

## ON THE ESSENTIAL OBJECTIVITY OF KNOWLEDGE

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1. Today common opinion holds that knowledge is essentially subjective and even that subjectivity is a perfection. Here I do not intend to point out and correct the innumerable errors in judgment and action that flow from these positions. Rather, I propose to show as thoroughly as possible that knowledge is essentially objective. This demands a preliminary consideration of the nature of knowledge (2-10). I shall then show that the nature of knowledge demands that it be essentially objective (11-46). Finally, I shall resolve this objectivity to its principle, the unity of the knower and the known (47-120).

2. A well-known scholastic definition conceives knowledge as the 'possession of the form of the other as other' or again 'to be the other as other'. In an article from the *Disputed Questions on Truth*, Saint Thomas proposes an account very close to this. He begins this consideration of knowledge by pointing out two ways in which a creature is perfected. The first is through the existence proper to its own form. But this perfection entails a deficiency. The second way of being perfected, knowledge, will overcome this deficiency.

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3. Here is his discussion of the first way a creature is perfected and the inherent deficiency that follows:

In one way [a thing is found perfect] according to the perfection of its existence which belongs to it according to its own [*propriam*] species. But because the specific existence of one thing is distinct from the specific existence of another, therefore in any created thing that much of perfection simply as is found in other species is lacking to such perfection of any thing, so that in this way the perfection of any thing when considered in itself would be imperfect as part of the perfection of the whole universe, which [perfection] arises from the perfections of the singular things gathered together.<sup>1</sup>

The creature *is* itself and thus it *is not* something else. Insofar as the creature has a finite essence and therefore lacks the existence possessed by other species, the universe possesses more perfection than is found in its part, the creature. But this imperfection can be overcome.

4. Knowledge overcomes this deficiency because it is an order of perfection in which the creature is perfected through the form of *another*:

Whence, so that there might be some remedy to this imperfection, another mode of perfection is found in created things according to which the perfection which is proper to one thing is found in another thing, and this is the perfection of the knower insofar as it is a knower, because something

<sup>1</sup> *Q. D. de veritate*, Q. 2, a. 2, c: Uno modo [res aliqua invenitur perfecta] secundum perfectionem sui esse quod ei competit secundum propriam speciem. Sed quia esse specificum unius rei est distinctum ab esse specifico alterius rei, ideo in qualibet re creata huiusmodi perfectioni in unaquaque re tantum deest de perfectione simpliciter quantum perfectionis in speciebus aliis invenitur, ut sic cuiuslibet rei perfectio in se considerata sit imperfecta veluti pars perfectionis totius universi, quae consurgit ex singularum rerum perfectionibus invicem congregatis.

is known by a knower insofar as the known is in some way in [*apud*] the knower.<sup>2</sup>

Here Saint Thomas describes knowledge in a manner very close to the definition stated above: possession of the form of the other as other or to be the other as other. The perfection of the knower as knower is that it possesses the perfection proper to *another* thing. But Saint Thomas is leading us here, I believe, to an account of knowledge very close to, but differing slightly from, the definition just mentioned.

5. Notice here that Saint Thomas resolves this problem to the following condition of knowledge, that the known is in the knower, *apud cognoscentem*. From this it is not difficult to see how knowledge supplies for the deficiency that follows the creature's natural existence. While its natural existence is limited to its own form or species, its knowledge, that is, its intelligible existence, can embrace the forms of all other creatures. Within the knower the forms of all other creatures can or do exist intelligibly. The knower is, actually or potentially, a *micro-cosmos*, a microcosm.

6. Something else demands our attention: the manner in which the known exists in the knower. After showing that yet another, third, mode of perfection is not necessary, Saint Thomas goes on to state what is required in order that the known be in the knower:

But the perfection of one thing cannot be in another according to the determinate existence that it had in that thing, and therefore that it be apt to be in another thing it must be

<sup>2</sup> *Q. D. de veritate*, Q. 2, a. 2, c: Unde ut huic imperfectioni aliquod remedium esset invenitur alius modus perfectionis in rebus creatis secundum quod perfectio quae est propria unius rei in re altera invenitur: et haec est perfectio cognoscentis in quantum est cognoscens quia secundum hoc a cognoscente aliquid cognoscitur quod ipsum cognitum est aliquo modo apud cognoscentem. . . .

considered without the things which are apt to determine it. And, because forms and the perfections of things are determined by matter, hence it is that something is knowable insofar as it is separated from matter. Whence it is also necessary that that in which such a perfection of a thing is received be immaterial, for, if it were material, the perfection would be received in it according to some determinate existence and thus it would not be in it *insofar as it is knowable*, namely as *being the perfection of one thing it is apt to be in another*.<sup>3</sup>

This text seems at first merely to present the sort of argument given in many places that the knower and the known are such insofar as they are immaterial. Certainly such an argument is present here.

7. But a more careful consideration of the last passage reveals another movement in Saint Thomas' thought. He begins the last passage by asking how the perfection of one thing can be in another. He concludes by describing something in another insofar as it is knowable, which he then expresses in these terms: "being the perfection of one thing it is *apt to be in another*". This seems to be the mere restatement of the condition with which he began: the known must be in the knower, the known perfects the knower insofar as it is apt to be in the knower.

8. In fact this formula involves a slight, though important, difference in thought. We first experience ourselves knowing

<sup>3</sup> *Q. D. de veritate*, Q. 2, a. 2, c: Perfectio autem unius rei in altero esse non potest secundum determinatum esse quod habebat in re illa, et ideo ad hoc quod nata sit esse in re altera oportet eam considerari absque his quae nata sunt eam determinare; et quia formae et perfectiones rerum per materiam determinantur inde est quod secundum hoc aliqua res est cognoscibilis secundum quod a materia separatur; unde oportet ut et illud in quo suscipitur talis rei perfectio sit immateriale: si enim esset materiale perfectio recepta esset in eo secundum aliquod esse determinatum et ita non esset in eo secundum quod est cognoscibilis, scilicet ut existens perfectio unius est nata esse in altero.

things other than ourselves. We see therefore that knowledge follows the presence of the known in the knower. But we experience this as *one* thing in *another*. From this we can then see that the knowable *as such* is '*apt to be in another*'. The knower *as such* is therefore one who possesses a form '*apt to be in another*'.

9. Note that, although this formula is true of one who 'possesses the form of the other as other', Saint Thomas does not assert that the knowable is actually in something other than itself. His expression demands only that the knowable lacks the determination preventing it from belonging to another. He does not exclude the possibility that this form, the form '*apt to be in another*', is in fact the form of the knower.

10. Self-knowledge obviously suggests this notion. Some knower may know himself through his own form or essence rather than through the form of another. Such a conception even seems at the heart of modern subjectivity: Any knower knows himself and knows any other form precisely insofar as it is united to him. Whether this form belongs to something outside the knower is a question to modern subjectivity.

11. Hence it is critical to see that this condition, '*apt to be in another*', demands that any knowledge, even self-knowledge, is essentially objective. Any subjectivity in knowledge, as I shall show (cf. 34-36, 95-98), is everywhere tied to the imperfection and limitation of knowledge. Knowledge utterly perfect and unlimited, the divine knowledge, is also utterly objective (cf. 39-46).

12. Showing this demands a clarification of what subjective and objective mean. The words subject and object are used in many ways, even in relation to knowledge. These words are of Latin origin, although they correspond to words with similar etymology in Greek. '*Obiectum*' is the perfect participle of the verb '*obiicio*', formed from '*iacio*', 'to throw' and '*ob*', 'against'. '*Subiectum*' has a similar etymology utilizing the preposition

'sub', under, rather than 'ob'. In Greek corresponding words are formed from a verb meaning 'to lie' rather than 'to throw'.

13. In relation to a science, 'subject' names the genus the science considers, which serves as the ultimate subject of predication. The 'object' of the science is to demonstrate *per se* accidents of this subject. These uses have nothing to do with the present consideration. Here these terms are used in relation to the knower and the knowing power. The knower or his power is the *subject underlying* the operation of knowing, and the known is the *object* of this power in which the operation terminates.

14. I wish to point out a difficulty here, one that does not immediately seem very relevant to the question at hand. Saint Thomas claims that 'action which remains in an agent is not really something middle between the agent and the object, but [it is middle] according to its mode of signifying only, while really it follows union of the object with the agent.'<sup>4</sup> At present, it suffices to say that everywhere in these remarks the object, that is the known, is called a terminus insofar as it proceeds into its most perfect actuality when the knower knows in act. But a better understanding of this claim and its explanation are in some sense the aim of this investigation.

15. Now knowledge can be called subjective insofar as the subject is a condition of knowledge. It is true that all creaturely knowledge is subjective, because there must be a subject in some way distinct from its object. Still, knowledge is not essentially subjective even in this way, because there is a knower, God, in whom there can be no subject of any sort. If knowledge can be found without a subject, it cannot be essentially subjective according to this sense, namely, insofar as the subject is a condition of knowledge. More detailed proofs of these claims will come.

<sup>4</sup> I Q. 54 a. 2, ad 3: . . . actio quae manet in agente, non est realiter medium inter agens et obiectum, sed secundum modum significandi tantum, realiter vero consequitur unionem obiecti cum agente.

16. In another sense knowledge will be called subjective or objective, depending upon which of the two elements is formal in knowledge, that is, which makes knowledge to be knowledge. This is the sense in which knowledge will be essentially subjective or objective simply speaking.

17. It is not difficult to see that these two senses are related as the *secundum se* or *per se* in its formal and material senses.<sup>5</sup> In one sense, knowledge is said to be objective or subjective insofar as the very whatness of knowledge is constituted by a subject or an object. This is the sense in which number is said to be a multitude. 'Multitude' enters into what number is. In another sense knowledge is subjective because of the demand that a subject underlie the action of knowing in the manner of a material cause. So the 'odd' is a multitude. 'Multitude' is essential to oddness on the side of its subject. Only a multitude can be odd. To my mind, all other senses in which knowledge is thought to be subjective or objective are reducible to these, as it is objective or subjective on the side of what it is or on the side of what receives it.

18. In what follows, knowledge will be called subjective or objective in one of these two ways. But it will be shown that knowledge is essentially objective in the first sense of 'essential' or *per se*. Everywhere the knower knows insofar as he possesses a form that serves in some way as an object, that is, as the term of the act of knowing. Yet in any creature, knowledge always demands a subject in some way distinct from this object and is in this way subjective 'from its essence' according to the second sense of *per se*. Though such knowledge is still essentially objective in the first sense of *per se*, it is to some extent subjective. But, as will be shown, this follows from the imperfection of the knower.

19. Now the essential objectivity of knowledge will be proved in four ways: first, through the definition of knowledge stated above (20-28); next, through the communicabil-

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Metaphysics* 5, 1022a14-19; 24-32.

ity proper to knowledge (29-33); then, by considering the knowledge of creatures (34-36); and finally, by examination of the divine knowledge (37-46).

20. Through the first definition mentioned, 'to be the other as other', this objectivity is obvious. For the other is, of course, the object. One knows when one attains another's form. For knowledge consists in being *intelligibly* the other or the object, rather than oneself, the subject. This was how knowledge would overcome the deficiency implied in the finite existence of the creature. By knowing he would possess the forms other than his own. Thus, Aristotle says that 'the soul is somehow all things'.<sup>6</sup>

21. Yet here one might understand the 'otherness' of the object to be so essential to knowledge that a subject is necessary. One cannot possess another's form except as subject to that form. Let me propose two answers to this difficulty (22-23, 24).

22. First, note that even to be subject to another's form, as occurs in habitual knowledge, is not sufficient for knowledge in act. Knowledge in act demands a union with this form as the terminus of an operation, that is, as an object. Nor would habitual knowledge possess the name knowledge unless it were ordered to knowledge in act.

23. Yet even in habitual knowledge, where union with the object has the nature of a principle rather than a terminus, the nature of the known is yet more formal than the nature of the knower. This is clear from the fact that the species of the known rather than the species of the knower causes the specification of knowledge. My knowledge of the triangle is knowledge of a triangle rather than knowledge of a square because of the triangle's species, not because of my own species. Here the object gives species to the knowledge rather than the subject.

24. The definition may not demand a subject in another

<sup>6</sup> *De anima* 431b20-21.

way. For the definition does not explicitly demand that the form of the other be possessed specifically. For God knows creatures by his own form, in which their forms are found eminently and not according to their proper species.

25. Yet this reply suggests another difficulty with the scholastic definition. For God does not know himself through the form of another, nor does he know himself as other, though the definition seems to demand this.

26. The formula suggested by Saint Thomas, 'to be or to possess a form *apt* to belong to another', avoids both of these objections, namely that the definition presupposes a subject (26-27) and that the knower must know through the form of another (28). For according to Saint Thomas' account, the form possessed is the form of the known, the object of the act of knowing. The one possessing this form is the knower. The knower is a knower in act, not insofar as he possesses a form considered precisely as it belongs to him as to a subject, but because he possesses a form that is apt to belong to another, that is, insofar as he possesses the form of the object.

27. The notion of subject, however, involves the existence of a form in something other than that form. The subject determines some form, which from its own *ratio* is common, to this or to that. The form is not apt to exist in another, if it is considered precisely insofar as it exists in some subject.

28. Note also that according to Saint Thomas' formulation, the knower and the known may be other. Yet no opposition between them is expressed. They may be utterly identical. What this account demands is that we conceive the form in question as apt to belong in some way to *another*. This otherness may describe the relation between the knower and the known or between the known and another knower. Nor is the manner in which the form of the known may belong to another expressed distinctly. Only existing as determined to a subject is excluded, since the subject can never belong to another.

29. This objectivity is further manifested by the commu-

nicability proper to knowledge. Every order of knowledge is in some way common to many: We see and feel the same things. One who knows sufficiently is able to teach. One angel knows another. By grace and glory God can even communicate his essential knowledge of himself to the blessed.

30. This communicability follows from an axiom which it also manifests most perfectly: form *quantum est de se* is communicable. Saint Thomas usually considers this axiom as it is manifested in material things.<sup>7</sup> But the examples given, and others that will be mentioned later, make clear that in some sense this is true of all form as such.

31. What prevents the communication of form is its limitation to a subject. While I can receive the sensible or intelligible form of something existing outside me, I cannot possess that form with the existence by which it exists in that subject. Nor can I see or feel an object with the very same sensible form by which you experience the same object. In the external senses, the subjectivity that follows reception in an organ even makes it impossible that we should receive the object's form from precisely the same angle or at the same time.

32. By the science of geometry I know the same object that Euclid does. But I cannot receive from him the very form by which he knows insofar as it is determined to his intellect as to a subject. Even the angel must receive the form of another angel without the existence that determines that form to that angel as to a supposite or subject.<sup>8</sup>

33. As will be clear later, only the divine form is communicable precisely as it exists in itself, since that form is its own existence. Every other form is communicable or apt to be in

<sup>7</sup> Cf. I Q. 7, a. 1 c; *Expositio libri peryermenias* I l. 10, 87-89; but I Sent. D. 4, Q. 1, a. 1 c.

<sup>8</sup> I Q. 56, a. 2, ad 3. Even in the angel, the essence (although the subject of existence and accidents) stands really as something formal to the supposite (which is the essence taken together with whatever is joined to it). Hence the supposite stands to the essence in some manner as subject.

another without the things that determine it, that is, without the things that determine it to some subject. In knowledge, therefore, form is communicable insofar as it bears the notion of object.

34. The distinct consideration of creaturely knowledge, where knowledge must be in some way subjective, will make it yet more clear that knowledge is essentially objective in the first sense of essential or *per se*. For any created knower possesses many acts of knowledge. In these many acts the knower first knows its proper object. The knower can turn in its consideration from one instance of its proper object to another or from that proper object to some object known through its proper object, as we now know God. Even the angel *now* knows itself and *then* another angel or something material. Thus every created knower is in some way in potency. It has a power to know which is not always in act or is not in act in every way in which it can be in act.

35. But it is precisely this potency that distinguishes the knower from its object. Two arguments make this clear. First, this power constitutes the subject of knowledge in some way. Any knower is subject of an act of knowledge insofar as his power to know enters into act. Yet this power is not sufficient to constitute knowledge. As subject, the knower is only in potency. Only with the presence of the object is the knower in act. Further, though habitual knowledge is a certain union with the object, the knower in habit is yet in potency. Only the presence of the object as the terminus of the operation of knowledge brings the knower to its complete perfection.

36. Second, even when fully in act, the created knower remains distinct from the object known precisely in virtue of its potency. So Saint Thomas says, 'And according to this alone sense or intellect is other than the sensible or intelligible, because each is in potency.'<sup>9</sup> Though the subject becomes

<sup>9</sup> I Q. 14, a. 2, c.: Et secundum hoc tantum sensus vel intellectus aliud est a sensibili vel intelligibili, quia utrumque est in potentia.

the object, it remains in potency to know other objects, that is, its form is in potency to be other forms. To this extent it is distinct from the object known. This is true both for sensitive and intelligible powers. Potency, either to the form of the object known or to the act of knowledge, defines the subject of knowledge. The subject of knowledge in no way constitutes knowledge in act.

37. I shall now consider the divine knowledge, which is supremely objective. This statement, that the divine knowledge is objective, is true in a way that demands that subjectivity be utterly excluded from God's knowledge. 'Subject', even the subject of action, formally signifies 'underlying' and thereby potency. Though a subject must be used in predication, as we say, 'God knows himself,' the notion of subject suggested by this predication pertains only to the mode of signifying and in no way expresses the reality of that act of knowing.<sup>10</sup>

38. Note, however, that in some uses of the word, something of perfection may be signified in the subject through what the subject underlies, as when we speak of a subject of action, where 'subject' (through the notion of action) implies active power. Here the notion of action posits some perfection in the subject, insofar as it brings forth the act, not insofar as it underlies the act. This perfection must, of course, be found in God. Note, however, that only the name that formally expresses this perfection, for example, 'power', can be extended to God. He is never formally 'subject'.

39. The objectivity of the divine knowledge can be seen in five ways. First, through consideration of the extension of the name 'knowledge' from creatures to God (40-41). Next, through consideration of the objects of God's knowledge. For God is an object to himself (42), but he also knows all other objects in himself (43). Further, according to the teachings

<sup>10</sup> Cf. I Q. 39, a. 1 ad 3.

of the Catholic faith, he is able to be an object to other, created intellects (44) and is eternally the object of knowledge to three divine persons (45-46).

40. First, insofar as knowledge is a perfection in creatures, it is objective rather than subjective. The subjectivity in knowledge is on the side of imperfection. But, when we transfer this name to God, we must deny anything pertaining to imperfection. The divine knowledge is therefore objective in such a way as to involve no subjectivity.

41. Again, the subject of knowledge is characterized by potency and real distinction. For the subject is the object insofar as it is in act, but it remains really distinct from the object insofar as it is still in potency. Hence, there cannot be any subject of divine knowledge.

42. Second, God is his own proper object in knowing. This demands union with his form or nature as object in the first sense of *per se* from the very notion of knowledge. If he were subject in the first sense of *per se*, then all knowledge would be subjective in the first sense of *per se*.<sup>11</sup> Then, if knowing were in this sense subjective rather than objective, the mere presence of the knowing subject would constitute knowledge. Again, if knowing were essentially subjective and objective in the first sense of *per se*, knowing would demand a real distinction between subject and object, which cannot exist in God, or subject and object in knowing would only differ in their mode of signifying.

43. Third, God knows all creatures not through a form proportioned to those creatures, but through his own form. He also knows them in every way in which they can be known. For everything is intelligible insofar as it is in act, while any-

<sup>11</sup> This is, to my mind the very opinion of the moderns, expressed most distinctly by Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*: "Es kommt nach meiner Einsicht, welche sich durch die Darstellung des Systems selbst rechtfertigen muß, alles darauf an, das Wahre nicht als Substanz, sondern eben so sehr als Subjekt aufzufassen und auszudrücken."

thing is in act insofar as it is like God. Thus, through God's pure and infinite actuality, all things exist in him as objects of knowledge. But it has been shown above that, precisely insofar as something is subjective, it is not apt to be in another. The actuality of God makes creatures known to him insofar as that actuality is utterly objective. There is therefore nothing subjective in God's knowledge. The remaining arguments will show that this is so because God alone is an object of knowledge precisely as he exists in himself.

44. Fourth, God is able to be an object not only to himself but also by grace to the created intellect. This cannot occur by a likeness, as in the knowledge of other creatures, but only by the presence of the divine essence, that is, God himself, in the intellect.<sup>12</sup> In the beatific vision God's essence is the principle and the terminus of a created act of knowing. Thus, although the *act* of knowing of the blessed is distinct from the divine knowledge, this act terminates in the divine essence itself as in an object. But this essence is in no way distinct from the existence by which it exists in the intellect. In this case, therefore, the object known is apt to be in another *as it is in itself*. Thus, *as it is in itself*, it is an object.

45. Finally, the divine essence is the proper object of knowledge in the divine Trinity. But here there is distinction only among the Persons and in no way between the person and the essence. The object of knowledge is therefore distinct in no way from each of these Persons. In the divine knowledge, therefore, the object exists as supremely communicable and as supremely apt to exist in another.

46. Here, when it is said that the form is apt to be in another, the preposition 'in' cannot be taken positively. This 'in' is only negative. It expresses the lack of distinction between each divine person and the object of knowledge. The divine essence as an object of knowledge is not 'outside' any divine

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 1 Q. 12 a. 2 ad 3, a. 4.

person, since it is identical with each. Yet, while belonging to, that is, *being* one divine person, it also belongs to, that is, *is* another divine person. The unity and simplicity of the divine essence is supremely communicable to these divine persons as their essence, as their existence, and as their object of knowledge. In this way the divine essence *as it is in itself* verifies the *ratio* of the knowable proposed by Saint Thomas, 'being the perfection of one it is apt to belong to another.'

47. This leads to the third part of this study, namely the resolution of the objectivity of knowledge to its principle, the unity of the knower and the known, especially as this unity exists eminently in God. This will be done in three parts. The first will compare immanent action with transitive action (48-60). The second will show how the unity of the knower and the known which we experience in knowledge transcends any unity sensibly manifest to us (61-72). The third will resolve this unity to the divine unity by considering the grades of knowers (73-114).

48. Now, in Greek the word activity or action is first imposed upon movement.<sup>13</sup> Through movement the name is extended to transitive or predicamental action. For the category of action adds to the notion of movement attention to some principle in the agent of movement in another. As Saint Thomas, considering the Latin language, says, 'action, according to the first imposition of the name signifies [*importat*] an origin of movement.'<sup>14</sup> Hence such action is correlative to passion, that is, as he goes on to say, 'action insofar as it signifies an origin of movement implies passion.'<sup>15</sup> This origin or principle will be some form, substantial or accidental, through which the agent is able to act upon another.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Metaphysics* 9 1047a30-b2.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Q. 41, a. 1 ad 2: . . . actio, secundum primam nominis impositionem, importat originem motus.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Q. 42, a. 1 ad 3: . . . actio secundum quod importat originem motus infert ex se passionem.



49. In sensation we become aware of another sort of change. This is first conceived as alteration and thus as a passion.<sup>16</sup> I see one thing and then another. I see something after not seeing. Yet this alteration or passion does not involve the expulsion of a contrary, as does alteration strictly speaking.<sup>17</sup> Rather, some form is received to which the organ and thus the sense power are in some way in potency.

50. But we recognize a similar reception in the medium. For the color must pass through air. Yet the medium does not sense. We are thus led to recognize in sensation an action distinct from the passion by which we receive the sensible form. Sensation also demands awareness.<sup>18</sup> The reception of the sensible form is the reception of the principle of this action. But the action of sensing is distinct from the passion by which this principle is received. Hence, the sensible is a sufficient and proper agent of the passion, but the sense power is the proper agent of this action.

51. Yet we are clearly using the name action in another sense. For the sense power does not affect the sensible. However true it is to say that the exterior sense powers attain to the sensible as existing outside, they do not alter the sensible.

52. Thus Saint Thomas states in Q. 85, a. 2, of the first part of the *Summa Theologiae*:

Since action is twofold, as is said in *Metaphysics* 9, one which remains in the agent, as seeing and understanding, another which passes into something exterior, as burning and cutting, each comes about according to some form. And just as the form according to which the action tending into something exterior is the likeness of the object of action, as the heat of the one heating is the likeness of the heated; similarly the form according to which the action remaining in

<sup>16</sup> *De anima* 416b32-35.

<sup>17</sup> *De anima* 417a31-b5.

<sup>18</sup> *De anima* 424b16-17.

the agent is the similitude of the object. Whence the likeness of the visible thing is that according to which sight sees, and the likeness of the thing understood, which is the intelligible species, is that according to which the intellect understands.<sup>19</sup>

Though concerned here with immanent action, Saint Thomas draws our attention to the form that is the principle of transitive action. He does this so that we will see more distinctly that the form that is the principle of immanent action is the likeness of the object known. This is the first point to be noted.

53. Note also that the language of likeness used here is not opposed to the claim that the knower is the known. The distinction between these ways of speaking resolves to the distinction of essence (54) and existence (53). When we attend to such a form together with its existence in the knowing power, we say that the cognitive species is a likeness. For such a species exists with an intelligible or sensible existence, while the form outside the soul exists with a natural existence. Its likeness exists in the soul. Hence, we *also* say that the known has a second, intentional, existence in the soul.

54. When, however, we say that such forms are the forms of the objects or even that they are the objects themselves, we are attending only to the essence and do not consider its existence. Further, since such forms are separated in some way

<sup>19</sup> I Q. 85, a. 2 c: Cum enim sit duplex actio, sicut dicitur IX metaphys., una quae manet in agente, ut videre et intelligere, altera quae transit in rem exteriorem, ut calefacere et secare; utraque fit secundum aliquam formam. Et sicut forma secundum quam provenit actio tendens in rem exteriorem, est similitudo obiecti actionis, ut calor calefacientis est similitudo calefacti; similiter forma secundum quam provenit actio manens in agente, est similitudo obiecti. Unde similitudo rei visibilis est secundum quam visus videt; et similitudo rei intellectae, quae est species intelligibilis, est forma secundum quam intellectus intelligit.

from designated matter, they are not subject to numerical distinction. The intelligible or sensible species is not numerically distinct from the object's form.

55. Now in transitive action the principle of operation is the form by which the agent is agent. It is the likeness of the object because the agent communicates this form to the object. Thus, at the beginning of transitive action agent and patient are unlike. Through passion, the patient loses the attribute by which it is unlike the agent and receives the likeness of the agent. When agent and patient are like, to the extent possible or desired, the agent ceases to operate.

56. In immanent action, as we experience it, a principle of operation must be received from the object. This involves a certain passion on the part of the agent. By this passion, or more exactly, in this reception, the agent does not lose any attribute. It retains its power as an agent and receives the likeness of the object as the specifying principle of the operation. This reception completes the agent as agent. To 'become' like the object in this sense is to become an agent of such an operation. Thus Aristotle distinguishes this reception from true passion as a 'preservation' from 'corruption'.

57. This distinction between transitive and immanent action is also clear from the distinction of perfect and imperfect actuality. For transitive action is a movement, the act of the imperfect. Only when it is complete, that is, no longer imperfect, is the patient like the agent. Immanent action, however, is the act of the perfect. The subject and the object are like throughout the operation.

58. Here the principal point is that in immanent action the likeness of subject and object does not end the action, as it does in transitive action. Rather, this likeness is the principle of action, although such action may terminate in a more perfect likeness of the subject to the object.

59. Note also that desire and will are immanent actions that

do not in themselves demand that the principle of operation be like its object. Yet they do demand a prior operation, some apprehension, that has likeness as its principle.<sup>20</sup> Hence, even here, the likeness or union of the subject with the object as the principle of action distinguishes immanent action from transitive action.

60. The extent of this union is underscored by the recognition that the subject and object remain distinct only insofar as each is in potency. As proved above, though the subject of knowledge becomes its object, to the extent that it remains in potency to know and thus to become other objects, the subject is distinct from the object. Likewise, to the extent that the object remains in itself intelligible only in potency, it remains distinct from the subject.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, knower and known are in act insofar as the known is received in the knower, that is, insofar as the knower becomes its object, either as the principle or as the term of the act of knowing.

61. The next part of this discussion will show that the unity of the knower and the known consists formally in the knower or the subject becoming the known, that is, the object. In doing so, it will manifest that such a unity is greater than any unity that we sensibly experience, even the unity of matter and form in the composite.

62. Cardinal Cajetan can help here. In his comments on God's knowledge, he proposes to show these two things:

. . . the *per se* difference between the mode in which the knower is the known and in which matter has form. And similarly, how differently [something] one comes to be from the knower and the known and from matter and form: for the

<sup>20</sup> I Q. 27, a. 4, ad 2.

<sup>21</sup> How this stands with the sensible object involves further difficulties. For among material things the sensible is not in itself in potency in the same manner in which the intelligible is in potency. But such difficulties need not be resolved here.

judgment about being and about the one is the same, since they signify the same nature, as is said in *Metaphysics* 4.<sup>22</sup>

This will allow him to show that the unity between knower and known is greater than that between matter and form.

63. He goes on to point out that we encounter in these two cases two kinds of unity. In the first case two things are united so that one of the two becomes the other, that is the knower becomes the known, while, in the second, the union of matter and form, the two become a third thing, namely the composite:

It should therefore be known that the *per se* difference is in this that the knower is the known itself in act or in potency, but matter is never the form itself. From this difference regarding being, the difference regarding unity follows: namely that the knower and known are more one than matter and form, as Averroes says so well in *de anima* 3, comm.

5. And he gave the argument just mentioned, that from the understanding and the understood a third does not come to be, as from matter and form: for by assigning the exclusion of a third as reason for greater unity, he openly taught the unity to consist in this that one is the other. Whence Aristotle, in *de anima* 3 taught this beforehand, saying that the soul is everything sensible and understandable.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Commentaria in Summa Theologiae*, I Q. 14, a. 1, IV: . . . per se differentiam inter modum quo cognoscens est cognitum, et quo materia habet formam. Et similiter, quam differenter fit unum ex cognoscente et cognito, et materia et forma: idem enim iudicium est de esse et de uno, cum eandem naturam significant, ut in IV *Metaphys.* dicitur.

<sup>23</sup> *Commentaria in Summa Theologiae*, I Q. 14, a. 1, IV: Sciendum est ergo quod per se differentia in hoc est, quod cognoscens est ipsum cognitum actu vel potentia, materia autem nunquam est ipsa forma. Ex hac differentia quoad esse, sequitur differentia quoad unitatem: quod scilicet cognoscens et cognitum sunt magis unum quam materia et forma, ut egregie dixit Averroes in III *de anima*, comm. V. Et rationem reddidit modo dictam, quia ex intellectu et intellecto non fit tertium, sicut ex

In fact, to say the knower is the known expresses the unity between them more perfectly than to say they are one. For matter and form are one. Among the sorts of unity sensibly manifest to us the union of matter and form is the greatest. But they are one in some third thing that is neither of its constituents, while the knower and known are one insofar as one is the other.

64. Several reasons are given to show that this is the 'true *per se* difference'. Of these the following proves particularly illuminating: 'in no nature can the form and matter, subject and accident, be so elevated that one is the same as the other, while their natures are preserved, as we learn about the knower and known.'<sup>24</sup>

65. Paradoxically, the preservation of the natures of the two elements when united manifests the superior unity. These two elements are more united than any other natural union of two things because each remains what it is while it is united to the other. The knower remains a knower, and the known, whose form specifies the operation, retains its own species. Indeed the nature of the knower is perfected in its union with the known. Only by this union is the knower a sufficient principle of its own action. As said above, Aristotle distinguishes the reception involved in knowledge from that in predicamental passion as a preservation or 'saving' from a corruption.

66. This preservation of the nature of both the knower and the known is made clearer by several comparisons. Cajetan

materia et forma: assignando enim pro ratione maioris unitatis exclusionem tertii, aperte docuit unitatem consistere in hoc, quia unum est aliud. Unde Aristoteles, in III *de anima*, hoc idem praedocuit, dicens quod anima est omnia sensibilia et intelligibilia.

<sup>24</sup> *Commentaria in Summa Theologiae*, I Q. 14, a. 1, IV: . . . et quod in nulla natura possunt adeo elevari materia et forma, subiectum et accidens, ut unum sit idem alteri, salvo rationibus eorum, ut de cognoscente et cognito comperimus.

examines the operations of other beings to show the difference between things that know and those that do not:

Other beings either receive forms for the sake of the operations of those forms or for the sake of the operation of a third, what is composed of the receiving and the received.<sup>25</sup>

He then gives examples to manifest this claim (67-69).

67. The first case involves the union of subject and accident. He gives two examples of this case, one in which the accident belongs accidentally to its subject, the other in which it belongs to the subject from its nature:

An example of the first is hot water, and universally in subject and accidental form: for heating is not an operation proper to the water but to the heat. And the judgment is the same, so far as this goes, about cold water: for although coldness is a natural power of water, to cool is the operation proper to coldness, not to water.<sup>26</sup>

In these cases the form according to which the composite operates is not the operation proper to the subject of that form, even when the form belongs to it *per se*.

68. Even the case in which the subject acts through an accidental form for the sake of an operation that is in some way proper to it manifests the distinction that remains in the union of the subject and its accidental form. The ancients conceived fire to heat in this way. An example can be found in the digestion of food prior to its incorporation. For here the

<sup>25</sup> *Commentaria in Summa Theologiae*, Q. 14, a. 1, VI: Reliqua namque entia aut recipiunt formas propter ipsarum formarum operationes; aut propter operationem tertii, compositi ex recipiente et recepto.

<sup>26</sup> *Commentaria in Summa Theologiae*, Q. 14, a. 1, VI: Exemplum primi in aqua calida, et universaliter in subiecto et accidentali forma: calefactio enim non est propria operatio aquae, sed caloris. Et idem est iudicium, quoad hoc, de aqua frigida: licet enim frigiditas sit naturalis potentia aquae, frigefacere tamen frigidi, non aquae, propria est operatio.

substance immediately performs an operation that is proper to the accident through which it operates, let us say the acidic character of the stomach. In such a union the subject does not immediately satisfy its own nature. Rather, it immediately performs an operation proper to its accident, here the resolution of food. Only then does it perform the action proper to its own nature, here the incorporation of what has been digested.

69. The second case, in which a form is received for the sake of the operation of some third thing, is made clear by the union of matter and form:

An example of the second is clear in substantial forms: for matter does not receive form for the sake of the operation of the matter itself, but for that of the composite of it and form.<sup>27</sup>

Here the operation of the form is not distinct from the operation of the subject as in the former case. On the other hand, the operation of the form and matter is not proper to the matter or the form. They possess such an action only insofar as they are united in some third thing, the composite.

70. The greater unity of the knower and known is then stated forcefully by recognizing that the knower receives the form of the known for the sake of its own operation:

But the knower receiving the known does not receive it for the sake of the operation of some composite resulting from them, nor for the sake of the operation of the known itself, but for the sake of the specification of the proper operation of the knower itself. For sight receives the visible for the sake of the species of vision, which remains the operation proper to sight.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Commentaria in Summa Theologiae*, Q. 14, a. 1, VI: Exemplum secundi patet in formis substantialibus: materia enim non recipit formam propter operationem ipsius materiae, sed compositi ex ipsa et forma.

<sup>28</sup> *Commentaria in Summa Theologiae*, Q. 14, a. 1, VI: Cognoscens autem

This would not be, unless the known were more closely united with the knower than either of the other two cases. In the first of these, the form remains so distinct that it has its own operation. In the second the form makes with the matter some third thing that operates. But the knower and known are united to become a complete principle of the knower's proper operation. In the other cases the form is received for the operation of another. Here the receiver receives the form for an operation that belongs to both in complementary ways.

71. As said above, this is not a unity that we sensibly experience. We do experience this union in the act of knowing. But we can attend to it distinctly only through the analysis of that act. We know that this union exists and we know that it is greater than those unions that we immediately experience. As happens in all our knowledge of spiritual, incorporeal things, we see that we must say 'this is that,' although we do not see even the subject of our proposition.<sup>29</sup>

72. Thus Cajetan concludes with comments urging us to take care in our judgments about knowledge:

And from this it appears how clumsy have been those who, treating of sense and the sensible, the understanding and the understood and about understanding and sensing, judge about them as about other things. And you will learn to lift your mind and to enter into another order of reality.<sup>30</sup>

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recipiens cognitum, non recipit ipsum propter operationem alicuius compositi resultantis ex eis, neque propter operationem ipsius cogniti; sed propter specificationem propriae operationis ipsius cognoscentis. Visus enim recipit visibile propter speciem visionis, quam constat esse visus propter operationem.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. I Q. 3, a. 4, ad 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Commentaria in Summa Theologiae*, Q. 14, a. 1, VII: Et hinc apparebit quam rudes fuerint, qui de sensu et sensibili, intellectu et intelligibili, deque intelligere et sentire tractantes, tanquam de aliis rebus iudicant. Et discas elevare ingenium, aliumque rerum ordinem ingredi.

These remarks are particularly apt as we now attempt to resolve the consideration of the union of the created knower with its object to the unity of the knower and known in the divine knowledge.

73. The last part of this consideration will examine the grades of knowledge in order to resolve the unity of the knower and the known to the divine unity. Such a resolution cannot, of course, propose truths about God as though they are better known to us than truths about creatures. Yet the one comparing such truths can recognize that what belongs to creatures is a participation in what belongs to God.

74. Such is the purpose of the following consideration of the grades of knowledge. First, substances that do not know will be considered (75-77). Then created knowledge will be discussed: sensation (78-86) and intelligence, first in men (87-94), then in angels (95-98). Finally, the divine knowledge will be considered (99-114).

75. Now plants and inanimate bodies do *not* know. They possess all their forms, substantial or accidental, in a manner that is so subjective that these forms are not apt to belong to another. The material mode in which they possess these forms is the cause of this subjectivity. For their matter is in potency to many forms. It is therefore subject to quantity, which possesses the extension—part outside of part—through which many forms are received in matter.<sup>31</sup> One form is received in one part of matter and another form in another part. But any form-matter composite is itself subject to the quantity according to which its matter can receive many forms. Hence its form is received into a subject, matter, that demands that the composite possess part outside of part. In this sense, the form itself, though one, exists as distended through the composite. This corresponds to the readiness such forms exhibit to divi-

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Super Boetium de Trinitate*, Q. 4, a. 2, c., 186-246.

sion. Even the plant, whose form is obviously more united than the forms of inanimate bodies, exhibits a divisibility not far from the divisibility found in inanimate substances.

76. Such substances can act. But their action corresponds to the mode of their unity. They must become one with the patient bodily, by immediate contact or through a medium. The patient receives the likeness of the agent part by part and perhaps always over time. The mobile must enter the place intended by the agent part after part. The plant can only move itself by one part moving another.

77. Now the claim that plants and minerals do not possess their forms with sufficient unity for knowledge does not of itself shed any light upon the matter examined. The *fact* that this exteriority and multiplicity preclude knowledge does not prove *why* their absence causes knowledge. Further, our inability to see into this impediment corresponds to an inability to see why a spiritual union should be accompanied with an immanent action. This is complicated by the inclination of our fallen nature to judge all things through what is sensible and thus material.<sup>32</sup> But we *can* know that how unity and action exist in God is a cause and *ratio* of how these things exist in various creatures.

78. Now sensation, the lowest grade of knowledge, does not altogether avoid the subjectivity found in plants and minerals. In many ways, the materiality of the sense organ does in fact determine the forms it receives so that they belong to it alone. This is true of its substantial form and of the various quantities and qualities by which the organ has its nature as a bodily part. These all give the organ natural existence.

79. Yet the sensitive soul clearly rises above the materiality of its organ. This is proved by the very experience of sensation, in which we attain to the form of another. Still the sen-

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Super De Trinitate*, Q. 6, a. 2, c.

sitive soul does so in a manner that depends upon this materiality. Thus the quantities and qualities of the sense organ are necessary in various ways for its reception of sensible forms.

80. Clearly the reception of the common sensibles depends upon the extension of the organ itself. For the common sensibles are received insofar as the organ receives the proper sensibles into its various parts. In sight and touch, we clearly receive magnitude and figure insofar as the extension of the organ is informed by the sensible species of the proper sensible, while number, unity, movement and rest are known through magnitude and figure.

81. Yet more fundamental, the organ demands a certain complex of qualities that results in the 'mean' necessary to its reception of the proper sensible.<sup>33</sup> For the qualitative determination of the organ maintains in each sense the 'neutrality' it needs. Without such 'neutrality' it cannot receive a form in such a manner that the form does not undo the quality proper to the organ.

82. Two forms of dependence upon matter in the sense power's reception of the sensible form have just been stated. It must be disposed to a certain middle state with respect to the proper sensible, and it receives the common sensible together with the proper through the extension of its organ. A more important dependence is seen in the very exercise of sensation.

83. In the exercise of the external senses, the physical contact with the object necessary for the sense organ to receive the principle of sensation demands that the sense power knows its object in the here and now. For sensation is simultaneous with the reception of the sensible species. The time and place of the organ must therefore correspond in an appropriate manner to the time and place of the object. This may, as is most

<sup>33</sup> *De anima* 424a17-b2.

obvious in hearing, involve some time delay if the sensible species must be communicated through the medium part by part.

84. This determination of the sense power to the exterior object is certainly intentional and not physical, as is the organ's contact. Nonetheless, since the principle of action is received in this material manner, it causes a union between the power and the object outside the soul. A paradox is found here: the principle received from the object must be apt to exist in another, yet the object is known as it is determined in time and place.

85. This paradox is resolved by distinguishing the *per se* objects of sense from its accidental object. The proper and common sensible are the *per se* objects. Their reception in an organ determines them to certain material conditions by which they affect that organ. Yet they are not received precisely as existing in that subject. Hence, the senses can err with regard to where or what the *per se* sensibles are.<sup>34</sup> For this involves some sort of judgment regarding their inherence in a substance. In sum the external senses grasp their *per se* object in a manner in which the sensible can communicate its forms to a material organ.

86. Now the interior senses, through the active power of the imagination, make the union of the knowing subject with its object sensibly distinct. For we experience objects in some way within us—in the head, for example—even when they are absent. This union of the power with its object is manifestly greater than that which occurs in the exterior senses, precisely because the object is experienced interiorly. I shall go no further in the analysis of these senses here. A detailed investigation is beyond the scope of the present endeavor.

87. Now the analysis of intellectual knowledge manifests in the human intellect an immateriality that distinguishes it

<sup>34</sup> *De anima* 418a11-17.

from sensation. The intellect is not rooted in a substantial form that is in every way dispersed, as it were, through the extension of matter. Hence its 'parts' are not the forms of integral parts, one of which is 'outside' the other, as are sight and hearing. Rather its parts are immediately its own powers.

88. Another sign of its immateriality is the lack of an organ, by which it would be distinguished from other powers 'locally'. Such an organ would determine the intellect to certain qualitative and quantitative forms and thus to a certain bodily nature. Rather the intellect lacks any bodily nature.<sup>35</sup> Hence it can receive the substantial forms of other substances. In fact the intellect can only abstract the accidental forms through its knowledge of substance. For it knows any accident as some measure or determination of a substance.

89. Since, however, the human intellect receives its species in dependence upon the exterior senses and imagination, its proper object does exist outside it. Nor can it attend to that object as it exists outside without using, not only imagination, but even the exterior senses. Here too we have immediate experience—albeit through words—of the intellect knowing the things outside the soul.

90. Yet analysis shows us that the proper object of the intellect is not attained within the intellect precisely as it exists outside. For the intellect knows its object universally. But the object does not exist outside the soul universally. Hence the intellect receives forms that serve as the principle of intellectual operations, yet these intellectual operations cannot of themselves terminate in the exterior object. Rather, such operations must attain to that object interiorly. The intellect brings forth from the species that it receives not only its operations but also the concepts in which the operations terminate. These concepts, which are intelligible immediately and through themselves, represent the exterior object. In the

<sup>35</sup> *De anima* 429a24-27.

intellectual order itself, the exterior object is known in such concepts.

91. The union of the knower and the known in the concept is far more profound than the union found in the senses or imagination. First, the very spatial distance demanded by the medium entails an obvious distinction between subject and object in the exterior senses. The imagination does not present this difficulty. But the object of imagination is experienced with an extension in place or time—a triangle, say, or a melody—that clearly demands that the sensible organ that is the seat of such imagination be united to the object through the organ's parts or in succession. Both the interior and the exterior senses depend upon an organ. Intellect depends upon these organs only to determine its *per se* object to the particular from which it abstracts. In its proper operation it does not rely upon an organ.

92. Again, this is clear through consideration of the fact that the object of all cognitive powers is in some way substance, although substance as such is not the *per se* object of the sensitive powers. Certainly every accident of a substance arises *per se* or *per accidens* from its substantial form.<sup>36</sup> So the sensible qualities of any substance must arise from and thus be rooted in its substantial form and thus in the substance itself. These sensible qualities act upon the medium and thus upon the soul by a power that arises in some way from the substance which is their subject. Again, in brute animals we see clearly that sensation is not ordered to the mere apprehension of sensible qualities but to some judgment about the substance subject to these qualities.<sup>37</sup>

93. Of course, the sensation of the substance is not an action over and above the sensation of its qualities. Rather, the

<sup>36</sup> Cf. I Q. 115, a. 1 ad 5; Q.D. *de anima* a. 12, c.; De mixtione elementorum.

<sup>37</sup> I Q. 78, a. 4, c.; Q.D. *de anima* a. 13, c.

substance is sensed *per accidens* precisely insofar as its qualities are sensed *per se*. Yet the interior senses do make judgments about the object known through these various qualities as about something one.

94. This allows one to see very easily that the intellect, since it attains to the substantial forms of its objects, is united more intimately with the object than any sensitive power can be. The sensitive power, although it attains knowledge of the substance, remains, so to speak, upon the surface of this substance. But the intellect pierces through to its essence and even knows the accidents of its object insofar as they arise from that essence. Hence Saint Thomas says, 'The name intellect conveys a certain intimate knowledge, for *intelligere* is said as if *intus legere* (to read within)'.<sup>38</sup>

95. Now angels present a higher grade of knowledge. The proper object of the angel's knowledge is united even more closely to the knower. Yet here too one finds some distinction of subject and object.

96. The angel's knowledge of itself is connatural to it. Its essence is immaterial and thus intelligible in act. Hence this essence is the first and proper *object* of its knowledge. But only in God are the essence and supposite utterly identical.<sup>39</sup> In the angel they are in some way distinct. For, although the angelic essence alone is the subject of its existence, the supposite of the angel includes in its notion the existence by which it exists

<sup>38</sup> 2-2 Q. 8, a. 1 c: [N]omen intellectus quandam intimam cognitionem importat, dicitur enim intelligere quasi intus legere. Et hoc manifeste patet considerantibus differentiam intellectus et sensus, nam cognitio sensitiva occupatur circa qualitates sensibiles exteriores; cognitio autem intellectiva penetrat usque ad essentiam rei, obiectum enim intellectus est quod quid est.

<sup>39</sup> 3 Q. 17, a. 1, c.: . . . natura, secundum se considerata, prout in abstracto significatur, non vere potest praedicari de supposito seu persona nisi in deo, in quo non differt quod est et quo est, ut in prima parte habitum est.



and the accidents that occur to its essence.<sup>40</sup> Now the essence is the proper object of the angel's knowledge, and it knows its existence and accidents in some sense without discourse, yet through knowing its essence.<sup>41</sup> The supposite, however, is the proper subject of this knowledge, for actions belong to the supposite or individual. Hence, there is some distinction between subject and object in the angel's knowledge.

97. Perhaps this can be quickly illustrated by noting that, while Gabriel, in his first act of knowledge, knows Gabrielity, that is, he knows what Gabriel is, and he knows this essence as existing. He also knows in the very same act, that Gabrielity need not exist. But only Gabriel, that is, existing Gabrielity, can be the subject of such knowledge. Thus to be an object pertains to the essence as an essence, but to be a subject pertains to this essence insofar as it is a supposite, an existing essence. This distinction is real, even though the distinction between essence and supposite (and thus between object and subject) is not so great as is found in human intellects.

98. In this way, even in the angel according to its first act of knowledge, there is a real distinction between the subject and object sufficient for the claim that in this act of knowledge the knower is *in* the known in a positive, and not merely a negative, sense. Here the affirmation of the relation *in* does not merely assert that the known is not outside. It also expresses the reality that in this union one thing is in some way

<sup>40</sup> 3 Q. 2, a. 2, c.; *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* 2, Q. 2, a. 2. When we say denominatively that Gabriel is Gabrielity, we are pointing out that the essence is that which is the supposite, although to be the essence and to be the supposite are not the same in Gabriel.

<sup>41</sup> To say the angel knows its existence through its essence is not to say that there is some discourse in angelic knowledge. Rather, it is to say that its essence is known *per se*, by which it knows the existing essence as its proper object. So with us, the most fundamental order in our knowledge involves abstraction of the form of the thing known, by which form the essence of the is known *per se* and immediately, while the *thing* is the intellect's proper object through that form.

in another, the object in a subject, such that the subject knows the object.

99. Consideration of the transcendent unity of knower and known in God's knowledge will allow us to see the objectivity of knowledge in light of a higher unity. This will begin with brief discussion of the axiom that operation follows existence (100-101).

100. The most fundamental axiom regarding action is that a thing operates as it is. Everywhere we see this relation of first and second actuality: second actuality follows first actuality. Even in the inanimate, the possession of a form, if there is no impediment, is sufficient for some action. Thus fire heats, and, in another way, water heats. As already noted, in the inanimate the material nature of first actuality demands a material, and therefore transitive, action. A being operates as it exists.

101. Knowledge follows in the same way from the knowing power's reception of the form of the known. Human knowledge is in many ways subject to choice. Yet the first reception of an intelligible form is simultaneous with the first consideration of the corresponding object.

102. We can understand this better by turning to the divine knowledge. For action has this relation to being in us creatures, because of the manner in which action and being pre-exist eminently in him. In the divine, there is no distinction between first and second actuality, yet the notion of each is found there: being and operation. God's actuality transcends the distinction of first and second actuality, yet it contains the perfections signified by each.

103. Now second actuality is divided by transitive and immanent action. But the divine action also transcends the distinction of transitive and immanent action. His transitive action, creation, exists in God in its principle, his creative power. To that extent, it is not distinct from the divine essence and from the immanent operations of intellect and will. Yet, just

as there is an order in our understanding of these immanent operations in God, so there is an order in our understanding of his immanent operation and his transitive operation.

104. But reason proves that God's immanent operation is necessary and follows from the immateriality of his nature. The operation is in every way eternal. The mystery of the divine Word confirms that this operation is proper to the divine nature in a manner beyond human calculation. Indeed, to say that intellectual nature is the divine nature is neither metaphor nor exaggeration.<sup>42</sup>

105. God's transitive action, however, is not in every way necessary and eternal. This action, creation, insofar as it exists in God himself, is the divine essence and is thus necessary and eternal. But transitive action proceeds from the agent into another. Thus, insofar as God's action proceeds into the creature, it is neither necessary nor eternal. Rather, it depends upon the divine will. Revelation underscores this truth by teaching that God has created the world in time.

106. Now both transitive and immanent operation flow from some being or first actuality, according to the principle that second actuality follows first actuality. God, of course, is not subject to such a principle. But this truth is found in creatures because the *rationes* or notions of first and second actuality are found in the divine simplicity. Hence, while creatures must receive both actualities for their perfection, second actuality immediately follows the first actuality that is its principle, in transitive or immanent action.

107. Yet such first actuality, received in creatures, is not in every way sufficient for operation. Both kinds of action demand union with an object. But here a difference arises. Immanent action demands union with an object within it; this union with the object constitutes the first actuality that is the principle of operation. Transitive action demands union with an object outside it.

108. Clearly this difference follows the manner in which these actions exist in God. For God's immanent operation is complete within himself. But His transitive, creative action implies an object outside him. Since his creative power is his omnipotence, his creative action posits this object. Still, such transitive action is not intelligible without another.

109. Again, God's immanent operation belongs to him without reference to anything outside him, but merely in virtue of his transcendent unity and simplicity. All created knowledge, but especially intellectual knowledge, is a participation in his immanent operation. The immaterial union from which immanent operation arises is a participation in God's unity insofar as his unity is the *ratio* upon which the *ratio* of his immanent operation is founded.<sup>43</sup>

110. This unity is in him so utterly without potency to perfection that nothing in God has the notion of subject.<sup>44</sup> For, although God has the power found in the subject of action, he does not underlie his action. His essence yet retains the notion of object. For the divine essence is the object known. In us the object exists in the subject so as to give the subject some accidental existence. Otherwise, the subject exists only in potency. But this intelligible existence is found eminently in the divine essence. For every perfection pre-exists in the divine existence. Since immanent operation belongs to God merely in virtue of this intelligible existence, the principle of immanent operation even in the creature is a 'spiritual', intentional union of the creature, that is, the subject, with an object.

111. One can see more clearly here why the intellectual operation is not really middle or between its principle and term. In intellectual creatures operation is really distinct, that is, it is distinct from its principle and term as one *res* or thing is from another *res* or thing, again, as second actuality from

<sup>42</sup> Cf. I Q. 27, a. 5, c.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. I Q. 14, a. 1, c.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. I Q. 39, a. 1, ad 3.

first. Even in creatures, however, this principle and term is the form of its object, in whatever way that form is united to the intellectual power. The principle and term are not two *res*, two realities. Hence the action cannot be *really* between.

112. Rather, the distinction between cognitive species as principle and term concerns the existence this form possesses. The form possesses greater actuality as a term, for it participates in the operation, which consists in second actuality. Hence the operation proceeds from and terminates in the very same form and is not really *between* the principle and term as though it were some thing between two things, as transitive action is between the agent and the patient.

113. Let me quote Saint Thomas on this point again, yet more fully:

. . . action which remains in an agent is not *really* something middle between the agent and the object, but according to its mode of signifying only, while really it follows union of the object with the agent. For from this that the understood becomes one with the one understanding, the act of understanding follows, as if a certain effect differing from each.<sup>45</sup>

Again, to understand is to proceed into a more perfect possession of a form, whether that form is one's own species or not. To understand is to be what one is in as completely as possible. Here we see yet more distinctly that in such immanent operation the intellectual creature participates more perfectly in the divine simplicity.

114. Transitive action, however, is a participation in God's creative action. Hence, it proceeds into another. Thus it does not constitute a perfection of the agent. Rather, such action

<sup>45</sup> 1 Q. 54, a. 2, ad 3: . . . actio quae manet in agente, non est realiter medium inter agens et obiectum, sed secundum modum significandi tantum, realiter vero consequitur unionem obiecti cum agente. Ex hoc enim quod intellectum fit unum cum intelligente, consequitur intelligere, quasi quidam effectus differens ab utroque.

perfects the patient. For this reason agent and patient must begin as unlike. In creative action the terminus of the act, the creature is unlike God before the action, precisely insofar as it does not exist. Hence, God creates from nothing. Since, however, the operation must be proportioned to the agent, the finite, determinate power of a created agent can only actualize a finite, determinate potency outside that creature. Such a potency can only be found in another creature.<sup>46</sup>

115. Before making a conclusion, let me summarize the third part of this study. The distinction between transitive and immanent action makes clear that in immanent action the likeness of agent and patient exists not only at the end but also as a principle of operation. The likeness of knower and known arises from the greatest unity we experience, a unity that is greater than any we experience sensibly. The grades of knowledge manifest that the unity between knower and known is greater as the knowledge is higher and more perfect. In God this union is so great that neither the object nor the act of knowledge is distinct from the knower. Thus the object of divine knowledge is so actual that within God there is no union of a subject with this object. There is nothing that need in any way attain the object of divine knowledge. Rather, from eternity God possesses an existence which contains eminently the first and second actuality which are always found in creatures as distinct and which in creatures define, together with potency, the subject and object.

116. A final consideration of the text of Saint Thomas used at the beginning of this discussion will be illuminating. Saint Thomas proposed knowledge as a remedy to the imperfection that necessarily follows the finitude of the natural existence of any creature. God surpasses the generosity manifested in the creature's existence by granting to the knower the ability to be all things. As God knows all things by his essence, so

<sup>46</sup> *Quaestiones disputate de potentia*, Q. 3, a. 4, c.

the knower, in particular the intellect, can become and thus know all things. Insofar as it shares or can share in all the perfection contained in the universe, the intellectual creature is, more or less, an image of God.

117. Through such knowledge the creature can also turn his mind toward the creator himself. Without touching upon the magnificence of such knowledge, let me draw attention to its insufficiency. The infinity of the divine essence makes it impossible to form a concept adequate to that essence through the finite species of creatures. Further, the utter simplicity of God makes it impossible that his essence should enter into any composition or have accidental existence in any subject. It is therefore impossible that any intellectual creature, man or angel, possess the form of God as they possess the intelligible species of objects proportioned to them.

118. Yet God has found a remedy even for this imperfection. By grace and the light of glory, God communicates to intellectual creatures a share in his nature such that the knowledge of his essence is quasi-natural to the creature. The union of God with the substance and power of the intellectual creature that follows this participation in God's nature supplies for the lack of an intelligible species able to be principle to such an operation. A created act of understanding immediately arises from this union with God and this act terminates in God. In God's Word the intellect so blessed sees the divine essence and the three Persons who ineffably share that utterly simple essence.

119. Since God cannot dwell within the intellect as an intelligible species does, through accidental existence, he has found here a more intimate union. For the union that constitutes this participation in his nature is more intimate even than the union of knower and known as we experience it, although this is the greatest unity we now experience. For through grace the substance of the soul shares in the divine nature and becomes so one with God as to be, as it were,

a god, and through glory the power of the intellect is raised above its natural power and attains to God's essence as it is transcendently intelligible. Hence, through this participation, the blessed share in the divine unity beyond any natural share in that unity. Through this supernatural participation, the blessed are themselves called gods and they see forever God in his essence as a proper object of knowledge.

120. In sum, let me restate what I proposed to show in this discussion. At the beginning I said that I would discuss the nature of knowledge, show that it is essentially objective, and resolve this objectivity to the union of knower and known necessary for knowledge. From the present vantage point these three points can be described in reverse order as follows. First, all knowledge demands union of the knower with the known because knowledge, unlike transitive action, is a participation in the immanent activity that arises from the sufficiency of the divine unity. Hence, every knower knows insofar as it is or becomes one with its object, and greater unity with the object implies a more intimate knowledge, as angels know themselves more perfectly than men do, intellect knows more intimately than sensation. Second, knowledge is essentially objective because the subject of knowledge must imitate, in a manner superior to material objects, the unity that is the *ratio* of God's immanent activity. Thus, the created knower is distinct from its object, and therefore a *subject* of knowledge, insofar as it is in potency and apt to know other things. Its very falling away from utter actuality and thus from utter unity makes it apt to know many things and thus distinct in some way from any object. Third, the very nature of knowledge is an expression of God's desire to communicate, insofar as possible, both by nature and grace, the fullness of his transcendent unity.