is otherwise scattered and dispersed into many acts (though he does not offer an explanation of how this is possible); see *Le sens de la réflexion*, 93, cited above in note 89.

<sup>91</sup> Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 77.

<sup>92</sup> *ST Ia*, 79.6, ad 2 [Leon. 5.271]: “Quae quidem duo simul coniunguntur in parte sensitiva, quae est apprehensiva alicuius per hoc quod immutatur a praesenti sensibili: unde simul animal memoratur se prius sensisse in praeterito, et se sensisse quoddam praeteritum sensibile.--Sed quantum ad partem intellectivam pertinet, praeteritio accidit, et non per se convenit, ex parte obiecti intellectus. Intelligit enim intellectus

Thomas solves this problem by noting that there is a time, not only of the known object, but also of cognitive acts, whether sensitive or intellectual. This time is known by reflexion:

The understanding of our soul is a particular act, existing in this or that time, insofar as a man is said to know now or yesterday or tomorrow. And this is not incompatible with intellectuality, because to know in this way, although it is a certain particular, is yet an immaterial act . . . and therefore just as the intellect understands itself, although it is itself a certain singular intellect, so too it understands its understanding, which is a singular act existing in the past or in the present or in the future. Therefore in this way the account (*ratio*) of memory is preserved with respect to what there is of past things in the intellect, insofar as it understands itself to have understood previously, but not insofar as it understands the previous thing *qua* here and now.<sup>93</sup>

Intellectual memory is possible, in fact, only because 1) an implicit self-awareness is included in every intellectual act, and 2) that act is so thoroughly part of the understanding of the object that it and its time, and the implicit self-awareness by which its time is grasped, are all stored in the intellect with the species. To store a known species is therefore to store the act of apprehension, the actuality of that moment of knowing with its concomitant implicit self-awareness, when the species first informed the intellect. When the species is recalled and used in another, later, act of knowing, the intellect recalls the object as having

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hominem, inquantum est homo: homini autem, inquantum est homo, accidit vel in praesenti vel in praeterito vel in futuro esse. Ex parte vero actus, praeteritio per se accipi potest etiam in intellectu, sicut in sensu.”

<sup>93</sup> *ST* Ia, 79.6, ad 2 [Leon 5.271]: “Ex parte vero actus, praeteritio per se accipi potest etiam in intellectu, sicut in sensu. Quia intelligere animae nostrae est quidam particularis actus, in hoc vel in illo tempore existens, secundum quod dicitur homo intelligere nunc vel heri vel cras. Et hoc non repugnat intellectualitati: quia huiusmodi intelligere, quamvis sit quoddam particulare, tamen est immaterialis actus, ut supra de intellectu dictum est; et ideo sicut intelligit seipsum intellectus, quamvis ipse sit quidam singularis intellectus, ita intelligit suum intelligere, quod est singularis actus vel in praeterito vel in praesenti vel in futuro existens.--Sic igitur salvatur ratio memoriae, quantum ad hoc quod est praeteritorum, in intellectu, secundum quod intelligit se prius intellexisse, non autem secundum quod intelligit praeteritum, prout est hic et nunc.”

Thomas repeats the same doctrine frequently throughout *In De mem.*; see for instance c. 1 [Leon. 45/1.161–62]; c. 6 [123:11–124:60]; c. 7 [129:150–84].

previously been known. “For always when the soul remembers, it judges itself to have heard or sensed or understood something before.”<sup>94</sup>

Third, all of this presumes, of course, that the soul know that the “I” experienced in viewing a sunset yesterday is the *same* “I” experienced in chatting with the neighbor today. But the intellect’s ability to perceive identity is a basic assumption of Thomas’s general theory of knowledge. Simply, we perceive subjects in their acts, not disembodied acts; and the intellect is capable of perceiving the identity of a repeatedly grasped subject. These principles apply just as much to the perception of the self as to the perception of any external object.

More than any other factor, psychological personal identity depends on implicit self-awareness together with the storing of the awareness of each particular intellectual act along with the species itself. Without implicit self-awareness, there would be no single same element in every act to serve as the I-viewpoint. But implicit self-awareness would on its own would be useless: there would be no consciousness of the self *as* same, no *awareness* of a unified viewpoint. We would simply experience a sequence of disconnected intellections, each one apparently new; we could have no concept of ourselves existing in the past. But because the knowing self, in all its concrete timebound particularity, is implicitly perceived and stored along with the species, we enjoy a continuous sequence of linked thoughts, which are linked together by the “I” implicitly perceived in every act and remembered as part of each act.

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<sup>94</sup> *In De mem.* 1 [Leon. 45/2.160:161–62]: “*Semper enim, cum anima memoratur, pronunciat se prius audiuisse aliquid uel sensisse uel intellexisse.*”

One may summarize the way in which Thomas's theory of self-knowledge offers a way of accounting for psychological personhood, then, as follows. First, that the human person approaches the world as a subject is attributable to the ineliminable duality of all experience, insofar as every intentional act encompasses not only the known or desired object, but also (at least implicitly) the actualized soul itself. Second, that this subject is always experienced in the first person as "I" is attributable quite simply to the fact that the soul *is* itself. Moreover, the intellect and the extramental entity are rendered actually intelligible in different ways in a single act, so that its self-experience is necessarily and discernably different from its experience of anything else. Third, the unity of consciousness over time is explained by implicit self-awareness, intellectual memory, ontological self-identity, and the intellect's ability to perceive sameness.

Thus while it is tempting to adduce habitual self-awareness as Thomas's explanation for psychological personhood, it is more properly implicit self-awareness, together with the soul's ability to perceive identity and intellectual memory, that is responsible for the various phenomena characteristic of psychological personhood. Habitual self-awareness contributes to psychological personhood only insofar as it constitutes the disposition in the soul to be made intelligible to itself in every act of knowing another, and therefore makes possible implicit self-awareness. Because habitual self-awareness belongs to the essence of the soul, all that is lacking for actual self-awareness is the soul's actualization in knowing another. Thus habitual self-awareness grants the soul the ontological structure whereby it necessarily perceives itself implicitly in every intentional act. But the cause of the soul's perceiving itself as the same identical I is simply that it *is* identical with itself, and that in an intellectual

nature, this self-identity includes a habitual disposition to self-awareness that yields an implicit self-awareness in every act.

#### **D. Self-Knowledge and Embodied Personhood**

It is now evident that Thomas's theory of self-knowledge, far from being a marginal addendum to his theory of knowledge, is inextricably woven into his theory of human nature. The intellectual nature of the human being demands that it be a self-knower, to such an extent that a habit for self-knowledge belongs to the soul by its essence, in virtue of its immateriality and intellectuality. Moreover, because the human person is, metaphysically speaking, a subsisting individual of a *rational* nature, its subsistence is manifested most perfectly in the operation of quidditative self-knowledge, insofar as the "return according to essence" in self-subsistence is completed by the "return according to operation" of quidditative self-knowledge. And since the human being possesses an intellectual and therefore reflexive soul, he enjoys psychological personhood, with its first-person subjecthood and continuously unified experience.

It is important to note, however, that the metaphysical and psychological characteristics discussed in this chapter belong to the human individual in virtue of the soul, not in virtue of the composite (though of course the internal and external sense powers of the soul inhere in the composite). In one way, this makes Thomas's account of human personhood much more palatable to contemporary inquiry. In fact, self-subsistence and intellectuality persist in the separated soul, after the corruption of the metaphysical human person as body-soul composite. The disposition to self-knowledge remains in the separated soul; it completes the return to itself according to operation, by knowing its own essence

(though now in the manner proper to separate substances). More importantly, it maintains the same personal identity, selfhood, and first-person subjecthood that it had on earth. The “I” who beholds the face of God in the beatific vision is the same “I” who watched a sunset or pondered philosophical problems during his or her earthly life (though presumably whether these embodied experiences are remembered or not depends on the infusion of divine species). If this were not the case, there could be no just retribution or reward for the separated soul.

On the other hand, the fact that these metaphysical and psychological properties are rooted in the soul does raise questions concerning the consistency of Thomas’s view of human nature. It seems as though the logical conclusion of the discussions in this chapter is that for Thomas, the psychological human “I” is identified with the intellectual soul. But for Thomas, the claim “I am my soul” is just as incorrect as the claim “I am my body.” In the early *De ente et essentia*, he holds: “Man is said to be (*esse*) from soul and body, just as from two things a third thing is constituted, which is neither of the two. For man is neither a soul nor a body.”<sup>95</sup> In *ST Ia*, 75.4, he defends this claim on the basis of human operation: if sensation were purely an activity of soul, then all “all the operations attributed to man would be proper to the soul alone.” It would then be true to say “I am my soul,” an agent using the body as an instrument. Since sensation is an activity of the body, however, clearly “man is not a soul alone, but some thing composed from soul and body.”<sup>96</sup> The actions of which “I”

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<sup>95</sup> *DEE* 2 [Leon. 43.372:204–7]: “Ex anima enim et corpore dicitur esse homo, sicut ex duabus rebus quaedam res tertia constituta, quae neutra illarum est. Homo enim neque est anima neque corpus.”

<sup>96</sup> *ST Ia*, 75.4 [Leon. 5.200]: “Et hoc [quod haec anima sit hic homo] quidem sustineri posset, si poneretur quod animae sensitivae operatio esset eius propria sine corpore, quia omnes operationes quae attribuuntur homini, convenirent soli animae; illud autem est unaquaeque res, quod operatur operationes illius rei. Unde illud est homo, quod operatur operationes hominis.—Ostensum est autem quod sentire non est



am the principle proceed from soul and body together—thus “I” must refer to the entire composite as a whole. Thus, if the soul is said to be the bearer of personal identity as the knowing agent, this seems to contradict Thomas’s view that properly human agency belongs to the whole body-soul composite. Actions are attributed, not to the soul or to the body or to some part of either, but to the entire human person, the body-soul composite, as the agent.<sup>97</sup>

Again, Thomas even appears to argue in *In I Cor.* that personal identity does not persist after death. As an argument for the resurrection of the body, he states: “It is obvious that man (*homo*) naturally desires his own well-being (*salutem*); but because the soul is a part of the human body, it is not the whole man; and I am not my soul (*anima mea non est ego*); whence although the soul achieves well-being in another life, I do not, nor does any man. And consequently because man naturally desires well-being also of the body, a natural desire would be frustrated.”<sup>98</sup>

It is, in fact, hard to believe that, for Thomas, the psychological identity and experience of the human person has nothing to do with the body since the body is for Thomas an intrinsic part of human nature.<sup>99</sup> Here we have reached the very heart of Thomas’s fiercely Aristotelian theory of human nature, and it appears to be in essential

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operatio animae tantum. Cum igitur sentire sit quaedam operatio hominis, licet non propria, manifestum est quod homo non est anima tantum, sed est aliquid compositum ex anima et corpore.”

<sup>97</sup> *In Ethic.* I.10 [Leon. 47/1.35:68–76]: “Eandem enim operationem oportet existimare in toto et in partibus, quia, sicut anima est actus totius corporis, ita partes animae quaedam sunt actus quarundam partium corporis, ut visus oculi . . . relinquitur ergo quod etiam totius hominis sit aliqua propria operatio.”

<sup>98</sup> *In I Cor.* 15.2, no. 924 [Marietti, 411]: “Alio modo quia constat quod homo naturaliter desiderat salutem sui ipsius, anima autem cum sit pars corporis hominis, non est totus homo, et anima mea non est ego; unde licet anima consequatur salutem in alia vita, non tamen ego vel quilibet homo. Et praeterea cum homo naturaliter desideret salutem, etiam corporis, frustraretur naturale desiderium.”

<sup>99</sup> *SCG* 2.68 [Leon. 13.440–41]: “Et inde est quod anima intellectualis dicitur esse quasi quidam *horizon* et *confinium* corporeorum et incorporeorum, inquantum est substantia incorporea, corporis tamen forma. Non autem minus est aliquid unum ex substantia intellectuali et materia corporali quam ex forma ignis et eius materia, sed forte magis: quia quanto forma magis vincit materiam, ex ea et materia efficitur magis unum.”

conflict with the role of self-knowledge in the essence of humanity and the individual experience of the human being.

This apparent tension can be dispelled with a closer look at the way in which self-subsistence and personal agency belong to the composite. First of all, for Thomas, soul and body share a single *esse*, but this *esse* is the soul's, which is extended to the body: "The composite exists by the *esse* of the soul."<sup>100</sup> Self-subsistence is grounded in the soul,<sup>101</sup> because the *esse* whereby the entire composite subsists is the *esse* of the soul. This is simply what it means for the soul to be the form of the body. The soul is the source of actuality, being, existence: consequently the composite subsists if and only if it is informed by the soul—but it just so happens that the human soul, being intellectual and therefore immortal, is itself capable of separate subsistence. This does not mean that the human soul is complete in its nature without the body. Rather it retains its "nature of unibility with the body."<sup>102</sup> The body in the absence of the soul is certainly no human supposit or first substance; but neither is the soul in the absence of the body. Still, the soul is the body's source of being and actuality, and it is able to exist without the body—whereas the reverse is not true.

This first consideration leads to a second: the intellectual acts of the soul are the acts of the whole human being in precisely the same way that the soul's *esse* is shared by the entire human composite. The soul is properly the source of all vital operations: "The form

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<sup>100</sup> See *De unit. int.* 1 [Leon. 43.298:648–9]: "[C]ompositum est per esse eius [i.e., animae]"; *DEE* 4 [Leon. 43.377:189–92]: "Ex anima et corpore resultat unum esse in uno composito, quamuis illud esse prout est anime non sit dependens a corpore"; and Klima, "Man = Body + Soul," 264: "But body and soul, as distinguished in the exclusive senses of these terms, have the same unique act of substantial existence, namely, the life of a living body; therefore, body and soul are one being, one entity, absolutely speaking, not two entities."

<sup>101</sup> Remember that the soul can be said to subsist in itself or even to be a *hoc aliquid*, as long as one excludes the notion that the soul is a supposit, or metaphysical person. See *ST* Ia, 75.2, ad 1, cited above in note 11.

<sup>102</sup> See *ST* Ia, 29.1, ad 5, cited in note 12 above.

of the human being is the soul, whose act is called ‘living’ (*vivere*); not in the sense in which living is the being of some living thing, but in the sense in which one calls a vital operation ‘living,’ namely understanding or sensing.”<sup>103</sup> Since the soul is the form of the body, all acts of the human being spring from the soul as from their original ground.

Yet these acts belong to the individual composite substance for two reasons. First, any act of the soul must be an act of the whole human being, because the operations of intellection and sensation in the human individual require the concerted effort of body and soul. Sensation is the act of the soul in a bodily organ. And although intellection is an act of the soul that does not use a bodily organ, the initiation of this act in the embodied state is contingent upon the presentation of material phantasms abstracted from sensations, because of the body-oriented nature of the soul.<sup>104</sup>

Second, an operation is properly the operation of the whole individual because operation follows *esse* and the individual composite has a single *esse* rooted in the soul. “The operation of a thing demonstrates its substance and being (*esse*): for each one operates insofar as it is a being, and the proper operation of a thing follows its proper nature.”<sup>105</sup> Operations belong to suppositis (or simply to “wholes,” as in the case of the separated soul,

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<sup>103</sup> *In Ethic.* I.10 [Leon. 47/1.35:80–84]: “[F]orma autem hominis est anima, cuius actus dicitur vivere; non quidem secundum quod vivere est esse viventis, sed secundum quod vivere dicitur aliquod opus vitae, puta intelligere vel sentire.”

<sup>104</sup> Thomas neatly summarizes this point in *SCG* 2.80 [Leon. 13.506]: “Esse quidem animae humanae dum est corpori unita, etsi sit absolutum a corpore non dependens, tamen stramentum quoddam ipsius et subiectum ipsum recipiens est corpus. Unde et consequenter operatio propria eius, quae est intelligere, etsi non dependeat a corpore quasi per organum corporale exercita, habet tamen obiectum in corpore, scilicet phantasma”; see also texts cited in note 12 above. Verbeke points out, “Among human activities there is not a single one that is merely spiritual, not even self-consciousness . . . self-knowledge is only possible on the basis of sensitive activity, otherwise the potential mind will not be actualized” (“A Crisis of Individual Consciousness,” 393).

<sup>105</sup> *SCG* 2.79 [Leon. 13.498]: “Operatio enim rei demonstrat substantiam et esse ipsius: quia unumquodque operatur secundum quod est ens, et propria operatio rei sequitur propriam ipsius naturam.”

which is a substance but not a supposit),<sup>106</sup> and even if an operation is entirely caused by only a part of the composite human being (here, the intellect), the operation still belongs to the unified whole; *the agent is always the individual subsisting substance*. Similarly, if Sam falls over a cliff, his motion of falling is entirely due to his body *qua* body, in such a way that the soulless corpse of Sam would fall in the same way and at the same speed as the ensouled composite Sam. Nevertheless, even though the body *qua* body is the entire cause of the motion of falling, it is more proper to say regarding the live Sam that “Sam is falling” than “Sam’s body is falling”—for acts belong to individual substances.

Consequently, just as both *esse* and the intellectual act in the embodied state are rooted in the soul but belong to the composite, so too personal identity in the embodied state derives from the soul’s intellectuality, but belongs to the whole composite. This means that the human subject, the “I,” is the entire composite in the embodied state, but its self-possessing subjecthood is grounded in the intellectuality of the soul. Because the root and original ground of personal identity is the intellect, the individual human’s personal identity is as incorruptible as its power of intellection. Thus the embodied human being views reality from the very same first-person perspective as does the separate soul. The embodied “I” is the same as the separate “I.”

Embodiment is not irrelevant to the way in which personal identity is experienced, however. The human awareness that is also a self-awareness includes the perception of one’s body and its sensibly-perceptible activities. The body itself is one of the objects of

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<sup>106</sup> *ST* IIa-IIae, 58.2 [Leon. 9.10]: “Actiones autem sunt suppositorum et totorum, non autem, proprie loquendo, partium et formarum, seu potentiarum: non enim proprie dicitur quod manus percutiat, sed homo per manum; neque proprie dicitur quod calor calefaciat, sed ignis per calorem.” The principle “Actus sunt suppositorum” appears in *In Sent.* I.5.1.2; I.11.1.2, arg 3; III.33.2.4.1, arg 2; *ST* Ia, 39.5, ad 1; Ia, 40.1, ad 3; IIIa, 7.13; IIIa, 20.1, ad 2; *DV* 20.1, arg 2

sense, and the intellect perceives all acts of sense and its own act as part of a single perception. Human experience, for Thomas, is therefore incredibly rich. In reaching out for an apple, I perceive the apple itself and myself as perceiving it, together with my act of seeing the apple, my hand reaching toward the apple, my desire wanting it, my will moving my body to obtain it. All of these constitute complementary aspects united in a single perception from a single first-person viewpoint. Therefore every act of knowing depends on the data received through the bodily senses, but most acts also include an awareness of the body, (a) implicitly insofar as the intellect, in receiving the data in the form of a phantasm from the senses, concomitantly perceives the soul in the act of sensing; and (b) explicitly insofar as a sensation of some sensible entity may even include a sensation of the body itself as a sense-object. My experience of personal identity is of myself as an embodied being. “It is the same man who perceives that he knows and that he senses.”<sup>107</sup>

With this in mind, then, the text from Thomas’s Commentary on *I Corinthians*, cited above, makes more sense. Thomas is speaking from a prephilosophical embodied perspective: when I say, “I desire to remain in existence” I am not simply referring to my soul: I am referring to the whole embodied supposit. Thus one cannot be satisfied simply with the immortality of one’s soul; this natural desire for self-preservation necessarily extends to the body, because it is experienced as a desire that *I* persist, where *I*, as is proper when spoken in an embodied state, refers to the agent as an embodied whole. In other words, one must take the extension of ‘*ego*’ before death as including the whole body-soul

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<sup>107</sup> *ST Ia*, 76.1 [Leon. 5.209]: “Ipse idem homo est qui percipit se et intelligere et sentire.” See Dhavamony, *Subjectivity and Knowledge*, 85: “Sensations and intellections are united to one and the same consciousness, which shows precisely that they belong to the same substance and to the same subject, for one and the same subject perceives the intellections and the sensations as pertaining to himself and not to two different subjects.”

composite. After death, however, the extension of ‘*ego*’ is only the soul. Of course, God could not claim to have satisfied Mother Teresa’s natural desires just because the sentence “I remain in existence” is true when she speaks it after death; because the natural desire encompassed more than just the existence of the soul. Thus Thomas is not saying that the same first-person viewpoint does not persist after death, or that the conscious “I” perishes when the soul leaves the body. Rather, he is pointing out that my natural desire for self-preservation encompasses the existence of both soul and body.<sup>108</sup>

The experience from the single first-person viewpoint of the separated soul is much less rich. To return to the experience of the apple described above—the separated soul could only achieve a reduced (though still important) perception: it could know the form of the apple apprehended during earthly life and perceive itself as knowing and desiring to know that form (unless God also infuses a species whereby it may know the singular apple as well<sup>109</sup>). But since the intellectual soul is the *same soul that was perceived in the act of knowing and sensing in embodied life*, the first-person viewpoint remains the same, though lacking the additional perceptions of bodily acts.

The account that I have sketched of the role of self-knowledge in Thomas’s theory of the human person, then, does not imply either that personal identity is not to be attributed to the composite metaphysical person, or that the human “I” in the sense of the aware and self-aware human agent is to be identified with the soul. Rather, the acts of awareness and self-awareness that constitute the actualization of psychological personhood are acts of the

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<sup>108</sup> A similar explanation is given by David Oderberg, “Hylemorphic Dualism,” in *Personal Identity*, ed. Eleanor Franken Paul, Fred Dycus Miller, and Jeffrey Paul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 97, n. 52. This is related to Thomas’s insistence that the soul “tends toward” or is “commensurate with” the body; see texts cited in note 12 above.

<sup>109</sup> See *ST* Ia, 89.4, on the separated soul’s knowledge of singulars.

metaphysical person, the individual composed of body and soul. The operation is the operation of the whole, since the *esse* is the *esse* of the whole, and operation follows *esse*.<sup>110</sup> And it is for this reason that awareness and self-awareness of the human being in this life have a strong corporeal component. But the power whereby awareness and self-awareness occurs is an immaterial power of the *soul*; indeed, the soul is the principle of the acts that are attributed to the entire metaphysical person. Consequently, the soul maintains the same first-person-subject identity even when separated from the body.

To summarize, then: while Thomas uses the word ‘person’ to refer to a metaphysical reality—an individual substance of a rational nature—it is clear that this kind of metaphysical entity is structured precisely in view of self-knowledge, whereby it enjoys psychological personhood. The highest ontological perfection attaches to the person as a subsistent individual of a rational nature, since a rational substance has “dominion over its own actions,” manifesting its own (relative) ontological independence in the independence of its acts. This ontological self-subsistence is completed by the return according to operation (*reditio completa*). Thus quidditative self-knowledge is the completion of the human being’s self-subsistence, a self-subsistence which derives ultimately from the intellectual soul. Indeed, a disposition for self-knowledge is written into the very constitution of the soul: as a potential knower, the soul is a habitual self-knower.

It is this habitual self-knowledge, pertaining to the very essence of the soul, that results in the soul’s actual implicit self-awareness whenever the soul is actualized in knowledge. And it is this actual implicit self-awareness, together with the soul’s self-

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<sup>110</sup> See texts cited in note 40 above.

identity, that is mainly responsible for the phenomena associated with psychological personhood. Thomas's theory of self-knowledge, then, is the logical outgrowth of his theory of the human being as a single substance in which an intellectual soul enlivens a material body. The importance of his doctrine of self-knowledge for the human being's psychological personhood can scarcely be ignored.



## CONCLUSION

### SELF-KNOWLEDGE: A THOROUGHLY THOMISTIC THEORY

In the final analysis, Thomas's theory of self-knowledge is surprisingly simple. Its backbone is the almost absurdly obvious distinction between knowing *that I am* and *what I am*,<sup>1</sup> a basic distinction that reproduces Thomas's broader distinction between knowledge *an sit* and *quid sit*. Even the further divisions into actual vs. habitual self-awareness and apprehension vs. judgment of the soul's nature accord with Thomas's views on habits and judgments in general. Self-knowledge does not even present any special exceptions to the human being's natural orientation towards sense-objects—indeed, it unfolds in a thoroughly human and embodied way. Thus perception of one's existing self requires the intellect to be rendered intelligible to itself in the act of knowing some extramental object. And the journey towards quidditative self-knowledge begins by recognizing the extramental object *qua* object and reasoning about what kind of act, power, and nature make it possible for the intellect to know universals apart from matter. In no instance does Thomas offer even the slightest suggestion of support for the notion that the embodied human being enjoys an innate actual self-awareness or quidditative self-knowledge *per essentiam*. The only self-awareness that belongs to the human being through his essence is habitual, and as we have seen, habitual self-awareness is an essential disposition to self-awareness, not an inchoate actual self-awareness.

Yet the almost tedious thoroughness with which Thomas repeatedly expounds the same basic distinctions throughout his work should not trick the reader into underestimating

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<sup>1</sup> Putallaz describes this distinction as “la distinction la plus élémentaire à établir dans l'étude de la connaissance de soi” (*Le sens de la réflexion*, 130).

the complexity and subtlety of his approach to self-knowledge. Thomas never forgets that self-knowledge constitutes a unique type of human knowing. For one thing, only in self-knowledge are knower and known numerically identical. For another thing, the intellective soul is an immaterial entity. The principles of Thomistic knowledge seem ill-suited to handle these unique characteristics. The normal mode of human knowing is to abstract an intelligible species from a sense image. But it seems odd to say that in order to know itself, the soul must abstract a species of itself from a sense-image, or that it must be represented to itself by a species, since it already is itself. Again, other immaterial entities such as God and the angels are known according to their existence and a few descriptive characteristics, attained by reasoning from their sensible effects. But it would seem odd for the soul to reason similarly to its own existence from its effects. Since it already *is* itself, it should have better cognitive access to itself than it does to angelic and Divine being.

Here we return to the fundamental problem of self-knowledge outlined in the Introduction, namely, whether Thomas's general epistemological principles can accommodate non-discursive, natural knowledge of an immaterial substance—one's own soul—in this life. If the soul knows itself through its normal abstractive mechanism via an intelligible species, it is difficult to imagine how this could work, since the soul is not a sensible object. But knowing oneself in any other way would seem to contradict two Aristotelian principles: namely, that all knowledge comes to us through the senses, and that the soul knows itself in the same way as it knows everything else. Furthermore, if the soul's knowledge of itself is not abstractive, it must be intuitive—but does Thomas not reject the possibility of intuitive intellectual cognition *in statu viae*? Thomas can only consistently

integrate self-knowledge into his general theory of knowledge if he can overcome this problem.

The genius of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge appears in the way in which he explores the hidden potential of his general principles in order to accommodate the unique exigencies of a knowledge in which knower and known are numerically the same, all the while remaining faithful to the phenomena of human self-experience. The key to his beautifully crafted account is found in his foundational view of the human intellect as truly an intellect, yet a completely passive one, such that it receives its entire cognitive actuality from without, in its union with the form of a known object. This way of construing the human intellect derives, of course, from Thomas's conviction that embodiment promotes the human good and makes it easier, not harder, for such a passive intellect to attain knowledge. It also generates (a) his account of human knowing as the union of knower and known in a single act informed by a single species, abstracted from the material object by the agent intellect; and (b) his account of self-knowledge as completely dependent on the intellect's actualization by forms received through the senses.

But this Thomistic doctrine of the human intellect also necessitates a lesser-known corollary: as a potential knower, the human intellect must also be a habitual self-knower. The reason is that because the intellect is immaterial and ontologically identical with itself, it already fulfils all the subjective conditions for self-knowledge *qua* knower (i.e., it is present to, indeed identical with, its already immaterial self). But because the intellect is essentially passive, it does not fulfil the objective conditions for self-knowledge *qua* known (i.e., it is not yet in act). Thus the intellect's position with respect to knowing extramentals (in

potency) is not the same as its position with respect to knowing itself (something analogous to habit). While both knowledge of extramentals and self-knowledge rely on the importing of external forms to actualize the intellect, knowing and self-knowing are achieved differently. The result is that Thomas's doctrine on the nature of the human intellect *demands, in the very stroke of mandating the human intellect's fundamental orientation to the senses, that the human intellect enjoy precisely the sort of self-knowledge that Thomas outlines*. Both Thomas's general principles of knowledge and his theory of self-knowledge logically result from his view of the human intellect. In no case does self-knowledge violate his general principles of knowledge, as can be seen from the following observations.

First, it is true that the necessity of sensation for all human knowing is as central to Thomas's theory of self-knowledge as it is to his general theory of knowing. But this principle finds a unique application in self-knowledge, as befits the uniqueness of a situation in which the object of knowledge is also the knowing subject—and an immaterial, singular, existing subject at that. The Thomistic-Aristotelian maxim that the senses are the principle of all human knowledge has been seriously overstated, due perhaps to the influence of a much more strongly-worded Scholastic maxim, *nihil in intellectu nisi prius in sensu*.<sup>2</sup> Sensation is indeed the principle of self-knowledge, but only insofar as the essentially passive human intellect must be actualized from outside by sense-knowledge in order to know itself. Once the intellect is so actualized, it perceives itself directly and immediately because it then fulfils all the requirements for actual knowing: presence and actual

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<sup>2</sup> See the texts cited in the Introduction, note 2.

intelligibility.<sup>3</sup> In no way does the soul need to become the object of sense in order to know itself, either by constructing a phantasm of the soul from which a species of the soul is then abstracted, or by externally perceiving one's body moving (see Chapter II, §C.2.b and IV, §A.3).

Second, it is true that all human knowledge takes place through a species. But Thomas carefully qualifies that the species whereby the soul knows itself is *not a species of itself*. Rather, self-knowledge takes place by means of the species of a known external object. In self-awareness, the species actualizes the intellect, illuminating the intellect to itself (see Chapter II, §C.2.b). In quidditative self-knowledge, it is by discovering the immateriality of the species (by reasoning from the intellect's object, universal natures) that the intellect is eventually able to reason to its own immaterial nature (see Chapter IV, §A.2–3). The species does not, however, represent the intellect to itself. This is entirely consistent with Thomas's general principles, for species are necessary for human knowing only because a material object cannot be intelligibly present to the intellect until it is dematerialized. The intellect, however, is already immaterial and already present to itself. Thus it only needs to be actualized by an informing species—any species—in order to perceive itself.

Knowing oneself “in the same way” as one knows other things, therefore, does not mean that the soul must be processed by its own abstractive mechanism, as though a species

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<sup>3</sup> Fabro puts it well: “La percezione, allora, che l'anima ha di se stessa, a traverso i suoi atti, costituisce una fonte di contenuti originali, i contenuti della vita spirituale. Il lockiano ‘nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu’ non vale nel Tomismo se non per gli oggetti che fanno conscenza di sè a traverso specie ricavate dai fantasmi, come sono le essenze delle cose materiali. La conscenza della realtà spirituale ha un punto di partenza proprio e nuovo, benché avvenga in continuità ed anche in dipendenza dell'altra conoscenza, poiché si danno delle percezioni autentiche della realtà spirituale” (“Coscienza e autocoscienza,” 112).

of the soul were to be abstracted from some experience, rendered intelligible by the agent intellect, and deposited in the possible intellect. Rather, “in the same way” means that the soul knows itself through a species, just as it knows anything else through a species; but “through a species” here is equivocal, since the species is not a species of the soul, and it plays a different role in self-knowledge than it does in knowledge of extramentals.

Third, it is true that Thomistic knowledge cannot accommodate intuitive cognition in the Scotistic sense of directly beholding a material existent as such.<sup>4</sup> For Thomas, material existents are attained only obliquely by conversion to phantasms, because the individuating existential aspects of a material object are stripped away when the agent intellect dematerializes the phantasm. But immaterial singulars, such as itself, do not have to be dematerialized in order to be known, and can thus be known *qua* existing singulars. Now, because of the nature of the human intellect, self-awareness possesses two interesting characteristics. First, it is illuminated to itself in its act. The soul never has to reason to its own existence, but perceives itself instantly in a simple apprehension, in its actualization. Consequently, it perceives itself “directly,” i.e., without prior discursive reasoning. Second, for an extramental object, the species serves as the means of knowing, represents the object and makes it present to the intellect. But the soul needs neither to be represented to itself nor made present to itself since it already *is* itself and already is present to itself by habitual self-awareness. The species, therefore, does not render self-awareness possible in the same way in which it renders possible the knowledge of the extramental object, i.e. as a *means* of

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<sup>4</sup> Note that to refer to a “Thomistic rejection of intuitive cognition,” could be misleading, since theories of intuitive cognition in the Scotistic or Kantian sense are not on Thomas’s radar screen, so he never explicitly rejects them. Moreover, he himself not infrequently uses the verb *intueri* and other verbs of vision to refer to acts of human knowledge.

knowing. Instead, it simply actualizes the intellect, “triggering” self-awareness, so to speak. Thus the soul perceives itself “immediately,” i.e., without the intervention of a species to represent and render it present to itself.

In no way is it true that the soul’s direct and immediate perception of itself contradicts Thomas’s general principles of human knowledge. Nowhere does Thomas say that the human intellect can only attain knowledge by discursion.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he is careful to make clear that he is not endorsing the soul’s knowledge of itself through its own essence (which would be innate self-knowledge), or even the soul’s intuitive grasp of its essence, which, due to the feeble light of the human intellect, can only be known through reasoning. But, carefully avoiding these misinterpretations, one can affirm that for Thomas, the human soul perceives its own existing self intuitively if ‘intuition’ is taken in the restricted sense of a direct and immediate perception. Thus without compromising any of his principles of general knowledge, Thomas provides for knowledge of the soul *in hac vita* which is immediate (though indirect), non-inferential, and purely natural (see Chapter II, §C).

Thomas’s theory of self-knowledge is therefore inextricably knotted into his broader theory of knowledge as the logical fulfilment thereof. Furthermore, it reveals an important and generally-overlooked aspect of this broader theory of knowledge: namely the fundamental duality of all human experience. Awareness and self-awareness are simply two dimensions of a single act of knowing. The intellect can only catch itself in the act of knowing something else, so to speak; there can be no explicit self-awareness without an implicit awareness (see Chapter III, §C.3, and V, §C). Without the informing content

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<sup>5</sup> In fact, it is one thing to know something through its act, and altogether another thing to know it through its effect, which has existence apart from the agent.

provided by the intelligible species, the intellect is analogous to prime matter in the order of intellects. The intellect is unintelligible if it is not actually knowing.

Yet neither can there be explicit awareness without an implicit self-awareness. Every act of noticing or considering an extramental object precisely positions that object against the subject, or else one would not be able to distinguish the rest of reality from oneself. As I argued in Chapter III, §D, to pay attention to a tree is to speak it in a concept. Attention to some extramental object is in some sense the intellectual naming of the object in the third person. Awareness is therefore precisely possible only insofar as the subject is also implicitly known in the same act.

It is, in fact, this fundamental duality of experience that is captured in the phenomenon of personhood in the psychological sense. As I argued in Chapter V, Thomas's theory of self-knowledge accounts for psychological personhood insofar as it posits the ontological identity of the soul with itself, the immateriality of the soul, and the indissociability of awareness and self-awareness. More specifically, Thomas's theory of actual implicit self-awareness, together with principles from his doctrine on human nature, makes it possible to explain how every act of knowing the other is positioned against a first-person subject, the "I" who experiences reality from a consistently unified viewpoint.

By means of these principles, then, Thomas's theory of intellectual self-knowledge strives to account for the following phenomena. His explanation of self-awareness, or perception of one's individual existing self in one's acts, seeks to explain the personal, private, and absolutely certain knowledge that I have of myself and my acts. Habitual self-awareness is posited to account for the fact that this self-perception never seems to be



learned; I never encounter myself for the first time as a stranger, but am always already familiar with myself. Moreover, the relationship between habitual and actual self-awareness is what makes possible the intuitive character of my perception of myself in my acts. Implicit self-awareness explains the ineliminable duality of all experience, the continuity and incommunicability of the first-person viewpoint, and the fundamental relation between the intellect and knowable being, such that neither can be thought without the other. Finally, quidditative self-knowledge is the philosophical understanding of the soul and the ability to define it properly; the unending squabbles of philosophers over the nature of the soul can be accounted for by the fact that it constitutes a long process of discursive reasoning from personal experiences.

Thus we find in the Thomistic texts, not a philosopher attempting to force the phenomena to a set of preconceived Aristotelian principles, but rather one who keeps his principles flexible enough to accommodate the phenomena—indeed, one who is closely attuned to human experience. His distinction between self-awareness and quidditative self-knowledge captures the difference between prephilosophical awareness of oneself and philosophical inquiry into one's nature. He presents two sophisticated ways of accounting for our ongoing self-familiarity by distinguishing habitual self-awareness and implicit actual self-awareness. And his theory even offers resources for addressing the question of subjecthood and the “I,” as well as unity of consciousness in a perception and across time.

The concern for attaining conceptual consistency and developing an account that addresses the basic phenomena of human self-experience are not the only forces shaping Thomas's doctrine of self-knowledge. In comparing Thomas's theory to those of his

sources, it is evident that the carefully precise crafting of his account is also attributable to his efforts to account for Augustine's confusing and sometimes even apparently contradictory comments within the framework of Aristotelian psychology, with occasional input from Proclean Neoplatonism. Thomas makes sophisticated and balanced use of his predecessors in order to craft a synthesis that is uniquely his own.

Perhaps most importantly, Aristotle is the source for Thomas's all-important view of intellection as the intelligible unity between knower and known in the immaterial act of knowing. Indeed, Aristotle's theory of intellection shapes Thomas's doctrine of self-awareness by presenting the psychological structure that makes it necessary for the soul to perceive itself in its acts, but that also makes it possible for the soul to perceive itself non-discursively and immediately in the instant in which it is in act. Thomas builds his theory of habitual self-awareness on the basis of this same psychological structure. Aristotle is also above all the source for Thomas's theory of quidditative self-knowledge, bequeathing to Thomas an account of the process by which the philosopher comes to know what the soul is, by reasoning from the soul's objects to its acts (and perhaps to species) to its powers to its very essence (*De an.* II.4, at 415a15–22). Finally, it is from Aristotle that Thomas takes the key principle that the soul knows itself “like other things,” i.e., through a species—though in light of Aristotle's broader theory of knowledge, Thomas takes this species to be a species of the known thing, not a species of the soul. This principle serves to encapsulate the requirements both for self-awareness (since the species provides the intellect with the act in which it perceives itself) and quidditative self-knowledge (since it is in exploring the

relationship between the object and its species that the philosopher begins to reason to the soul's essence).

Augustine bequeaths to Thomas a far more sophisticated analysis of self-knowledge, yet one which is often aporetic and far from perfectly organized. Augustine thus frames a number of key problems that occupy the medieval discussion. Augustine also highlights three key distinctions that Thomas adopts: the distinction between perceiving one's own self and understanding one's own nature; the distinction between knowing oneself as a whole and knowing oneself wholly; and the distinction between consideration of oneself and familiarity with oneself. The first and second form the backbone of Thomas's own theory as the distinction between self-awareness and quidditative self-knowledge (Chapters II and IV). The third is interpreted alternately by two different Thomistic distinctions: habitual vs. actual self-awareness and implicit vs. explicit actual self-awareness (Chapter III). Finally, some of Augustine's most problematic formulations offer Thomas the opportunity to elaborate some of the finely tuned details of his own theory. Thus Augustine's claim that the soul is always familiar with itself (*se nosse*) provides the occasion for Thomas to explain the soul's essential habitual disposition towards self-awareness, articulating a fundamental property of intellectual beings that is equally implied by his Aristotelian psychology. And to the Augustinian insistence that the nature of the human mind is known in the light of divine truth, Thomas responds by carefully distinguishing the process of philosophically deducing the soul's nature and the assent of judgment that is bestowed upon the deduction's conclusion. Thomas's exposition of Augustine's principles is surprisingly faithful, or at least very plausible. I have found that habitual self-awareness and judgment of the soul's

nature are not awkward accommodations to Augustine that Thomas jettisons at the first opportunity. Rather, they are already implied within Thomas's theory, but only discussed explicitly in response to problems posed by Augustinian texts.

Although the *Liber de causis* is conspicuously absent from Thomas's *ex professo* discussions of self-knowledge, Thomas frequently appeals to it in elaborating the nature of the soul. In most of these cases, the *Liber de causis* offers Thomas a way to argue for the immateriality, self-subsistence, and consequent immortality of the human soul, beginning from the phenomenal fact of its self-knowledge. Quidditative self-knowledge constitutes a complete return that is only possible for immaterial subsistents. Self-knowledge is rooted in the essential reflexivity of the human soul, flowing from its immateriality. Thus the soul, which is capable of self-knowledge, must be immaterial, separable, and immortal. While Thomas takes his theory of self-knowledge from Augustine and Aristotle, then, the *Liber de causis* provides the lines of argumentation whereby Thomas establishes the role of self-knowledge in fulfilling and manifesting the nature of the human soul. In particular, it gives considerable insight into the way in which the ability to know oneself is rooted in the very depths of metaphysical personhood. The *Liber de causis* also gives Thomas the language of *reflexio* and *reditio*, which is mirrored in the description of self-knowledge as a circular motion in *De Div. nom.*.

Thus, against the numerous claims to the contrary among Thomistic commentators, Thomas's own theory of self-knowledge is neither wholly Aristotelian nor wholly Augustinian. Neither is it an Aristotelian theory to which Augustine is awkwardly grafted. Rather, both are interwoven, together with occasional strands of Proclean reflexion-theory,

into a single seamless Thomistic doctrine. This theory, indeed, constitutes an arguably accurate development of both Aristotle and Augustine, subjecting each source via charitable interpretation to the demands of the other in such a way as to create what appears to be a unique Thomistic synthesis.

I conclude by noting two aspects of Thomas's theory of self-knowledge which, in my opinion, make this theory particularly worthy of further study in the context of contemporary inquiry into the manifold phenomena of human self-consciousness. First, it demonstrates the fundamental reflexivity of the human intellect as the irreducible principle of self-knowledge: "But since the intellect reflects upon itself, according to this same reflexion it understands both its understanding and the species by which it understands."<sup>6</sup> When Thomas traces self-awareness and quidditative self-knowledge back to our perception of our own acts, he reaches a point beyond which one cannot reason: there is no further cause to explain *why* we perceive our own acts, except the fact that it is the nature of the human intellect to do so. It is in the intellect's essential ability to "bend back" or "turn back" towards itself that Thomas would, I believe, locate what philosophers or psychologists call the conscious "I" or the human self, the center of psychological personhood. Moreover, although I could not develop these lines of inquiry here, I suspect that this fundamental reflexivity may account for more than just self-knowledge: further study may well discover that it may in some way ground our knowledge of the transcendentals, free choice, the truth of judgment, and even our reliance on the evidence of the senses.

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<sup>6</sup> *ST* Ia, 85.2 [Leon. 5.334]: "Sed quia intellectus supra seipsum reflectitur, secundum eandem reflexionem intelligit et suum intelligere, et speciem qua intelligit."

Second, Thomas's theory of self-knowledge makes it abundantly clear that for the Angelic Doctor, the human being is inherently relational. In the act of illuminating the nature of a known object, the human soul becomes known to itself. The soul never knows itself apart from the world: rather, it always knows itself as the agent of some act of cognizing an external object, whether in sensation or intellection. Thus Thomas insists that the first thing that the human intellect knows is not itself: it does not appear to itself alone as some solitary self-enclosed being disconnected from the world and then proceed to reach out towards the external world. Rather, it immediately and without discursion perceives itself *within the very act* in which it perceives another object<sup>7</sup>: I always perceive myself together with some other object, so that the object, the act of knowing the object, and the knowing agent are all known all at once.<sup>8</sup> Our relation to the world is thus the foundation for our self-perception, and not vice versa.

In sum, Thomas's position on self-awareness is remarkable for its depth of insight into the very heart of personhood, its consistency with his general theory of knowledge, its deft handling of earlier sources, and its coherence with everyday experience. Once its main principles have been understood, even the apparently irrelevant or inconsistent details turn out to be indispensable and tightly interlocking components of what is in fact a highly

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<sup>7</sup> *Sup. Boet. De Trin.* 1.3 [Leon. 50.87:96–108]: “Hec autem lux non est primo cognita a mente, neque cognitione qua sciatur de ea quid est, cum multa inquisitione indigeat ad cognoscendum quid est intellectus, neque cognitione qua cognoscitur an est, quia intellectum nos habere non percipimus nisi in quantum percipimus nos intelligere, ut patet per Philosophum in IX Ethicorum; nullus autem intelligit se intelligere nisi in quantum intelligit aliquod intelligibile; ex quo patet quod cognitio alicuius intelligibilis precedit cognitionem qua aliquis cognoscit se intelligere, et per consequens cognitionem qua aliquis cognoscit se habere intellectum. Et sic influentia lucis intelligibilis naturalis non potest esse primum cognitum a nobis, et multo minus quelibet alia influentia lucis.”

<sup>8</sup> *CT* 1.85 [Leon. 42.110:139–42]: “[S]ed intellectus intelligens per eas [species] suum obiectum reflectitur supra se ipsum, intelligendo ipsum suum intelligere et speciem qua intelligit.”

streamlined theory. This theory deserves a more prominent place within the contemporary debate over the phenomena that compose human self-knowledge.

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